

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Gene Hawkins

INTRODUCTION

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." (Colossians 4:12-14)

The fourth chapter of Colossians lists two distinct groups of people: the circumcision (Israelites) and the uncircumcision (Gentiles). Luke's name is found among the Gentiles. The Apostle Paul identifies Luke as a physician. He is the only Gentile writer of the Bible, and both his epistles, Luke and Acts, were written to a Gentile, Theophilus.

From Luke 1:3, he states that he "had perfect understanding of all things from the very first," or "from above." He did not portray Christ after the wisdom of men. He received his revelation of Christ from Heaven. In many cases, undoubtedly due to his close association with Paul, the Message of Grace is woven throughout this book.

All of these facts form the perfect background for the Gospel of Luke, which presents Christ as the peace offering. This Levitical sacrifice, which was divided almost equally between God and the priests, is a fellowship offering. It shows Christ bringing God and man together on the basis of a common sacrifice. It is also fitting that the Holy Spirit should choose this Gentile to portray Christ Jesus as a Man among men, rather than One sent only to the Jew. More than the other Gospel writers, Luke presents Jesus as THE MAN with all the frailties, temptations, pains, and sorrows, which are common to mankind.

These two threads -- the peace offering and Christ's humanity -- are woven most beautifully throughout this book, and which we will endeavor to expound in these lessons. By comparisons and contrasts with the other Gospel Records, we shall see that Luke has a very unique story to tell. -- G.H.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

CHAPTER ONE

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judah, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years" (vs. 5-7).

Zacharias, meaning "Remembered of Jehovah" and Elisabeth, "God of the oath," tell us that God is going to fulfill the glorious promises of redemption, which are seen throughout Scripture. As seen here, Satan tries the same tactics which he used many times in the Old Testament. From God's prophecy in Genesis 3:15, the old serpent, the devil, has known that the "Seed of the woman" would fatally bruise his head; and thus when a Godly woman came on the scene such as Sarah, Rachel, Rebekah, Hannah, and now Elisabeth, they were found to be barren. All of these women produced sons who made a tremendous impact on those around them; and in many cases, literally changed the course of history for Israel.

None of these women gave birth to the Redeemer, but John the baptist, was the forerunner of the Messiah, announcing that God did indeed remember and made good His oath to them. We learn from I Chronicles 24:10 that Abia (Abijah) had the eighth course of service in a 24-man rotation. Zacharias was following the prescribed lot of his forefather, as he "executed in the priest's office before God in the order of his course" (verse 8). It was his lot to burn incense; and, as "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense," Zacharias was in the holy place.

"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him" (vs. 11-12). Incense is said to represent prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8), and is suggestive of the fact that God also reveals Himself to us as we, too, linger beside the altar. This angel had a very special message for Zacharias; and we learn from verse 13 that even in their old age, this Godly couple had been praying for a child. The angel said, "Thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call him John."

This name means "Jehovah is a gracious Giver," and is significant of John's ministry in preparing

the way for THE GIFT (v. 17). From his birth, there was to be joy and gladness, a theme which is seen throughout the book of Luke, due to the fact that he presents the joy and glory of the peace offering. John was to be a Nazarite, and he had the unique experience of being "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God" (vs. 15-16).

Verse 17 is the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6, where God announced that "Elijah" the prophet, would come before the day of judgment to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. John met these requirements, but it is only Luke who tells us about such a restoration. Matthew informs us that John "is Elias which was for to come" (11:14), but the context of his message foretells judgment only. Luke informs of the great blessings of the peace offering, where children and fathers are brought together "by the wisdom of the just," that is, by God's wisdom in the great plan of redemption. Such provision will also "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Such language is constantly found in Luke, because Christ is seen in his Gospel as setting a lavish table of fellowship, bringing the disobedient back into harmony with God and with one another.

"And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this?" (v.18). Although he had been praying for a child, Zacharias responded with unbelief. On the contrary, Mary, the mother of Jesus, responded with her heart. Zacharias depended on his reasoning mind, "I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Mary had no precedent for a virgin birth, but Zacharias at least had the record of Abraham and Sarah having a child in their old age. The sign given to him was a consequence of his unbelief. "And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season" (v. 20).

This sign came to pass immediately, and Zacharias was unable to speak when he came out of the temple. When his days of ministry were accomplished, he went to his own house, and "after those days, his wife, Elisabeth, conceived and hid herself five months" (v. 24). We do not read of any unbelief on the part of Elisabeth; neither do we know if God told her of His intention and purpose as He did to Sarah of old. Later, she did acknowledge that the Lord had taken away her reproach, and she had a revelation of Mary being "the mother of my lord," when Mary greeted her (vs. 41-43).

"And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (1:27). The sixth month refers to Elisabeth's pregnancy, rather than the sixth month of the year, as we read "she hid herself five months." (v. 24) Verse 36 declares, "This is the sixth month of her that was called barren."

The city of Nazareth is added to the long list of reproaches under which Christ was born. Nathanael asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) Galilee also tells a story by the meaning of its name, "circuit, or circle." It tells us of the continuity of all the events surrounding Christ, bringing Him to the fulfillment of God's purposes.

Mary is the chosen vessel, and is greeted with, "Thou that art highly favored" (v.28). She was troubled at such a salutation and wondered what it could mean. The angel informs her immediately that she has found favor with God and that "thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son and call His Name Jesus" (v. 31). He is described as being predestined to greatness, the Son of the Highest, and Heir to the throne of David. Such a reign over the house of Jacob is an eternal one, wherein His Kingdom shall never end.

If Mary thought of the promise in Isaiah 7:14 concerning the promised Redeemer being born of a virgin, we are not told. She does ask the question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (v. 34). Contrary to Zacharias, hers is not a question of unbelief, and the great miracle is confirmed to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." She is also told of Elisabeth's condition, with this addenda: "With God nothing shall be impossible" (v. 37).

Mary's response is, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word." Mary did not consider the reproach of being made a "public example," a fact of which Joseph was keenly aware. His response to the news from the angel was that which is inherent in a man. God made men in this way for the purpose of his headship. History proves that Joseph was right in his

fears, and we see from Scripture that Mary probably never lived down the reproach. A Pharisee of Jesus' time said, "We be not born of fornication" (John 1:41), the inference being that Jesus was born of fornication. If Mary thought of the consequences of this miracle, there was no hesitation on her part in fulfilling the purpose of God.

The camel at the close of day, kneels down upon the sandy plane,
To have his burden lifted off, and rest again.

Then, too, O Traveler, to thy knees, when daylight draweth to a close,
And let the Master lift the load, and grant repose.

Else how wouldst thou tomorrow meet, with all tomorrow's work to do,
If thou the burden all the night, dost carry through?

The camel kneels at break of day, to have his guide replace the load;
Then rises up anew, to take the desert road.

So, Pilgrim, kneel at morning's dawn, that God may give thee daily care;
Assured that He no load too great, will make thee bear.

"And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth" (1:39-40). In keeping with Luke's presentation of Christ in the atmosphere of the emotional Adamic race, we see Mary with the typical response of a woman wanting to share her ecstatic joy with another woman. Her desire was to see Elisabeth, especially since both women had been part of a miracle.

"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (vs. 41-42). We do not read of such happenings and language in the other Gospels. The beloved physician, alone, tells not only of these emotional peaks which are common to the human race, but they also tell us of the beauty, joy, and glory provided for all mankind through Christ as the Peace Offering. God has indeed come down to man and the result is unparalleled peace and fellowship -- with God and with other believers. It is truly a feast of love.

Elisabeth had an immediate revelation of the high honor bestowed upon Mary as the "mother of my Lord." It is also stated that her own child, John, leaped in her womb for joy. Elisabeth commends Mary further, "Blessed is she that believed." From such statements, we must conclude that the heart of Mary simply heard what was told her and received her commission without doubt or reservation. She grasped it immediately and believed that "there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord" (v. 45).

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (vs. 46-47). Now it is Mary's turn to burst forth in praise and adoration of the Lord. Such a paean of praise is born of a deep experience with the Lord. Real praise comes from personal revelations from the Lord. "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (v. 48). Mary, like many others before her, declares the glories and power of God's grace. She does not claim any goodness of her own, nor any special righteousness or character as the reason for being God's chosen vessel. She admitted her "low estate," and gladly received His grace. This is the attitude of recipients of grace, who realize their deep need, and never draw back from receiving such grace because of their unworthiness.

Mary continued to expound on her experimental knowledge of the Lord as she describes three Divine Characteristics. First, "He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (v.49). Next, she pays tribute to His holiness, and finally, asserts "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation" (v. 50). The rest of this prayer of adoration gives us some beautiful insights into the magnitude and meaning of this last statement, as they describe the experience of the "fear of the Lord."

Some portray this "fear" in a manner to make, even Christians, afraid of God; but that is not what we read here. Any constructive relationship with God or man, must be based on Love, not on fear and trembling. The fear of the Lord as outlined in these verses, indicates the attitude of one who submits to the operations of the grace of God. It is a surrendering of our own will and strength, as we stand in awe and grateful wonder at the power and majesty of God. To know the fear of the Lord, is to experience true humility and dependence upon Him. Job declared, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (28:28). Paul informs us that "Christ is made unto us wisdom." It is only as we find our complete existence in the Lord, that we really understand the fear of the Lord.

Mary bowed before Him who "hath showed strength with His arm" (v.51). Only the strength of

God could accomplish this miraculous feat of that Holy Seed within Mary's womb. (the self-sufficient rebellious flesh which would on going its own way). He "put down the mighty from their seats," that is, the seats of judgment where they would rest from their own righteous works. Furthermore, He hath "exalted them of low degree." God loves to manifest His grace, and our own "low degree" is the perfect background.

A sharp contrast is seen in v. 53: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent away empty." The key word is "hungry." These are the ones who acknowledge their deep need in every area of life, and then go to the Source for an abundant supply. The rich and independent one, who refuses to submit to Him, "He hath sent away empty." Finally, "He hath holpen his servant Israel, IN REMEMBRANCE OF HIS MERCY; AS HE SPOKE TO OUR FATHERS, TO ABRAHAM, AND TO HIS SEED FOREVER" (vs. 54-55). The abundant favor which He shows is because of His promises, rather than any righteous works on the part of man. The ones who learn this are those who really understand the fear of the Lord.

"And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house" (v. 56). The rest of this chapter records the events and prophecies surrounding the birth of John the Baptist. We could infer from these verses that Mary left before the birth of John, but in view of Luke's overall presentation of the characteristics of humanity, I think that is highly unlikely. It is difficult to imagine that a woman, pregnant with her own child, leaving the scene where another woman is due to deliver at any time. We shall see many of these "human" situations in this book.

"And she brought forth a son" (v.57). It was great day for family and friends, as they rejoiced in the mercy which the Lord had showed upon Elisabeth. When the child was eight days of age, he was circumcised, and those present assumed that he would be called "Zacharias," after his father. His mother answered and said, "Not so; but he shall be called John." Everyone was in a quandary what this should mean for they said, "None of thy kindred is called by this name" (v. 61).

Zacharias who had been dumb for nine months was consulted and confirmed that Elisabeth was indeed in her right mind, the child was named John. True to the prophecy of verse 20, his tongue was immediately loosed and he began to praise God. Undoubtedly all the details were made known and thus "fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad." God had given witness of Himself by all of these strange events, and they who heard, marveled, knowing it was not mere coincidence as they mused, "What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him" (v. 66). Zacharias was "filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people" (vs. 67-68). In verse 68 to 75, Zacharias prophesies concerning the coming of Israel's Redeemer, Christ; and in verses 76-80, he speaks of God's purposes for John. Through Zacharias, the Holy Ghost affirms that God has "raised up a horn of salvation from the house of David," in fulfillment of His promises "since the world began." Such prophecies began in the Garden of Eden, when God Himself prophesied that the Seed of the woman (Jesus Christ) should bruise the head of the seed of the serpent (Satan).

Such language is fitting here, for it is the "seed of the woman" which is so graphically portrayed in Luke. This promised Redeemer is said to be a Savior "from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us." He will show mercy in fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." Zacharias is speaking particularly of Israel who have been in bondage much of their history, and is at the time of John's birth, bowed down under the cruel scourge of Rome.

It is also an expression of God's provision for us all. God has freed all mankind from the bondage of sin and unrighteousness, that we might be free to serve Him in all holiness, traits which come only from the Redeemer Himself.

"And thou child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord" (v. 76). The ministry of John is presented in a five-point outline. (1) To "prepare His ways." (2) To give knowledge of salvation unto His people." (3) Announce the dayspring (sunrise) for Israel as a nation. (4) "To give light to them that sit in darkness." (5) "To guide our feet into the way of peace."

The first item is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy which describes John as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make His paths straight" (Isaiah 40:3). John was the forerunner in announcing Christ and His purposes in coming. Secondly, he

came to them bearing knowledge of salvation, which was a message of repentance "for the remission of sins." Next, his message of grace announced that the "dayspring" or sunrising for Israel had come. Christ was the beginning for all the hopes, dreams, and promises of Israel. Their entire day of existence depended only on Him.

The fourth point which is a promise of light seems to indicate God's provision for the Gentiles, or for those who "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." God's order was to the Jew first, but Christ came that the Gentiles also might be delivered from the power of darkness: into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). Finally, Christ is the fulfillment of Israel's national need of One to "guide our feet into the way of peace." These people have known terror, pain, and violence, even before they became a nation in Egypt. They have been ridiculed, threatened with annihilation, and in general, have been victims of one attempt after another, to wipe them from the face of the earth. Much of this has been brought on by their own unbelief, but the fact remains, they have never had the peace that only their King Jesus is going to give them. This promise is going to be realized.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel" (v. 80). We do not know how long John lived in the wilderness before beginning the ministry outlined here, but like many of God's ministers who came before and after him, John must also have a time of spiritual growth and preparation for his place on God's program. Such growth is expressed by the fact that he "waxed strong in spirit," meaning that his own spirit was integrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to make him of one mind and purpose with God and able to stand uncompromisingly against the evil of his time. Such a spirit is manifested throughout his ministry. John endured many things in his "classroom," being clothed with camel's hair raiment and a leather girdle and feeding on locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4). But he stayed in the desert places "till the day of his showing to Israel."

Less of self and more of Jesus,
More and more each day like Thee;
Just to live in full surrender
For my Lord who ransomed me.
-Wonder

Chapter Two

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David)" (Luke 2:1-4).

Scripture had prophesied centuries before, the momentous event of this chapter, but it is amazing to see how God brings it to pass. Joseph did not go up to Bethlehem by revelation, nor do we read that he was aware of Micah 5:2 which announces that Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem. Instead, God used ordinary circumstances to ensure that His purposes were brought to pass. This fact of taxation by a Gentile ruler goes unreported by the other Gospel writers, but it is a very important item for Luke to include. Luke was a Gentile, and he shows Christ as a Man among all men and not just among the Jews.

As a Man, Christ is seen bowing to that which is required of all man. He was to become one of them in every detail. God's dealings with Joseph are also freighted with instruction for us, because, we, too, must realize that many times the Lord shows us His will through natural circumstances and through powers which He has ordained to be over us. These things were beyond the control of Joseph, and we can only speculate as to the thoughts that may have run through his mind.

What father-to-be would not consider the possible complications of such a long, arduous journey for a woman due to deliver her first child. Yet all of this was in God's plan for it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (6-7).

There was no mistake. God orchestrated this entire production, and only Luke reveals it. Christ,

the great Creator of the universe, is seen as a helpless baby, being taken care of by Mary as she "wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger." In Matthew's Gospel Christ is seen as a King, rejected by an earthly king. In Luke, we view Him as a man being rejected by the common people, as "there was no room for Him in the inn. Jesus did not come as the elite of men, but was the poorest of the poor. What great things God did to create the perfect background for His grace!

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (8). In Matthew, we see the King visited by the wise men, bearing expensive gifts. Luke shows the shepherds coming to visit the lowly Man. Humble though they may be, these shepherds received the first announcement of the Heavenly Visitor; and that fact is marked by a display of glory, told only in this Gospel "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (9-10).

Such displays of glory and joy are characteristic of the peace offering. God has come down to man to fellowship with him in this tremendous atmosphere of ecstasy. The birth of the Savior is announced by a special sign -- "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Following this message, the heavens were filled with a "multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men" (13-14). Peace and good will are in view of the peace offering, wherein Christ has made "peace by the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20).

My life, my blood, I here present,
If for Your truth they must be spent,
Fulfill Your sovereign counsel, Lord,
Your will be done, Your name adored.

As soon as the angels departed, the shepherds hastened to go to Bethlehem to "see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us" (15). They found it exactly as the angel had spoken, and when they had seen Him, they became the first heralds of the Redeemer, as "they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child" (17). It is certainly fitting that these shepherds should be accorded the honor of coming first to see, and then, to tell the good news of the Great Shepherd. They were in their own element, coming to the stable, and were neither embarrassed nor intimidated by it.

There is also a lesson for us here in the principle of true humility. Before we can testify of Him, we must first come to view Him. It is only as Christ is revealed TO us, that we are able to testify OF HIM. Those who have not seen Him, their response will be as they who heard the lowly preachers -- "all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (18).

Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned to their duties "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them" (20). Our response should be the same. As we come into His presence, there must be an overwhelming desire to testify of Him.

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His Name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (21). This is the first of three occasions where Jesus' age is given. Luke is the only writer who records them, because he shows Christ going through the growth process common to all men. Circumcision, which originated with Abraham (Genesis 17), and was incorporated into the law, signifies that God can only accept that which is eight days old, or that which is of the new creation. It was at this time that Jesus officially became God's "Property", ready to fulfill the meaning of His Name, "Jehovah is salvation."

"And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord" (22). The action now shifts from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, the place of dedication. According to Leviticus 12:4, this dedication took place 33 days after circumcision, for the mother must "continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, NOR COME INTO THE SANCTUARY, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled."

Paul comments on this truth in Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the fulness 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" He is the promised "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15), which would eventually bruise the "head of the serpent." He came also to fulfill every jot and tittle of the law in order to redeem those bound by it. Thus was He circumcised and presented to the Lord. The pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons offered at His dedication in compliance with the law, are further proof of the poverty into which He was born. They represent the least of the offerings which would be accepted (Leviticus 12:8).

"And, behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon ... waiting for the consolation of Israel ... And it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (25-26). During the dedication ceremony, Simeon "came by the Spirit of the Lord into the temple" (27). Here is a marvelous story of faith and knowledge, as Simeon, being led of the Spirit and believing God's promise, took this baby "up in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (29-30).

To many people, this may have seemed just another cute little baby, but Simeon looked beyond the small, fragile body, and saw that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise, consolation, and deliverance. Simeon's words in verses 31 to 35 are a prophecy of God's purposes and how they shall be brought to pass. The salvation promised in verse 30 is to be "prepared before the face of ALL people." The Gentiles also were to receive light, and He will become the "glory of THY people Israel."

Joseph and Mary marvelled at those things, but verse 34 explains how it shall all come about -- "this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." The fall is a prediction of His death. The "child" is a representative figure of all men caught in such a fall; but He is also set for the "rising again" or resurrection. All this was "for a sign which shall be spoken against," or as Moffet translates it, "a sign for man's attack." Paul adds to this thought in I Corinthians 1:18: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." The provisions of the cross, and Christ's subsequent resurrection, have been attacked for ages, but God's "Sign" still remains, condemning all men who will not believe.

The following words, also addressed to Mary, express the deep sorrow which she was to endure as a "sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." This came to pass as she stood before the cross, watching Jesus die in agony. As her heart was being pierced by such cruelty, one of God's purposes was also brought to pass: "that the thoughts of many may be revealed." No one can remain neutral where Christ is concerned. Everyone must accept His provision for himself, or perish in his sins.

The next person we read of who witnessed the dedication of Jesus was Anna, a prophetess. "She was of a great age and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity ... a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (37). God always had His own special rewards for faithfulness, and this woman certainly was not disappointed. Like Simeon, she must have recognized Him, for she gave thanks unto the Lord and "spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (38).

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (39). Unlike Matthew, who portrays the King exiled and journeying to Egypt, Luke makes no mention of that time, nor of the threat on His life. Instead, he continues to picture the common man, the child who "grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him" (40). Jesus was as any man, dependent upon God, with the same needs that all men experience. He did not emerge immediately as possessing all spiritual strength, but He, too, must "wax strong", or become spiritual in process of time. As God, He knew all, but as Man, He must attain wisdom; and considering the reproach of Nazareth, we can well understand His opportunity to learn and depend on the grace of God.

The next view of Him is at the age of 12. The occasion is the Passover Feast at Jerusalem. Having fulfilled the days of that feast, Joseph and Mary began the journey home, not realizing that Jesus was not with the rest of their company. Not finding Him, they returned to Jerusalem and "after three days found Him in the temple, 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" (46-47).

We are not told what the subject matter of these conversations were, but those hearing Him

certainly were impressed. This testimony of His wisdom is the result of His spiritual growth, (v.40). Mary showed the concern of a mother as she said, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (48). His answer to her tell us that, at the tender age of 12, Jesus knew that God was His Father, and that there was a work for Him. Even though these special parents had received many prophecies concerning their special Son, first from the angel before His birth, the shepherds, Simeon and Anna, and now Jesus' words, "I must be about My Father's business," they understood not the words of Jesus. (50).

"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (51). This is a tremendous statement in view of who Jesus was. He was the Eternal Creator of the universe, vested with all power, might, and authority, and yet we see Him submitting to the authority of His parents. This is one of the greatest principles of God, Jesus being the greatest example, and no one can ever really know success without submitting to authority.

In summing up this chapter, we would like to note that the path which Jesus took into maturity, is a description of our own journey of spiritual growth. The process of our "new birth" is described in chapter 1:35, as "the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that HOLY THING which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Who can begin to explain how God could implant His Divine Life within the womb of Mary? Likewise, we cannot comprehend how He can implant such a "holy thing" within everyone who believes.

Understanding has no bearing on the outcome of this great miracle, and, like Mary, our only response is, "be it unto me according to Thy Word." As Mary carried that Divine Seed within her, so Christians carry within them the Life of Christ, feeding and nurturing that spiritual life, even as she did humanly. It is sad that so many of God's people never go beyond this first stage of development. While they are, indeed, born again and possess that holy, incorruptible Seed, spiritual fruit is never seen. This is not God's purpose. Like Mary, there comes the day that "she should be delivered."

There comes a time in our experience when the fruit of Divine Life cannot be hidden. It is visibly manifest, though very fragile and in need of food and nurturing. The next step of growth is found in verse 21, as Jesus is circumcised. Only that which is eight days old is presented in such a manner, and it tells of the time in our lives when we realize that we are of new creation stock. We belong to God and are of great value to Him. Sad to say, many believers never see the full import of this beautiful truth. They never grasp the fact that "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Next, we read of Jesus' formal dedication. It speaks of our own dedication to the Lord as we present our bodies, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1). After this we read, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit." Becoming strong in spirit is a direct result of growth. It reaches quite beyond the initial infilling with the Holy Spirit, into the practical operation and development of the Spirit of Christ within. It is reflected in the ability of one to stand alone, listening to and "being about my Father's business." As seen previously in the life of Jesus, it is manifested by the depth of knowledge He possessed.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." There is no substitute for the attitude of submission to authority. The Scriptures are silent concerning the life of Jesus from this point to the age of 30 (chapter 3:23), when He began His public ministry. The inference is that He remained subject to His parents all this time, and still accomplished all that God intended for Him to do.

The same pattern is to be our experience. Paul spoke of his dedication and submission: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen" (Galatians 1:15-16). It is only as the characteristics of Christ are revealed IN us that He will one day be able to reveal Him THROUGH us. Jesus literally increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (52); and that process must also be accomplished in us. It is a direct result of the subjection we read of in verse 51.

Mid the splendours of the glory,
Which we hope ere long to share,
Christ, our Head, and we, His members,
Shall appear divinely fair,
O how glorious!
When we meet Him in the air!

From the dateless, timeless periods,
He has loved us without cause;
And for all His blood-bought myriads,
His is love that knows no pause;
Matchless Lover!
Changeless as the eternal laws!
O what gifts shall yet be granted,
Palms and crowns, and robes of white,
When the hope for which we panted
Bursts upon our gladdened sight,
And our Savior
Makes us glorious through His might.
Bright the prospect soon that greets us
Of that longed-for nuptial day,
When our heavenly Bridegroom meets us
On His kingly, conquering way,
In the glory,
Bride and Bridegroom reign for aye!

Chapter Three

The Ministry of John the Baptist

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Gaiaphas being the high priests, the Word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness" (1-2).

Luke dates events according to Gentile times. Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, and our present story records that we are fifteen years into the reign of Tiberius. Luke not only lists political rulers, but religious leaders as well. It is interesting to read that Israel had departed from God's order, for there were two high priests instead of one, originally ordained by God. Spiritually speaking, having only one is vitally important, for he is representative of THE ONE, Jesus Christ. Not only had Israel violated God's spiritual purpose, but they had also gone away from His literal decrees.

We are not told how old John was when he began his ministry in the wilderness. From our present text, at least fifteen years had elapsed. God spoke to him while he was in the wilderness, for "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel" (1:80). The wilderness expresses Israel's spirituality at that time; and, as is so often the case, God met them while they were in that condition with the ministry of John.

His message to them was simple: John came "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (3:3). This was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (3:4-6). These words in this Gospel are in contrast with both Matthew and Mark. All three mention that John is the personification of the "voice crying in the wilderness," and all emphasize the message of repentance. However, only Luke mentions the bountiful blessings expressed by the peace offering, which is described in Luke 3. Here we have a beautiful expression of the result of man being brought into favor with God, and his ability to enter into fellowship on the basis of a common sacrifice.

"Every valley shall be filled" describes one of the first principles of entering into the provisions of Divine Grace, for it tells of the humble in spirit, who have been brought down into the valley.

There is where we learn the valuable lesson of dependence, where also we are able to be filled up with Christ. This is reinforced by the next words: "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low." James writes, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (4:6). Such words are found throughout the Scriptures and declare the fact that man cannot enjoy the blessing of the Lord if he is in a state of independence.

"The crooked shall be made straight." The word, crooked," means "warped, winding, perverse," and tells of those whose lives are contrary to the will and purpose of God, but they are

"straightened" by the presence of Jesus. The rough ways portray lives which have been broken by sin and unrighteousness, but are made smooth and level, indeed, healed by Christ. Finally, "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Christ is this Salvation in its entirety, and He, alone, is able to fulfill all the provisions of spiritual blessings.

"Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin 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" (3:7-8). This record of John's message in Luke is in sharp contrast to those in the Gospel of John. The Apostle John portrays Christ as the Burnt Offering. In this particular sacrifice, all of it was totally given to God. It was an all-inclusive offering, showing our complete acceptance in Christ, with all wrath and judgment being laid upon Christ. For this reason, John records no hint of the message of judgment preached by the Baptist. Words like "repent," "viper," and "wrath" are not included in his Gospel. In Luke's account, however, we see man invited into the choice blessing of God, but still under a certain amount of responsibility, as he had not fully entered into that complete "acceptance in the Beloved." That is why this "rough" prophet declares Israel to be a generation of vipers. They are exhorted to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, and not to think that they have an advantage, just because they are the seed of Abraham.

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (3:9). This is the basis of redemption. The axe of God's judgment was laid upon Christ. He assumed total responsibility for Adam, the "root" of the tree of humanity. The Adamic creation became corrupt and incapable of bringing forth anything good to God. Therefore, not only was the fruit destroyed, but the whole tree came under the fiery judgment of God, as Christ died and provisionally took all of Adam's progeny into death and the grave with Him.

The next record of John the Baptist's ministry is also peculiar to Luke. Several groups of people come to John asking questions. This is symbolic of Jesus' presentation is to all men, for we see more than the religious Pharisee and Saducee coming to him. First, the people, undoubtedly referring to the Jew, asked, "What shall we do then?" John's answer is in view of Jesus' work on the cross, and tells of traits inherent only in the New Creation. It reflects the nature of sacrifice, exemplified by Christ: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise" (3:11).

The next group, the despised publicans, asked, "Master, what shall we do?" His answer to them can only be fulfilled by one who is born again: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (3:13). Finally, the Roman soldiers demanded, "And what shall we do?" He replied, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages" (3:14). All of these requirements are contrary to the traits of the flesh, and can only be accomplished because Jesus has cut down the corrupt tree of which we were all a part.

"And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (13:15-16). The question of all the people now is whether or not John is the promised Messiah. In answer to that, John unfolds yet more of the ministry of Jesus, which was to begin shortly. John did baptize with water; however, he announced a greater Baptizer and a greater baptism was yet to come.

We read of that baptism of fire in the book of Acts, on the Day of Pentecost. It was at this time that Jew and Gentile believers were baptized by the Spirit into one body (I Corinthians 12:13). Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He announced this event, which occurred ten days later. "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The fire which John mentions was symbolic of that glorious power, for cloven tongues of fire sat upon each of the 120 gathered in the upper room (2:3). The one baptism to which Paul refers in Ephesians 4:5 and the baptism which John speaks of here, are one and the same. It does not refer to the infilling of individual believers, for this happened only once, and the entire Church was baptized into one spiritual body. Paul describes the infilling of the Spirit as "having all been made to drink into one Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:13).

"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (3:17). John continues to define

Christ's ministry, and this verse will be fulfilled in its entirety when Christ comes in power and great glory. However, it is also going on in our lives right now. It is an apt description of Christ as Judge of the Church, walking midst the candlesticks, (Revelation 1), separating the good wheat manifest in our lives, and burning up the chaff of the flesh.

"And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people" (3:18). Luke does not inform us as to the content of his message. Perhaps this was left for the Apostle John to record in his message of Christ as the Son of God and the Lamb of God.

"But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison" (3:19-20). Before going to prison, John had said regarding Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Jesus said of John, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding He that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11). So, as great as he was, and as prominent a place as he held on God's program, John's "decrease" has begun. He was the forerunner of the promised Deliverer and faithfully carried out his charge, and now his race is about over. The "Least" in the Kingdom of Heaven, who is greater than John, has arrived.

John's imprisonment is another in a long list of evils attributed to Herod. John's reproof pierced the hearts of this adulterous couple, and God used them to bring to a close, the ministry of this unique prophet.

The increase of Jesus and His ministry began with His baptism. It is interesting that John did not question his baptizing of Jesus as he did in Matthew's account, "I have need to be baptized of Thee" (Matthew 3:13-15). The reason is, Matthew presents Christ as the King, while Luke shows us the Man. John was not intimidated by the man, as he would be by baptizing a king; therefore, Jesus encouraged him by saying, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness."

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also was baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (3:21-22). Luke is the only Gospel writer who tells us of Jesus praying at this time, for he shows Jesus the Man, praying to His Father. Matthew and Mark tell us that the "heavens were opened unto HIM." Luke's account seems to indicate that the heavens were opened to all. This is the special import of the peace offering. God has opened up the windows of heavenly blessing to as many as will receive. The inference is that all saw the descent of the heavenly Dove upon Jesus and heard the voice from heaven. This is another example of the openness of God, since Christ has brought the creature and Creator together.

"And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli" (3:23). True to form, Luke records those things in which man would be very much concerned and interested. Though we are to accept Christ by faith, men want to know, "Who is He? Where did He come from? Is He qualified?" They must know before they will accept His ministry. His age is given as 30, and is given only by Luke, who records Jesus' growth process. He is now in the prime of His life, able to accomplish His mission among men.

His genealogy here also differs from that given in Matthew's account, and rather than being a contradiction, it serves to show the Divine inspiration of the writers. Due to the fact that Matthew's record centers around Joseph, rather than Mary, and because Matthew presents Christ as King, he must trace the line through His father. We conclude that the lineage given by Matthew is that of Joseph, who is said to have been begotten by Jacob. In our present text, we read that Jesus was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli. The word "son" has a wide range of uses, indicating kinship, and undoubtedly refers here to Joseph being the "son-in-law" of Heli, who would be Mary's father.

In addition, we read in verse 23 of Jesus "being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph," meaning that He was not in actuality the son of Joseph, but rather the Son of Mary. This would be in keeping with Luke's presentation of the lineage of the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15). Further reading shows that both lines went back to "Zorobabel which was the son of Salathiel" (3:27). Matthew 1:12 reads, "Salathiel begat Zorobabel." This same duo is recorded in the post captivity era in Ezra 3:2, as "Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel." At this point, there is a glaring difference in the accounts. Matthew says that Jechoniah begat Salathiel. Luke declares that

Salathiel was the son of Neri.

Jeremiah tells us why in chapter 22:28-30, where we read of Coniah, also known as Jehoiachin and Jechoniah (II Kings 24:6-8; Jeremiah 24:1). "Thus saith the Lord, write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Coniah descended from David through Solomon, and this is the line traced in Matthew, who must record the legal or royal line of succession to the throne. However, due to the explicit words in Jeremiah, we see that the actual father of Salathiel was Neri. Speculation is that Jechoniah's line may have been related by marriage after the captivity in Babylon, but as noted, there can be no direct link through him to Solomon and David. God is never at a loss, however. Neri also is a direct descendant of David, through Nathan (3:31). He, like Solomon, was born to David by Bathsheba, whose story also depicts the beauty, power, and grace of God, in bringing victory out of adulterous chaos. Jesus has a literal right to the throne of David, and becomes the actual fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, wherein Solomon was only a type.

There is also another outstanding point of difference between these two genealogies recorded in Matthew and Luke. Matthew's record goes back only to Abraham. Luke's account says, "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God" (3:38). Luke, in presenting the Man, shows us the complete path of humanity from the first Adam to the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45). Luke gives every detail relating to the humanity of Jesus.

AN EVENING PRAYER

Lord, let me forget to remember
Each small hurt of this day;
Remembering only the wonder of great
Things life brought my way.
Yes, let me remember the right things,
Each word, each deed, each song;
For memories are only a blessing
When I've forgotten the wrong.

Chapter Four

Jesus Enters Public Ministry

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." 4:1. Jesus was led into the wilderness as a direct result of being filled with the Spirit. Some people imagine that when they are filled with the Spirit, all troubles and battles are over. The same Holy Spirit who fills us with joy also leads us into a direct confrontation with the enemy. It is stated in Mark's Gospel that the "Spirit DRIVETH Him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). Mark presents Jesus as the servant of God, under the direct command of the Spirit.

In Christ's temptation we learn many necessary things about the tactics of Satan. The first method of Satan's tempting is found in verse two: "Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered." Being a man, Jesus had natural needs, and this is what Satan used. The devil preys on any natural need or weakness we have. He tempted Jesus with food when He was hungry, not after He had enjoyed a banquet.

The devil tempts Him next by asking a question: "And the devil said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (4:3). This had been very effective in the Garden of Eden. Satan attempts to take advantage of man's inherent motivation to survive. He also seemed to be interested in Jesus' welfare. By his question, Satan tries to put a doubt in Jesus' mind as to His sonship, and put Him on the defensive, hoping that Jesus will demonstrate His power for personal gain.

Jesus was full of the Holy Ghost, and did not make the same mistake which Eve did. When Eve tried to answer the subtle serpent, she found out that she was no match for him. The Apostle Paul states that our weapons "are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4). Jesus pierced the devil with the Sword of the Spirit: "it is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God" (4:4). Satan was stunned by this blow, and tried another approach. "And the devil, taking Him up into an high

mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto Him, all this power will I give Thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it" (4:5-6). It is quite unlikely that Jesus was literally transported "into a high mountain," for what mountain could be a vantage point for all the kingdoms of the world?

There is no Scriptural proof that Satan has this kind of power. The Spirit of God transported Elijah (I Kings 18:12) and Philip (Acts 8:39), but it is doubtful that the devil would be able to do this.

The entire battle between Jesus and the devil was fought in Jesus' spirit. Satan has the power to inject thoughts into our minds. Again, we go to Paul's writings and read: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5).

The kingdoms were Satan's to give. In the beginning God gave earthly dominion to Adam: "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth ... and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28). When Adam fell, he lost that dominion to Satan, who is now called "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), the god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), and the "prince of this world" (John 12:31).

Jesus will one day exercise authority over all the kingdoms of the world, and enjoy the glory of them. Satan knows this, but he subtly suggests to Jesus that He can have it all right now without going to the Cross. The devil offered Jesus a shortcut to the throne if He would worship him. We can never fully understand, nor appreciate what horror, agony, fear, pain, and sorrow that Jesus endured for us on the Cross. He bore our guilt and the subsequent judgment because of our sin. There was to be a terrific battle at the Cross, and Satan thought that he could tempt Jesus with this way out of the suffering.

The response of Jesus was another quotation from the Word of God without any explanation: "Get thee behind me Satan;" that is, "I will not follow you in this matter." Then He said, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (4:8).

The focus of the final temptation shifted to Jerusalem. Satan "set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence" (4:9). By way of comparison, the last two temptations are reversed in Matthew's account, and we may wonder why. The greatest possibility is because Luke presents Christ being tempted as a man. The order of things is in keeping with the strategy our arch enemy uses today.

The devil, being floored the first two times he attacked, gets off the canvas and tries again to put Jesus on the defensive, to force Him to prove that He is the Son of God. "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee: and in their hands, they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone" (4:9-11).

We may have had a similar experience. Satan tries to catch us off guard while we are basking in a recent victory, and are thinking that we are through with this battle from now on; but not so. We must continually be on guard, contending with this "angel of light," who misquotes Scripture, as He did with Jesus. The devil quoted from Psalm 91:11, but left out a very important phrase: "IN ALL THY WAYS." This phrase refers to the ways of God, and Jesus jumping from the pinnacle of the temple was not one of them. Beware when Satan misquotes or wrongly applies a Scripture. Jesus did not deviate from His battle strategy. The Sword of the Spirit cut quickly and keenly when Jesus reminded Satan, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season" (4:13).

Only Luke implies that this was not the final temptation for Jesus. As a man, Jesus endured multiple temptations, even as all of us. "It behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; and there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about" (4:14). The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, and He returns from that experience in the power of the Spirit. Many of God's most effective ministers spent time "in the wilderness" before they began their public ministry. Moses spent 40 years on the back side of the desert before God used him to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. David spent most of his early years with his father's sheep, and fought a good many battles in the wilderness before he was able to fight against Goliath. He spent more time in

the wilderness after that great victory, before taking the throne of Israel. John the Baptist was in the desert until the day of his appearance to Israel. After Paul's conversion we read: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem . . . but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

This is God's pattern for His chosen men, and is also an example for us. Jesus, the chosen Man, must receive training "in the desert" before He began His public ministry. The following verses outline that ministry: "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ... " (4:16-18). This was not Jesus' first visit to the synagogue. It is not clear if this was the first time Jesus read aloud in the synagogue, nor why the book was given to Him at this time.

Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this incident. In these verses there is a seven-point outline of His ministry to mankind. It is a fulfillment of the blessings of the peace offering, in which Christ brought man into glorious fellowship with God and met needs common to all. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" commenced on the banks of the Jordan River where He had been baptized. If Jesus needed the power of the Spirit to fulfill His ministry, how much more do we need this same power to accomplish the work God has for us?

It was that Spirit of God which enabled Him to "preach the Gospel to the poor." This is the top priority in His ministry. It seems to have been the same with the Apostle Paul as he wrote: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (I Corinthians 1:17). In this day when men's programs are taking the center stage, the responsibility of preaching the Gospel is neglected. This results in a tremendous famine of God's Word. Preaching this Gospel meets the many needs of humanity. It is no different in our day than it was when Jesus preached.

This Gospel was preached to the "poor." This word means "distressed, cringing as a beggar," and shows the desperate need of men. Only as an individual admits his need, can he receive the message of the Grace of God. This needy attitude must continue in our lives from the time we receive forgiveness of sins until we are delivered from this world. God's amazing Grace is the strength of our lives.

JOY COMETH

My soul mounts upward in the dark;
There ariseth light.

Oh, let thy soul arise -- embark --
And taste the pure delight.

As flowers face the morning light,
Their cups are filled with dew
That spread their chalice in the night,
When chilly breezes blew.

My soul gropes upward, seeking light;
My heart, dove-like a-mourning.

Weeping may endure but for a night;
Joy cometh in the morning.

Ruby Lain Tow

* A problem, well stated, is a problem half solved.

* When Jesus came, there was no light; when He left, there was no darkness.

* Only as we go God's way can we know God's will.

* Death is the last chapter on time, but the first chapter on eternity.

"He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted." This is the second point of His ministry. This heavenly Man showed tremendous compassion as He ministered to the deep, emotional needs of humanity. He experienced a broken heart, and is able to help others with His healing balm. Thirdly, He came to "preach deliverance to the captives." Bondage, common to man, comes in many forms, and affects the spirit, soul, and body. Jesus healed many people who were bound by sickness and disease, and even loosed some from the chains of death; but He delivered many more bound by sin and unrighteousness. He did it by the message He preached. Faith in His

Message can deliver the captives, bound by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

"The recovering of sight to the blind," is the fourth phase of Jesus' ministry. He healed the eyes of many blind folks of His time, but the greater fulfillment is the opening of eyes unto spiritual reality. Men blinded by the devil, were led out of the depths of darkness into the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ.

Fifth: He came "to set at liberty them that are bruised." This word means "crushed, to break, or wreck," and describes what Satan has done to the human race through sin. Through Adam's transgression, humanity had been left crushed and bleeding by the way side, awaiting the coming of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). Jesus came not only to deliver from the bondage of sin, but to repair the damage which sin had done. The "liberty" means that He has set us free from the ruined and crushed condition, and bring a complete healing for the injuries suffered.

The sixth step of Christ's ministry was to "preach the acceptable year of the Lord." The Apostle Paul wrote: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Corinthians 15:13). The ministry of Jesus extends beyond that time and our time. He preached a message that would prepare us for His second coming. It is significant that the Minister of the Peace Offering stopped His reading from Isaiah at this point. The rest of the verse from the prophet proclaims: "and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn" (Isaiah 61:2). These words will be fulfilled in due time, but they have no place in this Gospel presented by Luke, who presents Jesus as the Peace-Maker, bringing men into deep and intimate fellowship with God, feasting at the same table.

The seventh point seems to be obscure as He simply closed the book and sat down. This, too, refers to His ministry, for it signifies a time of completion and rest. It is much the same as God's work of creation -- "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made" (Genesis 2:2). There is coming a day when all that is written in "The Book" will have been completed. This also has a special application in our personal lives, as God desires to complete this seven-fold ministry in us.

We experience the meaning of being "poor" in spirit, and receiving initial salvation. This Message continues in our lives as we surrender our broken hearts to Him. We can learn the joy of being freed from our captivity, as we call upon Him to fight our battles. We learn that "He is a Man of war: the Lord is His Name" (Exodu 15:3). Though we were blind, we receive perfect vision from the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Jesus ministers to us personally, and we experience the healing of our "death wound," and begin to enjoy abundant life in Christ, which is far superior to that of Adam and Eve's original state. Our hearts burn within us as He "preaches the acceptable year of the Lord." Finally, the Book can be closed and He can sit down, having completed the work in our lives.

"... And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him" (4:20). This is the desired effect that all preaching should have. Every message must focus attention on Christ.

Jesus announced that His ministry to man had officially begun, and His words had a profound effect upon the people as they "all bare witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (4:22). He not only conveyed the "letter" of the Law, but the spirit also. He had a message of grace, and His Spirit communicated it to all who would hear.

They were so in awe of Him, that they asked, "Is not this Joseph's son?" After bearing the burdens of the law for so long, we can well imagine their feelings at hearing such gracious words from the mouth of this unassuming and lowly son of the carpenter, Joseph. They were very impressed by Him, but their question indicates that they did not really know who He was.

Knowing their thoughts and anticipating their next question, Jesus said, "Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country" (4:23-24).

The Apostle Paul tells us that the "Jews require a sign" (I Corinthians 1:22), and this is borne out here. Jesus did not offer to give them a demonstration, and in essence says, "I am one of your own, but you are not going to listen to me." The following verses seem to be addressed to all Jews; not just these from His home town.

"But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was

cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian" (4:25-27). These two great signs performed by God, demonstrate His presence among people, but in both instances, the recipients of His mercy were Gentiles. Elijah was not sent to poor widows of Israel, but to one lone Gentile widow in Sarepta, whom He sustained for the duration of the famine. God also sustained Elijah and the widow's son with the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil, which did not fail, "according to the Word of the Lord" (I Kings 17:16).

There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, but none of them was cleansed except Naaman, another Gentile (II Kings 5). These examples explain what Jesus meant by saying that a prophet is not accepted in his own country. It is written of Jesus, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). These illustrations express the truth of the peace offering, which extended beyond the Jews to include all men.

"And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath" (4:28). The Jews were incensed by these references, because the Word of God reached into the inner recesses of their hearts to reveal their true sinful nature. The wrath and murder of their hearts were revealed as they "rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong" (4:29). This is the same Man whose words had seemed so gracious to them, but it is evident that those words did not sink into their hearts. The powerful searchlight of God's Word shone into their hearts and revealed the rebellion there.

"But He passing through the midst of them and went His way, and came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days" (4:30-31). This attempt on Jesus' life was only the first of many, and was the result of His preaching the Truth. He did not flee for His life, but simply passed through the crowd and went on His way. The ministry which God gave Him was not finished. He continued preaching in the synagogues and the hearers continued to be amazed at His powerful doctrine. "And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power" (4:32). His message was not empty rhetoric, accompanied by rituals of the law, but it was powerful as demonstrated by the following event.

"And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, 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" (4:33-34). The demons are unable to withstand Him, so they begin to exchange words with Him. Satan and his demon forces know Jesus' identity, and also God's purposes to destroy them. This same message is conveyed in Matthew eight, as the legion of demons answered Jesus, "Art Thou come hither to "torment us before the time?" Although Jesus did not destroy Satan at His first advent, He demonstrates His power over His enemies. "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him and hurt him not."

Jesus cast out this demon by His Word, and not by laying on of hands. Later in this chapter, we will find that

Jesus laid hands on the sick to heal them of different diseases. He simply commanded demons to keep silence and come out of their victims. This is the Scriptural way of casting out demons -- by command, not by laying on of hands.

This manifestation of power amazed those present, and they said, "What a WORD is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (4:36). This is further evidence of just how effective it is to preach the Word and leave the results to God. There was no great publicity campaign to promote Him, but nevertheless the "fame of Him went out into every place of the country round about" (4:37). The results speak for themselves, and God still confirms the preaching of His Word with signs following. (Mark 16) Like Jesus, Paul's preaching was in "demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Corinthians 2:4).

"And He arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought Him for her" (4:38). Miracles continue wherever Jesus goes. "And He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them" (4:39). According to Matthew 8:15, Jesus "touched her hand and the fever left her." There seems to be no fanfare because of this healing, however, this was just the beginning. "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And He

rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that He was Christ" (4:40-41). These demons spoke absolute truth concerning Jesus, but He rebuked them to keep silence. God will never allow Satan to have part in His work, even if he does speak truth. Paul was a part of a similar scenario in Acts 16, as a damsel possessed with a spirit of divination followed him and cried, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Everything she said was true, but Paul was grieved, and like Jesus, commanded the spirit to come out of her. God will not use Satan to publish His message. The devil can perform supernatural feats, which can contribute to confusing him with the most high God.

"And when it was day, He departed and went into a desert place; and the people sought Him, and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them" (4:42). Jesus came into a world filled with needy people, and He demonstrated that He was able to meet all the necessities of these helpless creatures. However, this Man, who was so sensitive to their hurts and woes, literally exhausted Himself in ministering to them. The desert place was undoubtedly intended as a place of rest for Him, but the "vacation" was short-lived as "the people sought Him." His response indicates the priority of preaching. He could not remain with them, for He "must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And He preached in the synagogues of Galilee" (4:43-44).

REWARD

Dare to be faithful to Jesus,
Faithful in all that you do;
Think how He watches your efforts,
Loving and caring for you.
He has been over the pathway,
And knows your struggles and fears;
Dare to be faithful to Jesus,
He keeps account of your tears.
Dare to be faithful to Jesus,
Faithful when pleasures surround;
Bravely displaying your colors,
Never deserting your ground.
Faithfulness shineth in heaven,
Bright as the fairest success;
Only be faithful to Jesus,
Trusting the Master to bless.
Dare to be faithful to Jesus,
Darkness may shadow your way:
Fear not, for Jesus is with you,
Faithfully serve Him each day.
Dare to say, "No!" to the tempter,
Dare to withstand every foe;
Clad in the heavenly armor,
Forth unto victory go.
-- Author Unknown

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS CHOOSES DISCIPLES

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (5:1-3).

The last we saw of Jesus, He was preaching the Gospel in the synagogues of Galilee. The scene has shifted to the great outdoors, by the lake, Gennesaret, but His purpose is the same. Jesus had performed many miracles previously, but the people here seemed to be interested in more than healing power, as they "pressed upon Him" to hear the Word of God. Due to such a crowd, Jesus requested the owner of the fishing boat to move it out away from the people, and He used

it as His pulpit, for there, "He sat down and taught the people." The word "Gennesaret" means "harps" and is in great harmony with the Gospel, for such Glad Tidings bring music to the hearts of those who are willing to listen.

"And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men, and when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him" (5:10-11). In verses 4-11, we read of the story in which Jesus called His first disciples. In both Matthew and Mark, we read that Peter and Andrew simply forsook their nets and followed Him. In Luke's account, we find more conversation, a great degree of fellowship, as well as more of the human side expressed. Jesus' manner with Simon wonderfully reflects what He can do in our own lives. "Launch out into the deep" is the exhortation, followed by His promise, "let down your nets for a draught." Simon's response is typical of all men, as he said, "We have toiled all the night, and have caught nothing!" This expresses the plight of those who go their own way, toiling through their own dark hours, trying to achieve their desires. Would to God that all people followed Simon's lead as he said, "Nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net!"

This is a marvelous statement of faith. Regardless of what he had already experienced of fruitless toil, he was willing to let down the net once more, just because Jesus asked him to do it. He was not disappointed. They "inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke." This is the catch which Jesus promised, but it was only a type of the greater, spiritual draught, available to all who are willing to launch out into the depths of God's grace and let down their nets, only because Jesus says it.

So great was the load of fish that "they beckoned unto their partners (James and John), which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink" (5:7). Peter's response to this display of divine power, expresses the attitude of one who has just received a great revelation of God's grace and power. When he saw it, "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (5:8). Peter had heard Jesus' teachings from the ship, and he had witnessed His power in this miracle of fish; therefore, he was overwhelmed by it all. His own heart was pierced by the truth this Man spoke, and he bowed before Him, confessing his sins.

As an interesting note, Peter addressed Jesus by two different titles. In verse five, he calls Him "Master," that is, "an appointee over, a commander, a teacher." In verse eight, "Lord" is a much stronger term, meaning, "supreme in authority, controller." Peter, had in this short time, come to know Jesus in a much greater way, and bowed to His authority as the Supreme One. Peter was willing to relinquish control of his life to the Lord. "He was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken" (5:9).

Such control took him and the others away from the fishing nets, as Jesus said unto Simon, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him" (5:10-11). All of these men were duly impressed with what happened. However, this miracle could well be seen as a test for these early disciples. Had they forsook their nets when "business was bad," their motive might have been, "Well, I have nothing better to do." As it happened, they departed, even after so great a success, so their decision to follow Jesus was real. Peter was faced with this same decision in John 21, after the resurrection of Jesus, and the results were the same.

"And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean" (5:12). There was never any lack for opportunities to show His healing power. He was constantly on the move. The leprous condition of this man called for a demonstration of the power of the Gospel, and for a witness of who Jesus is.

Faith sprang from the heart of this leper, and in simple language, he pleaded, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." In like simplicity, Jesus "put forth His hand and touched Him, saying, I will: be thou clean" (5:13). The leper's healing is immediate, and Jesus charged him "to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest" (5:14).

Jesus' request is another example of the fact that "He was made under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). In Matthew 5:17, He declared, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill . . ." When He said, "Tell no man," Jesus did not mean that He was doing things in secret, but rather that they must be done according to the demands of the law. Under the old covenant, it was the priest who must decide if a plague of leprosy was truly

gone, before a person could be admitted back into the camp of Israel. The law had to bear witness to the fact that he was not a fraud. Jesus also presents the principle of going to those in authority, rather than building mass support from man. By having this man "offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded," this great miracle was a "testimony unto them." The next verse tells us that this was effectual, for despite the fact that the emphasis was not toward man, "so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities" (5:15). Jesus preached the Word and God confirmed it with signs following (Mark 16:20). The pattern of Jesus' ministry is once again seen, and God's order of importance: First, they came to HEAR the Word, and then to be HEALED by Him.

"And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed" (5:16). This is the second time in two chapters that we read of Jesus' leaving the multitudes, and this time it is specifically to pray. Praying in the midst of public ministry is absolutely essential. If one is going to dispense blessing to others, he must personally be filled. This is done by spending time in communion with the Father. We do not know how long His respite lasted, for the text continues immediately with more of His ministry.

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sifting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them" (5:17). We gather that this gathering was a regular conference attended by the "clergy" of that time, and healing was present for them. It isn't recorded whether or not they received such power for themselves; however, God is always ready to stretch forth His hand to the poor and needy, and such a one is presented.

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him" (5:18). The faith of these men was the active kind that will not be denied, and is later commended by Jesus. Unable to reach Jesus by conventional means, "they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus" (5:19). True to form, Jesus supplied what is needed, not just what they wanted, as He said, "Man, thy sins be forgiven thee" (20).

Also, true to form, the Pharisees were critical of Him and declared Him to be blasphemous. They reasoned: "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" And they were right. What they did not want to admit was that the true God was among them, but He demonstrated that immediately. Man looks on the outward appearance, but only God can look into the heart, and when "Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" Both maladies are results of Adam's fall, both are included in redemption, and both are healed by faith in Him. Jesus' next action of physical healing was an outward proof of the inward healing already performed. "But that ye man KNOW that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (He saith unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch and go into thine house" (5:24). He immediately arose up before them and departed to his house, "glorifying God." The whole atmosphere was charged with God's presence as they were amazed, glorified God, and were filled with fear, declaring "we have seen strange things today" (5:26).

"And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him" (5:27-28). What a contrast this is with the thinking of natural man! He would never consider such a man as Levi, one of the despised publicans, to be a disciple of Jesus. Apparently without any "interviews" or other considerations, Jesus said, "Follow Me." Saul of Tarsus was another very unlikely prospect in the eyes of man, but "how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

Matthew does not record that it was he who was the host of the feast which followed, and Mark does not call it a feast, saying only that Jesus sat at meat in his house. Luke emphasizes, once again, fellowship between God and men; and one of the first things which we learn is that we may have been called into service by Jesus, but fellowship with Him must be a top priority. It was on this festive occasion that the Pharisees confronted Jesus with their perception of His wrong doing. Both Matthew and Mark record that they accused Jesus of eating with publicans and sinners. In Luke's account, the disciples were also accused as the Pharisees "murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?"

Luke's Gospel not only presents the glorious benefits and blessings of fellowship, but also the consequences of being identified with Christ. The accusations hurled against Him are also leveled against those who follow Him. It is the same today, as we go forth "unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:13). Upon hearing these remarks, Jesus answers His critics, declaring, "They that be whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (5:30-31).

In one all-conclusive statement, Jesus gave the glorious provisions of redemption and a scathing rebuke to the Pharisees. The "whole" and the, "righteous" refer to the Pharisees, who were so full of themselves and their own human righteousness, that they did not need Him. The "sick" and the "unrighteous" were those despised publicans and sinners, who realized their condition and gladly received His offer of grace. Jesus set forth a wonderful example for us. Never does He excuse the conduct of those who are "sick," but neither does He alienate them. We should have this same attitude to those to whom we minister. We will never win sinners if we destroy them with proud actions and attitudes.

Stunned by His words, the Pharisees pursued another avenue of fault finding. "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayer, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?" (33). Their questions present two of the many negative characteristics and tactics of law keepers. One is the obsession with outward appearances, which ignores the inward character. Two is comparison with others. The law keeper does not measure himself by the Word of God, but by other people. This accusation against the disciples is really one against Jesus, for not being able to "keep them in line."

Jesus' answer is simple: "Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" Jesus was present and took care of all their needs, so it was a time to feast and rejoice. When Jesus would be taken from them, then it would be a time for exercising real faith; thus a time of fasting and prayer.

At this juncture, as was so often the case, the Great Master gave His critics more than they bargained for. He presented a parable to introduce the truth of the two creations, which truth He later unfolded fully to the Apostle Paul, for the Church. "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old" (5:36). The Pharisees were trying desperately to "patch up" the old garment with all their works which could be seen by others. Jesus was telling them, "You need to become a completely new garment, or new creature." Anything short of this only "maketh a rent," or makes the problem more apparent.

"And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the

bottles shall perish" (5:37). The new wine, the power of the Holy Spirit, was poured out on the Day of Pentecost, and can never be contained in the old bottle of the flesh. Only the new creation is made to receive this new and powerful "Wine." The final verse reinforces the large gulf which exists between the flesh and the spirit:

"No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, the old is better" (5:39). The flesh does not even desire the New Wine of the Holy Ghost, let alone receive it. Paul stated it perfectly in Romans 8:17: "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be."

RISEN WITH JESUS

Are you risen with the Savior
Into resurrection power?
Are you now a new creation,
Trusting Jesus every hour?
We may live in glorious newness,
By a new and living Way;
Find in Him eternal dawning
Of an everlasting day.
Every morning His new mercies
Wake our hearts to new refrain;
His salvation is sufficient
For life's sunshine or its rain.
Let us not, 'mid old surroundings,

Live old habits and old ways;
But in His renewing presence,
Ever sing new songs of praise --
Ever think new thoughts inspiring,
Ever speak new words of truth;
Ever look above to Jesus,
Source of everlasting youth.

--Carlan S. Messler

Chapter Six

Lord of the Sabbath

"And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that He went through the corn fields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days" (6:1-2).

From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was criticized for every thing that He did. According to the Pharisees, either He, or His disciples were always in error. In our present chapter, they denounced Him twice for violating the sabbath. Evidently they thought that the disciples' act of plucking the corn and rubbing it between their hands, constituted working, which, indeed, was forbidden by the law. Numbers 15:32-36 tells us of such an act, which resulted in the man's death. Further analysis of the chapter shows that this man was picking up sticks presumptuously, in rebellion.

"And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungred, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shewbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?" (6:3-4). Jesus' answer in these verses is yet another example of how the law was set aside by Divine Grace, as David and his men were given shewbread to eat, though the law forbid anyone but a priest to partake of it. "And He said unto them, that the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (6:5).

The sabbath was ordained as a day of rest, and speaks of the perfect rest that we have in Christ. He is the Lord of Rest, and was trying earnestly to show these people that His ministry superceded the rigorous requirements of the law. He had come to give His rest to them all. The statement, "And it came to pass on another sabbath," is significant, because throughout Jesus' ministry, it seems that the sabbath was the day on which He demonstrated His great power in delivering humanity.

Our present text is no exception as He came to the synagogue and found "a man whose right hand was withered" (6:6). True to form, the Pharisees critically watched Him to see if He would heal the man, or "work" on the sabbath day. They said nothing, but the Master knew their thoughts, and said to the needy man: "Rise up, and stand forth in the midst." God does not do things secretly. Before continuing, Jesus asked the Pharisees, "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?" He demonstrated that, without a doubt, He was the Lord of the Sabbath of Rest, as He delivered this poor fellow from bondage. "His hand was restored, whole as the other." (6:7-10)

One would think that there would have been an atmosphere of awe, of glory and praise to God, but that is not what we read. Instead, "they were filled with madness (stupidity, rage, folly), and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (6:11). Jesus' next act is an example which we also do well to follow after such tremendous criticism for doing the will of God. It is also in keeping with Luke's presentation of Jesus, the Man, as "He went out into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (6:12).

"And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles" (6:13). From this verse and other texts, we learn that Jesus had many disciples or "learners," but of this number, only twelve were specifically chosen as apostles. They are named in verses 14-16. John's Gospel informs us that Andrew and one other apostle were formerly disciples of John the baptist (John 1:37- 40). According to this record, Andrew introduced his brother, Simon, to Jesus, who immediately changed his name to Cephas, or Peter. This is an interesting play on words. Simon means "hearing," and speaks of the fact that our ears must be tuned to Him in order for us to be changed to "Peter," a rock or stone. Peter comments later on this in his own epistle, as he wrote, "Ye also, as lively (living) stones are built up a

spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:4). Judas, the traitor, was also named among these chosen twelve. "And He came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed" (6:17-18). The ministry of Jesus continued as He was thronged by the multitudes. It is interesting that their first desire was "to hear Him." After that, the miracles followed in abundance for "the whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue (miraculous power) out of Him, and healed them all" (6:19). Such should be the message we preach today; it should be one which draws men to want to touch HIM; then His virtue can flow out in abundant blessing.

"And He lifted up His eyes on His disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for your's is the Kingdom of God" (6:20). The rest of this chapter is, in part, the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew, who presents Jesus the King and His Kingdom, gives much more detail, because this sermon is actually the Constitution of that new Kingdom. Although these things are spoken of the Kingdom, they contain principles which can only be fulfilled by the new creation, and are thus to be applied in the Church today.

"Blessed are the poor" tells us of all men who must realize and admit their own poor worthless destitute condition long enough to reach out and accept the sufficiency of His grace. "Yours is the Kingdom of God," "Blessed are they that hunger now," are in keeping with Mary's exultation: "He hath filled the hungry with good things" (1:53). God delights in those who are truly hungry for spiritual things. Such hunger is to be NOW.

"Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh." We labor under heavy burdens and they bring forth sorrow and agonizing tears NOW. However, joy cometh in the morning and there will be a time of heavenly laughter.

"Blessed are ye, when man shall hate you ... and shall separate you from their company ... and shall reproach you ... and cast out your name as evil, FOR THE SON OF MAN'S SAKE." This is one true definition of suffering with Christ, and though it is extremely painful at times, We are to consider it a blessing. The attitudes of our enemies toward us, in reality express their feelings towards God. Viewing persecution as a blessing, can only be done by faith, not feeling. "Rejoice ye in that day," that is, the day of reproach and rejection. Not only is it to be considered a blessing, but we are to rejoice and "leap for joy." Such things are absolutely foreign to the natural man, and can only be fulfilled by the new creation life which has been implanted within us. It is only as we take our place in Christ that we can look beyond these things by faith, and know that our "reward is great in heaven." The Master uses the prophets as an example of His words: "for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets." The inference is that these prophets who suffered severely at the hands of unbelievers, have their reward; ours is just as sure.

"But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" (6:24-26). These pronounced woes are in direct contrast to the blessings. They are the rewards of rebellion, and correspond with the words of the Judge to the Laodicean church: "Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods" (Revelation 3:17). This statement reflects the self-sufficient, independent nature of men who will not acknowledge their desperate need, nor bow to the grace of God. The temporal riches of these folks are their only consolation. The day of hunger, mourning, and weeping are coming quickly, and just because "all men speak well of you," does not mean you are right. The accolades of their fathers were given to false prophets, and not to God.

"But I say unto you which hear " (6:27). This is the key to fulfilling all the exhortations and instructions throughout the rest of this chapter. To each of the seven churches addressed in the book of Revelation, Jesus said: "He that hath an ear let him hear." Hearing Him is the only way to be enabled to "love your enemies, do good to them which hate you." The traits of the flesh, recorded here, are matched directly against the characteristics of Christ. Love and goodness must respond to hate. Blessing and prayer are poured forth because of cursing and persecution. To those who would smite your cheek, offer to him the other one also; he would take your cloke, give him the coat that goes with it. Give to the one who asks, and to the one who takes it by force, let him have it. Hebrews 10:34 says it thus: "ye . . . took joyfully the spoiling of your goods knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Only heavenly visions from God's Word to the new creation, can accomplish these attitudes within us. The principle of the Golden Rule is: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (6:31). Jesus enlarges on this thought in the next verse, showing that this new creation life goes above and beyond the rewarding of good for good. "For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."

SECURE IN CHRIST

Secure in Christ, blest Lamb of God
Who died to set me free.
And in His body bore the rod
Designed for you and me.
Secure in Christ, when foes assail
And try to make me doubt.
I'll trust in Him who will not fail,
Nor ever cast me out.
Secure in Christ, not I alone
Can merit one good thing.
No work of mine could e'er atone,
Or satisfaction bring.
Secure in Christ, when days are dark,
And I but dimly see.
Some day to glory I'll embark,
And ever with Him be.
Secure in Christ, 'til I shall stand
Before His shining face;
And ever dwell in that blest land
For all those saved by Grace.
Secure in Christ, Oh Praise His Name,
My song shall ever be.
His blood with power still the same
Gives me security.
-A. J. Staire

Chapter Six

Lord of the Sabbath

Continued

The moral flesh has a tremendous sense of paying debts. It even tries to "pay God" for His blessings, which is a direct insult to His grace. In paying those debts, however, the flesh always expects payment in return. Sinners know nothing of unconditional love, and will only love those who love them in return. They will do good to receive good, and will always lend to others, but always with the demand that the debt be paid. According to Jesus' words here, this is not love. The love of which Jesus speaks, begets goodness, even to your enemies. Love will lend, hoping for nothing in return. Simply stated, this means that Christians are really not to lend money to one another.

There are a number of reasons for this, one of them being Proverbs 22:7: "The borrower is servant to the lender." One Christian is not to be subservient to another because of money, and many good relationships have been broken because of violating this principle. When one cannot pay, there is always guilt. When the lender does not receive his expectation, there is disappointment and frustration. The new creation way is simply to GIVE to him that is in need, with no thought of receiving it back. He is thus entitled to God's promise: "Your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (6:35). Because of this promise, we can "be merciful" and show grace, even as our Father has shown grace to us.

"Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (6:37). Judgment under the law was a way of life, and it was severe. The new order which Jesus introduced, superceded that, and it is certainly foreign to the nature of man. The next few verses connect with this thought and deals with our attitudes and relationships to others. The word judge means "to distinguish, try, punish, avenge," and reflects

an attitude of law and condemnation, rather than grace.

"For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (6:38). The first part of this verse states: "Give and it shall be given unto you," and we might assume that He was speaking only of our material substance. That is not the context of the verse, for Jesus is talking about our attitudes to others throughout this portion of Scripture. If we mete out grace to others, that is the standard of measure that will be returned to us, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom."

If, on the other hand, our attitude is one of condemnation, such will also be returned, as unforgiveness. This thought concerning forgiveness is one part of Jesus' pattern prayer which is often misunderstood. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). This does not mean that God holds grudges, but rather that an unforgiving person cannot enjoy forgiveness, because of his own unforgiving and ungracious attitude. He ultimately bears the weight of guilt himself.

Jesus continued these thoughts with a parable. "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch" (6:39). The absence of light and vision indicates a lack of spiritual revelation, and indicates the letter of the law only. The next verse expresses a loss of the "spirit" of the law: "The disciple is not above his master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his master" (6:40). True disciples will show the spirit of grace, which was also evidenced by Jesus.

The next illustration reveals the result of a judgmental attitude, when grace is not present. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye" (6:41). Not only does a judgmental attitude condemn others, but such a person also has a severe case of near sighted and tunnel vision, whereby he enlarges on the faults of others, instead of turning the spotlight of God's Word on himself. He is oblivious to the beam (a large timber) in his own eye, but makes a great issue of the mote (small splinter) in his brother's eye.

Such people become obsessed with minute detail in the lives of others, using the letter of the law, while they overlook their own greater attitude problems. The remedy is always easy: "Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly" (6:42). A hypocrite is an actor, assuming a character; a stage player, a pretender. It means that such a one is only concerned with outward appearance, trying to appear spiritual by pointing out the faults of others.

This is completely foreign to God's ways. As Job said: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (Job 14:4). God insists on what is genuine. We must first experience the operations of God in our own lives, before we can minister to others. Paul speaks of of this same principle in Galatians 1:15-16: God ... called me by His grace to reveal His Son IN me that I might preach Him among the heathen." A "good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. But every tree is known by his own fruit" (6:43-44).

The good, incorruptible Seed of God's Word must be sown in our hearts in order to produce fruits of righteousness. The more of that Seed sown the greater the harvest will be. The Master illustrates the two creations, declaring that a bush of thorns and brambles will never bring forth the spiritual food of figs and grapes. Try as he might, natural man will never be able to bring any goodness out of the flesh. "A good man out of the good treasure in his heart bringeth forth that which is good" (6:45). That good treasure is the life of Christ (II Corinthians 4:6-7), and is the only life which is capable of producing any of the traits called for in this chapter. It comes forth out of the abundance of the heart, in contrast to the superficial works of man.

Jesus' concluding remarks are also very much related to the practical expression of this new life. "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (6:46). He becomes Lord of our lives, only when we submit to Him. We are creatures of choice, and can yield our members either as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, or yield them unto God as living members of righteousness (Romans 6:13). We must relinquish our wills to Christ, for Him to actually become our Lord.

At the beginning of this discourse, Jesus addressed "You which hear." He closes with the same exhortation: "Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like" (6:47). Doing them is allowing Him to produce the practical results of the Gospel in us. When that happens, we become "like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock." All of this is symbolic of the wonderful place of security which God has given to us in Christ. Not only does it express the assurance of our eternal

destiny, but the deeper we dig into God's Word, the stronger is our foundation whereby we are able to withstand the winds of adversity, and not be carried about with every wind of doctrine and practice.

Paul described it as a giant cube of Divine Love, and prayed earnestly that we might "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Ephesians 3:18). Despite the winds and waves that beat vehemently against that house, it was not shaken, for "it was founded upon a rock."

The last verse refers to the one who hears with his ears, but does not submit to what he hears of the operations of the Gospel. Rather than trust THE ROCK, he trusted in himself, and when the same winds of adversity came, "the ruin of that house was great."

IN JESUS

In Jesus! How safe and secure is the place
That He has provided to save a lost race;
What marvelous, loving, unsearchable grace!
All praise to His wonderful Name.

What matter if winds of adversity blow?
Or billows of trial my soul overflow?

In Jesus no gloom of despair can I know--
To lift me from darkness He came.

E'en though earthly sorrows may compass me round,
My fellows forsake me and trouble abound;

A resting place under His wings I have found--
And He is forever the same.

--Carlan S. Messler

Chapter Seven

"Now when He had ended all His sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, that he was worthy for whom He should do this: for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue" (7:1-5).

Having completed the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus entered Capernaum, and the city lived up to the meaning of its name for this certain centurion -- "village of comfort." The centurion was a Gentile, whose servant was near death. He went through the elders of the Jews to contact Jesus. The elders besought Jesus on the grounds that this man was worthy of something, in return for his love and goodness to the Jews, in that he had built them a synagogue.

The centurion, however, claims no such thing. His words and attitude were a great expression of true humility and faith: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof ... neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed" (7:6-7).

The reason for this man's expression of simple faith, is found in verse eight, and reveals a marvelous truth concerning Christ. Matthew tells us almost verbatim of this incident, but Luke adds one little word which speaks volumes: "For I ALSO am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth . . ." (7:8).

The centurion speaks as one man under authority to another Man also under authority. While Matthew portrays the King invested with such authority, Luke describes the Man under authority to His Father. It is such submission that GAVE Him authority, and the centurion knew that principle by experience. His faith sprang into action, as he said, "But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." He knew that the authority of Jesus would back him up, even as the Roman government affected his own authority.

"When Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed Him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (7:9). The principle of faith is: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). The centurion followed this principle of faith, and the messengers who came to Jesus "found the servant whole that had been sick" (7:10). God will demonstrate such power and results to those who willingly submit to the authority over them.

"Now it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people" (7:11). Nain, meaning both "afflicted," and "beautiful," lived up to its name, as it was the scene of Jesus' next miracle. As we see in so many cases, God used a dark background to set forth the beauty of His power and grace. A widow endured a great "affliction" here, as her only son had died and was being carried forth without the city. The "beauty" of Nain was revealed when: "the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her."

Unlike the previous miracle, there were no requests for His services. The need of this woman touched His heart of compassion and He immediately spoke these marvelous words of comfort -- "Weep not" -- words which have soothed troubled hearts through the years. Jesus' words were not only words of consolation for this grieving mother, but were founded upon a great demonstration of power about to be unleashed. Jesus said in John 6:63: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." He proves it literally, saying, "Young man . . . arise!" With that command, "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak."

We can only imagine the great joy of this bereaved woman when "He delivered him to his mother" (7:15). Fear came upon those who witnessed this mighty feat, "and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited ('select, go to see, to relieve') His people" (7:16). Regardless of where He went, Jesus left witness both in word and deed, that He was the Son of God, who had come to minister to those in such great distress. This incident is referred to as a "rumor," a disputation of words, rather than an established fact; nevertheless, it was published "throughout all the region round about" (7:17).

"And the disciples of John showed him all these things. And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?" (7:18-19). The answer to their inquiry came in works rather than words, for "in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight" (7:21). "Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me" (7:22-23).

These statements undoubtedly were an encouragement to John the baptist. He had faithfully declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God, "which taketh away the sin of the world." He had received the witness of the Holy Ghost, descending upon Jesus, in the form of a dove. Now he was in prison, and Israel had not experienced the deliverance which they expected and hoped for. This message to John conveys the truth that God's ways are not man's ways. These mighty miracles indicate that deliverance had arrived, but full freedom must come in God's way. John was exhorted not to be ashamed nor offended because of the lowly way which Jesus must go, to obtain a complete victory for all.

"And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" (7:24). The next few verses are a description of both John and Jesus, their respective ministries and the response of the people to each of them. John had evidently been criticized for his rather rough manner among them, thus the question, "did you go out to see a reed shaken in the wind?" The reed is symbolic of weakness, and such did not characterize John. Neither was he "a man clothed in soft raiment," indicative of the life of a king, one of wealth and ease. John was a prophet and much more. His ministry was to prepare the way for Christ, and despite his lowly mien, Jesus said, "Among those born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the baptist." John's race was over, and now, "He that is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." That "least" one is Jesus Himself.

"And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John" (7:29). Jesus' words always brought a response of some kind. Here, both acceptance and rejection are manifest. Those in need, like the publicans, were baptized with the John's baptism unto repentance, "but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (7:30).

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept" (7:31-32). This was their general attitude toward John. He refused to "dance to their tune." He did not bend to their ways and join in their merriment, as is evidenced by verse 33: "For

John the baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil." On the other hand, referring to Jesus, they said: "We have mourned to you and ye have not wept." Jesus seemed to be the opposite of John, as we read, "The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (7:34). At least, the last part was right. Jesus constantly befriended and ministered to those in need, but, like John, He did not conform to the mold of expectation cast by these religionists. "But wisdom is justified of all her children," and though John and Jesus were different, both were justified before God in their respective ministries. Both accomplished exactly what they were called to do, in spite of the opinions of men.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat" (7:36). The Son of man came eating and drinking, and some of that fellowship was with His chief critics, the Pharisees. We are not told why the invitation was extended, but Jesus accepted. The events of this segment in our chapter are not to be confused with those which were accomplished just prior to Jesus' death, namely, His anointing with the alabaster box of ointment. The other Gospel Writers record that event, but John, alone, identifies her as Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet. This woman is unidentified, the only point of distinction being that she "was a sinner" (7:37). She "stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment" (7:38). Humility, brokenness, and dependence, are elements of a true need. The hair, used to wipe His feet, is a symbol of weakness and tells of those who minister to the Lord BECAUSE of weakness, not in spite of it. She expressed her love for Him by kissing His feet, and the ointment speaks of Divine worship, and brings forth a gloriously sweet fragrance.

"Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, this man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner" (7:39). These words express a spirit of doubt and judgment. He doubts Jesus' claim as a Prophet of God, for he reasons that Jesus should have known the despicable condition of this woman and would not have allowed this act to take place. However, Jesus proves that He is The Prophet of God, for though Simon only spoke within himself, Jesus could look on his heart and know the hidden intents.

Jesus said unto him: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee" (7:40). Simon addressed Him only as "Master" (instructor, teacher), but was curious enough to listen to Him. The parable which Jesus relates, is peculiar only to Luke, and expresses the benefits of the peace offering, which comes to us only as we apprehend the truths of Divine Grace. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" (7:41-42).

The Creditor is God; the debtor, all men. Although one man was far more in debt than the other, it speaks of a sinner's comprehension of his offense against God. In reality, all of us are hopelessly in debt with nothing to pay, but everyone does not realize that. Because of His grace, He frankly forgave them both. Simon's answer, "he, to whom he forgave most," is the correct one, and such is the response of those who have admitted their deplorable condition from which He has delivered them. Simon witnessed in this woman a practical example of James 2:28: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

This woman's tremendous revelation and appreciation of sovereign grace brought forth a response to Jesus, which was in direct contrast to Simon's treatment of Him. "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" (7:44-46). Simon had overlooked the very basics of hospitality, but because of her great love, this fallen woman offered to Him a true spirit of humility and sacrifice, and ministered to His Spirit.

"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" (7:47). This same principle prevails today. When men do not realize their sins, which are many, they cannot appreciate the wonder and power of the grace of God, and are unable to shower upon Him the love which this woman bestowed. At this juncture, He said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven." Immediately, others sitting at the table,

questioned within themselves: "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" These thoughts did not draw a response from Jesus. Instead He said to the woman: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." True to Luke's theme throughout this book, she receives the glorious blessings of peace. Let us note carefully, however, Jesus' words: "THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE." The tears, kisses, and ointments were wonderful outward expressions of love, and were produced by her deep, inward faith in His glorious grace.

There is a power of selfishness,
The proud and willful "I",
And if my life would helpful be,
That proud old self must die.

Chapter Eight

The Peace Offering Illustrated

"And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance." (8:1-3)

In this chapter, Jesus continues His ministry of the Grace Message, both in word and deed. Luke informs us that in addition to the twelve who were called, there were others who traveled with Him and shared with Him of their substance. In addition to those who had been healed and delivered, such as Mary Magdalene, there were some in "high places," as Joanna. This shows the expanded realm of fellowship provided through Christ as the Peace Offering.

The Parable of the Sower (verses 4-15) is expounded upon as Jesus ministered to many people who came to Him out of every city. Matthew 13 lists seven parables, including this one, which outline God's overall purposes for Jesus and His Kingdom. They inform us of His dealings with the Church during this age, continuing through the tribulation period, and on to the consummation of His dealings with the nation Israel.

Luke writes about the Sower only, which enlarges on the benefits of the Peace Offering, especially during this present Church Age. While the Parable of the Sower speaks most emphatically concerning salvation, the principles found herein apply to any truth in God's Word. Jesus informs us that the Seed is the Word of God (8:11). Unlike many today who choose very carefully the direction of their sowing, the Heavenly Sower broadcasts it everywhere during this age. It comes to rest in four separate areas.

Some seed fell by the wayside and was devoured by fowls. Some fell upon a rock, and having no root, withered away. Some fell among thorns only to be choked. The rest fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit (8:5-8). The seed which fell by the wayside is interpreted as "they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." This refers to all those today who hear the Gospel as it is made available in a multitude of ways. It is published in the printed page, over the radio and television, through music, by personal witness, as well as in practical deeds.

People are without excuse, as to hearing the Message, but when the Gospel falls on hearts of stone, it is trodden upon by all the humanistic and rebellious ideas of man. Satan takes it away, and it never has a chance to spring into life in the hearts of those who have heard.

Seed which fell on the rocky places picture those who hear and "receive the Word with joy: and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (8:13). This pictures those who become emotionally involved with the Gospel, as they would with any other cause of mankind. Their hearts, however, are rocky hard, and there is no real penetration of the Seed. They are only professing believers, with a counterfeit of the true joy of the Lord, and have no root springing into everlasting life.

The third group experience is explained in verse 14, as those who are "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring NO FRUIT UNTO PERFECTION." Unlike the first two groups where the Seed is devoured and withered, these people are true believers, but they are carnal. There is life, but no fruitfulness, because their priorities are upon the things of the world, rather than in cultivating the Seed of God's Word.

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the

Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (8:15). This "good" ground has five distinct characteristics. One: the good ground means an honest heart. It speaks of one who is honest before the Lord, willing to admit a deep spiritual need, and wanting the very best the Word has to offer. Two: It is a good heart, or a heart broken and pliable before the Lord, that it might receive all the Seed offered. Three: It is a heart which "heard the Word," referring to those, like Mary, who have a ravenous appetite, and are willing to sit at His feet and learn of Him. Four : Those who receive the Seed, keep it. These people are not only hearers of the Word, but doers also (James 1:22-23). They will hear many things while sitting at Jesus' feet, and they will be sweet to the taste. There are some very grievous things to be borne, those which hurt the flesh deeply, but these also must be kept in order for it to be good ground. Five: The final plateau to be reached is to "bring forth fruit with patience." A genuine spiritual harvest is brought forth by the Seed sown in a heart of faith. This fruit refers to what we are, as a result of its growth, rather than of works which we may do.

"And the disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be?" (8:9). The disciples were in a quandary as to what this parable meant. Some have thought that Jesus used parables to simplify His teachings, so that they could be understood easily. This proves to be contrary to Scripture, as is evidenced by the apostles ignorance. "And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand" (8:10).

The parables are actually a hidden code to be understood only by he "that hath ears to hear." They express spiritual mysteries, whereby God separates the true from the false; faith from unbelief. Much of the Word of God is in mystery form, and only they who are truly dedicated to spiritual things, even among believers, can understand them.

The principles in the Parable of the Sower apply to any truth in Scripture, not just for salvation. Some people heartily accept the teaching of salvation by Grace, and are born again, but emphatically reject the teaching of being filled with the Holy Spirit as a separate experience. Thus, that particular truth is either "devoured by the enemy," or withered away for "lack of moisture." These believers do not come to fruition in all Scripture; but as long as the hearing ear is present, God will continue to reveal the deepest mysteries of His Word to us.

"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light" (8:16). The Parable of the Sower describes God's Word as Seed bringing forth fruit. Jesus now uses the analogy of a candle to portray the Gospel as light revealed in the lives of His people. The light has reference to His words: "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad" (8:17).

This verse has been used as a hammer of condemnation which strikes fear in the guilty heart. It is interpreted to mean that God will eventually bring out every sin which one has committed for all the world to see. As we compare this message with Matthew's Gospel, however, we find that the secret things are those by which the Pharisees would try to intimidate them. "Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27). The Master is encouraging His disciples to be bold in their testimony despite all the hidden devices and lies which the Pharisees were using against them. He assured them that such plans would come to light.

Furthermore, these times of darkness were to be times of revelation for them, as He said, "What I tell you in darkness . . ." The exhortation in Luke 8:18 applies: "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." The ear is alluded to again, and to the one who will hear, the mysteries of the Word will be freely revealed. If one does not have an ear to hear, even the opportunity, (that which he seems or thinks he has), shall be removed. God freely offers His revelations of Truth to all, but He will not force these things on those who refuse Him.

"Then came to Him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told Him by certain which said, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the Word of God and do it" (8:19-21). There is no Scripture in which Jesus denounced His natural family, but at this place we do find that He emphasized that the relationship built upon spiritual things is stronger. Luke does not tell whether His family gained an audience with Him or not, and

some people might interpret Jesus' actions as being rude and unfeeling. He is making the point that only those who yield themselves to God and His Word, are ever going to come into the deep family relationship with Himself. Many have found it so over the years. Perhaps His natural family were not inclined to listen to His preaching, but only wanted to see Him for natural reasons. We are not to be disrespectful and alienate our natural families, even though they do not share our interests. Neither can we find the same deep bond with them that we find with those who dedicate themselves to hearing God's Word, and letting that Word work in their lives.

GOD IS THERE

When cherished hopes all crumble
And prospects fade, or fall;
Once sure feet slip and stumble,
Still God rules over all.
He lifts the heart of sorrow,
And wipes our tears away --
He sees the glad tomorrow
Beyond the sad today.
All things are for a reason --
Though set-backs pain us now,
They last but for a season.
For God will not allow
His loved ones to be tested
Far more than they can bear
In faith and trust be rested
Where you are, God is there.
--Frank Roberts

FUNERAL SERVICE

There will be a funeral service for Mr. Neglect. He starved himself by staying away from church, and by leaving his Bible on the shelf to collect dust. He passed away very gradually, almost unnoticed. Some of his friends will be his pallbearers: "Don't Care," "Company Coming," "No Time," "Too Tired," "Overslept," "Went Fishing." Honorary pallbearers: "Worked Overtime," "Don't Like the Preacher," and "Mr. Unconcerned."

Chapter Eight, continued

"Now it came to pass on a certain day, that He went into a ship with His disciples: and He said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth." (8:22) The following events reveal Jesus as God and Man. His purpose in crossing the lake to the other side was His human need for sleep. When the storm came, they were in jeopardy because the boat was filling with water. "And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then He arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased and there was a calm" (8:24)

In His mastery over the elements, we see His Divine Authority, but with the added revelation that such things were also possible to them if they had faith. "And He said unto them, Where is your faith?" We can appreciate their wonder as they asked, "What manner of man is this! for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him." We have these same feelings when He silences many of the winds of adversity in our lives.

"And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee" (8:26). This incident is also recorded in Matthew and Mark's Gospels, but far more detail and intimacy is found in Luke's account. Matthew emphatically emphasizes the power and sovereignty of the King, and Jesus is seen as speaking more to the demons than to the one possessed of them (Matthew 8). Mark brings the ministering Servant closer to us, as we read of the man "sitting and clothed in his right mind" (Mark 5:15).

Luke gives more of the original background, so that the magnitude of this miracle can be fully appreciated. This event expresses what God has done for us in the spiritual realm. This man was indeed inhabited of the demons, and though this does not mean that all sinners are possessed, it does express that all unregenerate men are by nature "Children of wrath," and are influenced by the god of this world (Ephesians 2:3). The bondage of the devil can only be broken by Jesus.

Just as this man, possessed with a legion of evil spirits, wore no clothes, so humanity is without a clothing of righteousness. Living in tombs rather than in a house, is figurative of the fact that he was surrounded by death, and totally separated from God. Destruction and misery were his constant companions as "he was kept bound with chains and in fetters."

Man may try to curb ungodly behavior with laws and restrictions, such bands are constantly broken, and his wickedness continues unabated as the poor helpless victim is "driven of the devil into the wilderness." Today's "wilderness" includes drugs, alcohol, immorality, violence, and other unmentionable vices, whereby the victims are completely under the influence of the enemy. There is hope for this helpless creature, even as we see here. Jesus takes an interest as He says, "What is thy name?" He will also inquire into the exact miseries of our lives that He might remedy the situation. It is seen here, as in Matthew, a temporary compromise is reached, and the demons are permitted to enter the swine, rather than "into the deep." Such an end is going to transpire for them, but it is not the time.

"When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country" (8:34). Of course these events were published, but certainly not in gratitude for Jesus and this miracle of healing. Economics was undoubtedly a major concern to them as all the swine were lost. Thus the "Miracle Worker" was asked to depart from them. The result of His presence among them, however, could not be denied, for when they came out to see what was done, they found the "man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind" (8:35).

These same results are common to all who come to Him today. Not only is one delivered from the fetters and tombs of death, which heretofore surrounded him, but he can also be found "sitting at the feet of Jesus." We marvel at the inspiration of the Scriptures, for it is only Luke who depicts the great intimacy associated with the peace offering. Matthew mentions nothing of this scene, and while Mark tells us that he was clothed and in his right mind, only Luke tells that he was sitting at Jesus' feet. This is a very select place of love and revelation, which some have found. The new clothing speaks of the righteousness of Christ, while being in his "right mind" means he has the mind of Christ.

Jesus never forced Himself on others, and willingly "went up into the ship and returned back again" (8:37). The results of this great miracle was not over, however, and only Luke records the complete story. "Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him" (8:38-39). What a marvelous pattern of witnessing! Jesus instructed him to return to his own house and tell firsthand what had happened in his life. Our personal testimony will also be effective if we can speak from personal experience. This man went beyond his own house, and published his story throughout the whole city. The results of the peace offering can be seen again, as we read, "When Jesus was returned, the people gladly received Him: for they were all waiting for Him" (8:40). What a testimony of a man's obedience to Jesus, and his effective testimony!

"And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought Him that He would come into his house: for he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as He went the people thronged Him" (8:41-42). Jesus was sought out constantly by those who needed a miracle. As He was going to Jairus' house, many people crowded around Him. In this multitude, was a woman with a desperate need, and having faith, she quietly (and, she thought, secretly) reached out to touch Him. She had been hemorrhaging for twelve years, and had spent all her living upon physicians, but was not better. She is typical of people today whose "life blood" is ebbing away, and there is nothing in the world to stop it.

Quiet, simple faith is never denied, as she "came behind Him and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd" (8:44). When relating this incident, as in the previous one, Matthew omits the exchange of words between Jesus and this woman of faith. Jesus' question, "Who touched me?" seems to be rather foolish to the disciples, in view of the fact that multitudes pressed around Him. He asserted, however, that "somebody hath touched Me." The touch of faith is far different from the jostling and shoving of the crowd, as He replied, "I perceive that virtue (strength) is gone out of me" (8:46).

The power of God cannot resist the touch of faith, but there is more in store for this woman. How

often we come short, setting our sights only on one thing. Jesus wanted to call this woman into a deeper relationship with Himself, and she responded. "She came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately" (8:47). Faith can have many faces, and sometimes it may seem bold and demanding. This woman, however, came to Jesus, trembling, and prostrated herself at His feet. She was totally broken and dependent on Him, rather than demanding that her faith must be rewarded. She also declared the greatness of His power. "And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (8:48). Pure, simple, quiet, unadulterated faith had brought healing to her body and peace to her soul.

While this exchange took place, one came from Jairus' house, telling Jesus not to waste His time, as the child had died. "But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole" (8:50). The darkest background reveals the brightest light of God's power and grace. Taking Peter, James, and John, along with the parents of this maiden, Jesus entered into another atmosphere of death and unbelief. He insisted that the damsel was only asleep, but so strong was the opposition to such faith, that He was forced to remove everyone except those who came with Him.

Taking her by the hand, the simple, but powerful words, "Maid, arise," were sufficient. "Her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and He commanded to give her meat" (8:55). Death to Jesus is only a sleep, or a temporary state. He is the Conqueror of death because of Calvary. Her parents were astonished, but "He charged them that they should tell no man what was done." How different are the ways of man! If such a thing were to happen today, it would become sensationalism. Jesus gave this same charge to others, for different reasons, but one of them is that He wants our faith to stand in the Word of God, rather than in great miracles.

Chapter Nine

Making Preparations to Depart

"Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (9:1-2). Heretofore in our study we have seen Jesus ministering almost exclusively, but in this chapter there is a decided change. The twelve are sent forth to accomplish the same things which He had been doing. They were given authority over demons and diseases, and in verse two, the same order of business is given, which the Master followed from the beginning of His ministry: "Preach the Kingdom of God, and heal the sick." This order is repeated a number of times in our present chapter, and shows that the primary emphasis of any Scriptural ministry must be proclaiming God's Word.

As they were sent forth, the disciples were to "take nothing for your journey" (9:3). They were allowed to take no staves (clubs for self-defense), neither bread, nor money, nor an extra coat. This is in contrast to His directive in Chapter 22, the reason undoubtedly being that at this present time, Israel had not uniformly rejected Him. He was not yet "reckoned among the transgressors" (22:37). The disciples were to be hosted by those to whom they ministered -- "whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart" (9:4). If any would not receive them, they were to shake off the dust of their feet as a testimony against them.

"And they departed, and went through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing every where" (9:6). They followed the order given earlier. We are not given any specifics of their ministry at this time, but we do learn that the ministry of Jesus had definitely captured the attention of Herod. "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead" (9:7). Others were convinced that Elijah had appeared, while still others entertained the thought that one of the prophets was risen again. Herod desired to see Jesus, but as far as the record, no such meeting took place until after Jesus was arrested (23:8).

When the apostles returned, Jesus took them aside into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. The meaning of Bethsaida is "house of provision," and though it is a desert place, it tells of our own experience with Christ as He draws us aside from a ministry to restore and refresh us from His vast storehouse of spiritual blessing. This was intended to be a private meeting; however, when the people knew it, they "followed Him, and He received them, and spoke unto them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing" (9:11). The divine order is given again. Next is recorded a great miracle which ministered to the basic needs of the human body. It was late in the afternoon, and the disciples requested Jesus to "send the

multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are in a desert place" (9:12).

Such reasonings are very common to us, but the desert places in our experiences provide the perfect background for His amazing power. We can well understand the wonderment in the hearts of these men as Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat." They looked at the provisions available, and saw only five loaves and two fish, and concluded that this was not enough. "We should go and buy meat for all this people. For there were about five thousand men" (9:13-14). Jesus was not at all anxious about the matter, and He must have conveyed this faith to His disciples, for there was no further appraisal of the situation. Jesus said, "Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so."

These same principles must prevail today, if we are going to partake of His "heavenly meat," and sit down to rest and learn from Him. The loaves of bread speak of Christ, the true Bread from Heaven. The number five indicates the provisions of Divine Grace. The fish, having come out of the waters, tell of Christ being raised out of the waters of death and judgment, to become a feast of resurrection life.

After Jesus blessed these small provisions, He gave to His disciples to distribute, even as we receive such gifts from the Master's hands and distribute them to others. "And they did eat and were filled" (9:17). The result is the same today. God has made full provision for all men, even though all may not avail themselves of this glorious opportunity. Not only so, but so full is the provision that "there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets."

Dispensationally, this mighty miracle portrays the full blessing of the cross for the Church, plus twelve baskets for the twelve tribes of Israel.

"And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples were with Him: and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?" (9:18). More than the other Gospel writers, Luke records Jesus' times of prayer, because He is portrayed as a man. It was during this time of quietness, that He asked His disciples the question to which Herod had alluded earlier. As happened so often, Peter is ready with an answer, "The Christ of God" (9:20). This was the right response, and we might wonder why Jesus would then tell them: "tell no man that thing." His name "Christ" means "anointed," or "Messiah," and before He can enjoy that place, "The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day" (9:22). Israel looked and longed for such a Messiah, but the work of redemption must be accomplished before He can set up that Millennial Kingdom.

We read in another place, "My time is not yet come." According to Matthew, it was at this time that Peter rebuked the Lord for declaring that He must die on the cross (16:21-22). His response to them was: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it" (9:23-24). No only must Jesus suffer before He comes into His glory as the Messiah, but those who follow Him can, and must expect the same thing. Paul wrote in emphatic words, that to be a joint-heir with Christ, we must suffer with Him, "that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). He repeated the message by writing, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; but if we deny Him, He also will deny us" (II Timothy 2:12).

Luke reports the same message: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels" (9:25-26). Some might think that the terms, "lose himself," or "cast away," means hell, but this is not what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus and Paul both tell us that the price of the throne, or sharing in the glory of Christ, is by suffering with Him. Salvation from the destruction of hell is obtained by a simple act of faith. The word "ashamed" means exactly that. It does not carry any connotation of judgment.

Paul enlarges on this subject in I Corinthians 9:27, as he wrote: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." He does not mean that he will be cast into hell, but rather "disapproved" or "disqualified" from winning the race and gaining the Prize, and sharing the glory of Christ.

Jesus reinforces this interpretation as He said, "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God" (9:27). There were some of them who were about to find out what the "glory of God" is all about. Moses, and others down through the years caught such a glimpse, and it was indeed an incentive to live a life of discipline

and denial.

"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening" (9:28-29). His earlier promise was fulfilled to these favored disciples, and they beheld the Christ of Glory. "And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (9:30-31). These two worthies of faith are symbolic of all that was written in the law and the prophets, and they spoke to Him of the Event upon which all of God's purposes and promises hinged. He had spoken of it earlier in this chapter, and now these two men confirm that He must fulfill all that was written of Him.

It seems that the three had "dozed off," but when they awoke, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him. We can only imagine what a jolt they must have felt as they emerged from their slumber to find themselves in the midst of such a charged atmosphere! According to verse 33, by the time impetuous Peter began to speak, both Moses and Elijah had departed. He said unto Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here: let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: NOT KNOWING WHAT HE SAID." Like some today, Peter unknowingly put the law and the prophets on a par with Jesus.

Because of this, a cloud overshadowed them and "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear Him" (9:34-35). That message is for us today. The law and prophets had their place, but they were but forerunners, pointing out the way to Jesus. He, alone, must occupy center stage on God's program. In former times, God spoke by the prophets, but He "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

"And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen" (9:36). They had literally seen the Messiah, but were obedient to Jesus' request to "tell no man."

"And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him" (9:37). Jesus' journey now takes Him from the Mountain of Glory down into the valley of corruption and misery. He is immediately confronted with some of Satan's most despicable handiwork. A man, whose only child was demon possessed, besought Jesus to look upon his son. The disciples had first been entreated, but were unable to cast the demon out. "And Jesus answering said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you?" (9:41).

Jesus' words are somewhat akin to those of other great leaders, like Moses, Joshua, and later, Paul. They all knew when the time of their departure was near. His own departure was undoubtedly uppermost in Jesus' mind at this time, and He knew that much overcoming and believing God must be done after He was gone. Satan was no match for Jesus, as He "rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father" (9:42).

"And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (9:43-44). He emphasizes again His words rather than His works. Jesus did not want the mighty miracles to blind them to reality, and it seems that He went to great lengths to condition them for His deliverance into the hands of men. "But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask Him of that saying." Such fears also befall us before we grow into a place of genuine intimacy with Him. John did come to such a place later on, for he was not fearful to ask Jesus pointed questions at the last supper.

"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest" (9:46). It is evident that the disciples did not grasp the gravity of those things concerning Jesus. Perhaps the three who were on the Mount of Transfiguration were still reveling in the afterglow of that experience, and did not realize the price of having such a place on the throne. Jesus was beginning to labor under the burden of the cross, as we read later, "He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." Whatever the reason for their insensitivity to His needs at that time, Jesus was very gracious, and seized the moment to declare the Gospel to them.

"And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my Name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth Him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (9:47-

48). This is the theme of the Gospel of Grace. A little child is weak and dependent, and that is the spirit in which we must receive Christ. It goes beyond initial salvation, and must be an attitude which prevails throughout our overcoming experience. It is an attitude just opposite of that exhibited by the disciples. The path to greatness and true humility is through the valley of suffering, a path which Jesus has trod before us.

"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name, and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (9:49-50). Once again, the disciples' thinking did not coincide with Jesus' spirit. Perhaps they were of the opinion that this man would rob Jesus of His glory, and they must defend Him. This reminds us of Joshua in Numbers 11, who would forbid Eldad and Medad to prophesy, because they did not come to the tabernacle as Moses had requested. Moses' response was: "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets."

These same situations arise today, for there are those who may not be in full fellowship with us, or "followeth not with us," but they are declaring what truth they do know. Jesus said, "Let them alone, for he that is not against us is for us." To the degree that one will declare Truth, we can support him, rather than try to destroy what is being built.

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him" (9:51-52). Angels were messengers of His birth. John the baptist was the forerunner of His public ministry. Here, we see other messengers sent before Him as Jesus prepared for His death on the cross. We are not told specifically whether these messengers were His disciples, but are told of their going into a village to make ready for Him.

God's plans are unalterable, and though the Samaritans were given the chance to receive Him, they closed their doors, "because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem" (9:53). He was a man on a mission, and that mission was the redemption of all humanity. His disciples did not understand, and suggested retribution: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elijah did?" (9:54). What a statement from those who shortly before had been unable to deliver a child possessed of the demon! They are rebuked this time for a wrong attitude. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of" (9:55). The time of judgment will come, but now the spirit of grace must prevail, in Jesus, and also in those who follow Him. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (9:56). This is another striking example in Luke's presentation of the peace offering. The Samaritans are representatives of the fact that all the world has rejected Him, but God used that very rejection to carry out His plan of redemption, and allowed Jesus to be put on the cross, and thus provide reconciliation for all.

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (9:57-58). In the midst of this recent rejection, this man's statement would seem to be a welcome oasis in the desert. However, Jesus' words are more of a warning than an encouragement to follow Him, and there is no indication that this man did follow Him. It is very important to realize what is being taught in the final verses of this chapter. Some have applied them to salvation, but there are a number of reasons why that cannot be.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus pleaded with men to believe on Him unto salvation, but here, it seems that He actually tried to dissuade this volunteer. And to another, He said, "Follow Me." The subject here is SERVICE, not salvation. The second individual begins to make excuses: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." Such is not a contingent on being saved, and Jesus said unto him, "let the dead bury their dead: but GO THOU AND PREACH THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (9:60). The Master is not being cold and unfeeling. This man's father was probably not dead, nor even dying. This was his way of putting Jesus off indefinitely. That which is dead, is that which is of the flesh, and we cannot allow such things to interfere with a total dedication to this call for service.

Jesus was confronted with another volunteer, but with this proviso: "Let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God" (9:61-62). The plough is to be used in the "field" for the preaching of the Kingdom of God. Being unfit for the Kingdom of God does not refer to salvation, which is obtained by simple faith in the shed blood of Jesus. It indicates

being disqualified from service, which takes total dedication and a willingness to endure the sufferings and privations mentioned above.

Elisha traveled this same path, as recorded in I Kings 19, when Elijah cast his mantle upon him. His request was simple: "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee" (I Kings 19:20). "Looking back" is not a qualification for service, and Elijah indicated as much when he said, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" While not being impudent or rebellious against his parents, or shirking his God-given responsibilities at home, Elisha burned his bridges behind him as he "took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

Elisha proved himself "fit" to follow the Lord, and his ministry proved it. Jesus, likewise looks for those who are willing to forsake all, and be totally used for the Gospel's sake. We shall see in the next chapter, 70 disciples who were willing to accept the challenge.

VESSELS

Vessels of clay within the Potter's hands;
Some comeforth, hardened, vessels of wrath
Through unbelief, for their righteousness is of the law at killeth.
Other vessels of mercy filled with lovingkindness,
Faith which worketh by love;
Molded into vessels of honor and glory.
One vessel, chosen out before the world began
To be holy and without blame before Him in love,
Called Woman because she is taken out of Man.
"This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,
For this cause shall Man leave father and mother
And cleave unto His wife.

Rejoice! The marriage of the Lamb is come
And His Wife hath made herself ready!"

--Lillian Gruver

Chapter 10

Enlarging the Scope of the Peace Offering

"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place, whither He Himself would come" (10:1). The Lord of harvest steps up His efforts to present Himself to those in need, as seventy disciples were sent forth, in addition to the twelve of chapter 9. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and could not be deterred from being on His Father's appointed schedule. This appointment of the seventy, perhaps suggests the entire nation which will go forth to complete the ministry started by the remnant during the tribulation period.

These who were chosen went forth in pairs, two being God's number of witness, and Israel will be God's national witnesses during the Millennium. It is interesting to note that Matthew and Mark record the twelve being sent out, but only Luke writes of this company. In Matthew's record, those who were sent out are strictly forbidden to go into "the way of the Gentiles, and into any of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6). This is all most fitting, for Matthew records the King and His Kingdom presented to Israel, who are viewed as being under the stringent demands of the trespass offering. Luke's presentation of a Man among men, shows that the blessings of the Peace Offering are extended to all men, not just Israel.

"Therefore said He unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest" (10:2). They were also sent forth as "lambs among wolves," meaning that they were truly a fragile, defenseless lot, and must depend entirely upon Him. The instructions given to them concerning provisions for the way (verse 4), are the same as for the 12 sent out earlier.

Their message is one of Peace, "If the Son of Peace be there," or if it be received. It is quickly rescinded, or "shall turn to you again," if it is rejected (10:5). This is the principle in all the Word of God. It will have an effect, whether it is believed or not. Isaiah declares: "It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please" (55:11). Men cannot remain neutral, and as

noted in this chapter, their potential blessing is turned to condemnation and judgment. The disciples were told next to remain in the house which received them, "eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire" (10:7). This is in perfect agreement with Paul's message that those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. They were not to go "house to house," as though they were looking for greener and more lucrative pastures. Their mission was not to live lavishly, but to present the Gospel and believe God to minister to their own needs. "And heal the sick that are therein" (10:9). The Message of Peace had already been proclaimed, now healing is ministered, following the same order we have noted throughout Jesus' ministry. Men are abundantly blessed when they receive this Message, "but into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be sure of this that the Kingdom of God is come night unto you" (10:10-11). The way of escape from destruction was offered to the people, and they were without excuse. God's Word will not return void, and the more of that Message that is preached, the more men are responsible for, as these next verses indicate. "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes" (10:12-13). Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon were Gentile cities which did not have access to the Truth which was not being declared in the cities of Israel, and thus He would be more tolerable, or lenient on them at the judgment. Capernaum was singled out next as deserving severe judgment: "For thou . . . art exalted to heaven" (10:15). Jesus had dwelt for a time in Capernaum, (Matthew 4:13), and having witnessed this Heavenly Gift among them, they were indeed exalted to heaven. Because they rejected that great opportunity, however, they would be "thrust down to hell." "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name" (10:16-17). We can only imagine the great ecstasy these ministers felt as they returned and began to recount the glorious results of their ministry. Their ministry was effective because of the result of Jesus' own ministry, as He said unto them, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (10:18). This event has not yet taken place; Satan will not actually be cast out of heaven until during the tribulation period (Revelation 9:1; 12:9). Today, he is still called "the prince of the power of the air, and the god of this world." However, the basis for his fall was laid at Calvary, as Jesus bruised his head, and cried triumphantly, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

The vision in our chapter is as good as done, for He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. His promise to both the disciples and to us, because of that great victory, is "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (10:19). This is a similar promise to that of Mark 16, and refers to the complete victory over sin and Satan. Faith is the requirement, as we read in Mark 16:17: "These signs shall follow them that believe." To the degree that men believe the Gospel, nothing shall by any means hurt them. When one believes on Jesus unto salvation, he is forever delivered from the hurt of eternal destruction.

This principle, however, works even beyond that. Many of the early apostles suffered severe physical pain and hurt, some even being martyred. Others who were beaten and imprisoned, went their way rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name. None of them suffered eternal loss; quite the contrary, for Paul later exulted: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

"Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (10:20). Even as in the Church today, Jesus knew that the disciples could become occupied with outward signs and wonders, rather than the eternal riches of Calvary. When Jesus said, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven," He was talking about much more than initial salvation. He was speaking of the fact that as the sons of God we are entitled to all the provisions of our heavenly Father. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (10:21). The word "rejoice" means to "jump for joy," and Jesus' exultation was

because God had revealed "these things" unto babes.

The things of which He spoke, cannot mean their victory over demons, for He had also said, "in this rejoice not." He was talking about the glorious provisions available to them as sons. God hides these things from the wise and prudent, because they cannot be searched out by natural man. They are revealed to them who have the dependent attitude of a baby, one that is shut up completely to the grace of God, with no claims of his own.

"All these things are delivered to me of my Father." After His resurrection, Jesus said, "I go to my Father and your Father." John 16:15 declares: "All things that the father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He (the Holy Ghost) shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The Apostle Paul spoke of these "all things" in Ephesians 1:3, speaking of them as all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. They go beyond tangible things, for they refer also to the knowledge of God -- "And no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him" (10:22). The Son would have us intimately knowledgeable of our Father and His vast storehouse of blessings.

These depths are indicated as Jesus "turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (10:23-24). This does not mean that the prophets and Kings never witnessed God's power over demon forces. Worthies of faith, such as Moses, Elijah, Daniel, to name a few, had most assuredly witnessed such power, but none of them, regardless of their spirituality, were permitted to look into "those things," the glorious provisions which God had made for mature sons of God of the Church Age. This revelation of glory was completely hidden until it was fully disclosed to and through the Apostle Paul (Galatians 1).

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:25). This was an oft repeated scene throughout the Gospels, as those preoccupied with the law, tried to discredit Jesus and His message of Divine Grace. This was not the only time the question concerning eternal life was posed, and it indicates that those so heavily burdened by the demands of the law, had no rest or assurance of their eternal destiny. Deftly answering a question with a question, He put the enquirer on the defensive: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (10:26). He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart ... and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus agreed that this was a proper answer, but still the lawyer was not satisfied. He undoubtedly knew that the love required could not be found in his own sinful heart. Therefore, "he willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" (10:29).

The Master again took control of this adverse situation, and gave His tormentors more than they bargained for, as He preached the essence of the Gospel to them. The parable of the Good Samaritan is found only in Luke, and presents a glorious portrait of the peace offering, which brings God and man together on the basis of a common sacrifice. "A certain man went down from Jerusalem," describes Adam leaving the "foundations of peace," which he enjoyed in the garden of Eden, on his way to Jericho, "the place of fragrance." Jericho depicts the world and the fragrant deceptions of Satan.

It was on such a road that he fell victim to thieves, who stripped him of his raiment, or "robe of human righteousness," wounding him and leaving him half-dead, or under the sentence of death, being dead in trespasses and sins.

The certain priest who chanced to pass, represents the law and all its ritual, and he was forced to pass by on the other side, unable to help and restore life. Next, came the Levite, figurative of the works of the law, and he "looked on him," but he, too, must "pass by on the other side" (10:30-33).

Finally, the Good Samaritan, "as He journeyed, came where he was." This was not a chance meeting, for Jesus was on a mission, ordained of His Father. He condescended to a realm of total corruption and depravity. The fact that this man was a Samaritan is interesting, for the Samaritans were a despised and rejected people. The woman at the well made such a remark to Jesus: "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4). But this is the very burden of the parable. It is the despised, rejected One, who ultimately comes to deliver the very ones who have disdained Him.

There are seven beautiful steps of action seen in these verses, which portray the perfect work of redemption. First, He "came where he was." Second, "He saw him." Jesus knew the dreadful

plight of sinful humanity. Third, "He had compassion on him." This heavenly Minister did not turn from such a despicable sight and pass by on the other side. His heart was filled with a desire to help. Thus, He went to him, willing to get down into the very dust of corruption with this poor, sinful, dying creature, that He might lift him up. He did not stand afar off and tell him, "do your best and I will help you." He accepted him just as he was, in his miserable and helpless condition. His medicines are found in the fifth step as He "bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on His own beast." Jesus stopped the bleeding, as He bound up those deadly sin wounds with His tourniquet of Divine Grace. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). The oil and wine are symbols of the comfort and joy of the Holy Spirit, and setting him on his own beast indicates a complete victory over the "ass" of the old creation. Step six informs us that He brought him to the inn, figurative of the vast store of resources and provisions, found in Paul's Gospel. It was here that He "took care of him," even as we experience the tenderness of His hands today. Finally, "on the morrow when He departed, He took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of Him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (10:35). This tells us that the full price of redemption has been paid at the cross. There will be no payment demanded of this poor fellow. The innkeeper, the Holy Ghost, has full provision now to "take care of him" to a complete recovery.

The question, "who is my neighbor?" was answered with another question, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" Again the lawyer was correct, as he said, "He that showed mercy on him. Then Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (10:37). It is only the new creation that possesses such love and grace, for as the parable indicates, it is the one who has been rejected by others, who returns to help one in need. "Go, and do thou likewise," means that we, too, must minister at our own expense to help others. Moses, Joseph, Jephthah, and others followed this pattern. We cannot make atonement in any way, but these same principles apply to our own attitudes and actions regarding others. "Freely we have received, freely we give."

The final segment of our chapter is freighted with intimacy, as Luke's fellowship offering is found here. It is the story of two sisters, both of whom had great regard for Jesus. The house was owned by Martha, and surely her love for Him was expressed by her hospitality. Her service, however, was not really a labor of love, because she was "cumbered (dragged all around) about by much serving" (10:40). Mary, on the other hand, "sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word." Martha insisted that Jesus agree with her and demand that Mary "help me." This is typical of many laborers today, who have never discovered the way to bring pleasure to Jesus, and benefit themselves. After ministering to the Samaritan woman (John 4:34), Jesus said to His disciples: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." It brought Him greater joy to minister the Word of God to a hungry heart than to feast on a dozen meals. Mary discovered that great secret, as she sat at His feet. She had found that it is imperative to rest from labor, if one is truly going to learn of Him.

We can hear a sigh of exasperation as Jesus said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things" (10:41). She really did not enjoy her service, and though Jesus undoubtedly appreciated her efforts in His behalf, indicates that she had not "chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." This power of choice lies with each individual. He will not force us to cease from all our activities, religious or otherwise, and sit down long enough to learn of Him. The benefits of knowing Him are eternal, and it is no accident that Mary knew more about Jesus' mission and the path which would take Him to the cross, than did any of the others. It was she who "anointed Him before the day of My burying" (John 12:7), and because of it, received His high commendation. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:).

THINK AWHILE

Stop! Think awhile before you take
A step that leads you to forsake
The code you've lived by for so long,
The trusted Word that made you strong,
When you were weak, and did not know
Which way to turn or where to go.

Christ found you then, bemused and lost,
Revealed to you the awful cost
Of Calvary -- so moved your heart
You followed Him, and from the start
You found new hope and lasting peace
This latest setback hurts you so,
But those who follow Christ must know
The sheep He found, He will not leave.
Do not despair -- press on, believe
That He will take you onward, through
Each fiery trial, defend you
From every enemy and harm,
He'll lead you through the storm to calm.
Don't give up now in this last mile.
Stop! Brother, Sister, think awhile.
--Frank Roberts

Chapter 11

Communion in Prayer and Light

"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (11:1). Jesus taught by example, and one area was prayer. The disciples had undoubtedly been with Him many times, while He was communing with His Father, and they, too, wanted to enter into such fellowship. Many themes and books have been written on the subject of prayer, but none is more powerful than the principles of prayer outlined in our chapter. This pattern prayer, often called "The Lord's Prayer," is not something to be repeated verbatim. It represents the attitudes and priorities we should have when we come to Him in prayer.

The first statement is, "When ye pray." It is not "IF," for prayer is not an option. It is imperative that God's people pray. Secondly, we must come to Him as "Our Father." It is a tragedy that many Christians address Him only as "God" or "Lord," or "King." This indicates that these folks have never had a divine revelation of the Fatherhood of God, but they view Him as some far off Entity with whom they are not intimately acquainted. They do not enter into a Father-son relationship, that Jesus enjoyed.

"Our Father WHICH ART IN HEAVEN," is not meant to teach that He is so far off that He cannot deal with our situation, but rather indicates that He is the Master of the universe, in absolute control of everything, including Satan, the prince of the power of the air. Nothing in heaven or earth escapes His watchful eye.

"Hallowed by Thy Name," tells us that seeking His glory must be paramount in our petitions. Prayer is not just a matter of asking for everything which we may desire. One of the first principles of prayer is worship. God created us to worship Him, and as we grow spiritually, we become very much aware of the fact that the difficulties which we face, are ultimately designed to bring honor to Him.

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," is similar to the previous statement. This reflects an attitude which must prevail in our experience. Some people would try to persuade us that if we have enough faith, we can "twist God's arm" to do everything we want, but the Scripture says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Many prayers are not answered because they are contrary to the will of God. We are prone to pray for a "quick" deliverance, but God's will which brings greater glory to Him and greater spiritual good for us, must be paramount. If we would be spiritual, we must learn to pray, "Thy will be done."

"Give us this day our daily bread," indicates that we pray out of need, and not simply from personal desire. God has promised to meet our "needs," but certainly not all our "wants." "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." If we would enjoy the benefits of His grace, we must also show grace. In presenting the blessings of grace in the peace offering, Luke omits the negative consequences of failing to show such grace. Matthew's record enlarges on this point, as he writes, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). This is not to say that God holds grudges against

us, but rather that if we are unforgiving in our attitudes toward others, we will be unable to enjoy His goodness toward us.

"And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." This does not mean that God would lead us into evil, for God "cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man" (James 1:13). It is rather, a plea for a loving Father's absolute leadership in the life of a son. He becomes our unerring Guide, though we may not always understand such leadership at times. Delivering us from evil does not always mean deliverance from something we detest, but deliverance from anything which would cause us eternal hurt in our spiritual growth.

The next few verses are an appendage to this pattern prayer, describing an attitude of faith. "And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?" (11:5-6). This

is not a selfish request, but for the benefit of someone else. The time of midnight, is a most inopportune time, and refers to the darkest hour of difficulty. The request is denied, as he replied, "The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee" (11:7).

The persistence of faith will not accept this refusal, and "though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (persistence) he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (11:8). If he gave simply because he was a friend, it would be equivalent to saying, "As a friend, you owe me." Some may come to God in this manner, but it is vitally important to know that God's blessings come to us purely on the basis of His grace. The only requirement is to ask. This is not a casual "whatever will be, will be" attitude, but a persistent attitude of faith in a gracious heavenly Father.

This is beautifully illustrated by Moses, the lawgiver, who refused to accept God's original decree to annihilate Israel after they bowed down to the golden calf. Moses "besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand?" (Exodus 32:11). Moses appealed to God's sense of responsibility, "they are Your people." Next, he appealed to God's honor, "What will the Egyptians think?" Finally, he appealed to God's promises, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants to whom Thou swarest by Thine own self, and said unto them, I will multiply your seed . . . and all this land ... will I give ... and they shall inherit it forever." This is persistence in behalf of someone else. Abraham followed this same pattern in praying for Lot, when Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" (Genesis 18:24). Abraham persisted until God agreed to spare the city for the sake of ten righteous.

Jesus continued His instructions on prayer by saying: "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (11:9). This is a simple requirement, to be sure, but it indicates an attitude of expectant faith, rather than a passive attitude. Likewise, "seek and ye shall find," tells us that a certain energy must be expended, seeking as though for hidden treasure. Finally, "knock, and it shall be opened unto you." God has many doors of opportunity, which contain vast resources, and they are all opened by the knock of persistent faith. These three words, "Ask, Seek, and Knock," form an interesting acronym. Take the first letter of each word, and you will have the simple promise, "Ask." James tells us, "Ye have not because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

These advances of faith are never disappointed. The one who asks, receives. The seeker will find, and to him who knocks, the door shall be opened. The Master became very specific as to the possibilities which await us, as He says, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (11:11-13).

Giving a stone for bread will not stop the pangs of hunger. A serpent in exchange for a fish, or a scorpion for an egg, would inflict great pain and risk. Jesus' argument is that our heavenly Father not only guards us against injury, but gives only good gifts for our benefit and edification. He specifically mentions the Holy Spirit, and this tells us that such power is received according to the principles of faith. Some believers have received this Divine Gift immediately upon asking, while others have had to exercise great persistence. Regardless of how God chooses to meet such

needs, the key is that we are to come to Him as a son desiring gifts from his Father.

At The Gate of the Year

I know not what the year will bring,
What at joys or sorrows or new song to sing,
But this I know, my Lord is on the throne,
Jesus, my Shepherd, is at hand.
He leads me to the Better Land;
He guards and guides His own!
- A. J. Howe

"And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered" (11:14). Jesus powerfully demonstrated again the purpose for which He came into the world, to set captives free. This scene is filled with wonder, but one would think there should have been great praise and worship for the One who could perform such a feat. The people showed cynicism, unbelief, antagonism, and perhaps, jealousy. Being unable to deny the great miracle, some accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Satan. Others, "tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven." The Master was undaunted, and "knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth" (11:17). If these miracles had been done by the power of the devil, then Satan would be battling against himself.

Jesus added: "by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges." To accuse Jesus was to accuse their own sons, for both accomplished the same end, and as Jesus would say to them later, "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth" (11:23). Verse 20 concludes that they are without excuse. The fact that He "with the finger of God casts out devils," is evidence that the "Kingdom of God is come upon you."

The next two verses contrast Christ with Satan. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Though Satan is most assuredly a "strong man," the Stronger Man is Christ, who came into this world and overcame him, even with the devil's own weapon, death (Hebrews 2:14-15). He "divided his spoils" having "spoiled (stripped) principalities and powers" of their authority (Colossians 2:15). There is no middle ground. Man must either be for or against the Lord. Hypocrisy and pretense will also be revealed.

"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out" (11:24). This verse has been interpreted to mean that believers could be freed from Satan's grasp and then, be repossessed, and their last end would be worse than the first. This is not the meaning, however. It is the demon who does not find rest, and decides to return to "my" house. It was not the Lord's house. Upon returning, he "findeth it swept and garnished" (11:25). Matthew 12:44 declares that it "was empty."

This was exactly what happened to Israel. Their outward appearance was as "swept and garnished," indicative of their self-righteous reformation, but they were devoid of God's presence, and never had been truly made clean by the new birth. They had never really become God's house in reality. Jesus declared, "Ye are of your father, the devil" (John 8:44). He also described them as whited sepulchres, which were inwardly full of dead men's bones.

The fact that seven demons occupied the house, rather than the one, and that the last state of that man was worse than the first, tells us that when men think they have no problem, they are in deep trouble. The swept and garnished house of self-righteousness presents a false security, as the Judge said to the church at Laodicea: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?" (Revelation 3:17)

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked" (11:27). Inserted amidst all the unbelief and animosity manifested by the Pharisees, stood forth a woman, who at least, appreciated the Majesty of Jesus. As woman, she would naturally give credit to Mary, even as some are prone to do today. Mary did indeed have a wonderful place on God's Program, and had already been commended for her faith (Luke 1:42-

45). However, Jesus, once again, places emphasis on eternal blessings, rather than on miracles and on those who would perform them. He answered her: "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it" (11:28). There are those blessed, even beyond Mary, because they listen to the Word and allow it to accomplish God's purposes in their lives.

"And when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation" (11:29-30). His words were not sparing, as they cut to the heart like a two-edged sword. This generation, as a whole, was evil, because they refused to believe on Him. One characteristic of the Jew is that they require a sign (I Corinthians 1:22), and those signs abounded, as we have seen in this study. The time for signs was past, and now they were shut up to simply believing the Word of God.

Jonah was only a figure of Him who was to come. We read in Matthew 12 that Jonah's stay of three days and nights in the belly of the fish, was but a type of Christ's tenure in the heart of the earth. When Jonah came forth "in resurrection," he preached deliverance to the city of Ninevah, and the people repented (11:32). Jesus used the Queen of Sheba as another example of one "who shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." Jonah and Solomon were types of Christ. Solomon was noted for his wisdom, but the "greater than Solomon" is Wisdom personified. The Ninevites and the queen of the south were Gentiles, and though none of them saw the realities of Christ, as did these Jews, yet they believed. It is no wonder that they should condemn the unbelief described here, for a Greater than both Jonah and Solomon was in their midst.

The Great Master continued His parables describing the gross unbelief of this people. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light" (11:33). Israel claimed to be that lighted candle, because God had given them the Law. Had this been true, they would have been a beacon in darkness, setting an example for others, as did the Queen of Sheba and repentant Ninevah. Any light which they may have had, however, was hidden beneath the bushel of hypocrisy and unbelief. "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light" (11:34).

No one can become a luminary unless he receives the Light. Israel had failed to do this, for the simple reason that they did not have a "single eye." The word "single" means "folded together" as a single unit, rather than being divided. Throughout the rest of this chapter, Jesus arraigns the Scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers for their double standard. They did not have a single eye of purpose to receive the Light which was in their midst. When an eye is evil, or rejects the light, the body also is full of darkness. This nation, though it practiced even the finer points of the law, became a body of darkness. "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness."

Men cannot remain neutral in their attitude to the Light. This is a principle which applies to any truth in Scripture, not just initial salvation. If one refuses the light in any area of his Christian life, that point of truth becomes darkness to him. The next verse tells us that true witness comes from the one who would receive the full spectrum of light. "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light" (11:36). In actuality we do not receive the fullness of light all at one time, but it is the ATTITUDE OF BEING OPEN to ALL TRUTH, or having a single eye toward the light, that is the subject here.

"And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat" (11:37). The subject of fellowship is presented again, as it is throughout the Gospel of Luke. Jesus accepted an invitation, and as usual, criticism abounds. The objection this time was because Jesus "had not washed before dinner." The Lord answered characteristically: "The Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness" (11:39).

Jesus gives a host of examples showing that Israel's "light" of witness is not what it should be. They enlarged on the outward appearance, but inwardly, they were sorely lacking. This was because of a lack of singleness of eye, described earlier. Jesus reinforced His argument with a question: "Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within

also?"(11:40). It is God who made both, and the following verses cite specific examples of how the Pharisees were completely engrossed in the outward appearance, completely ignoring inward sanctification which comes only by virtue of the new birth.

The Lord instructs them to "give alms of such things as ye have; (or, as you are able) and behold all things are clean unto you." This statement is in reference to the fact that He had not washed His hands before eating. Jesus did not mean to neglect personal hygiene. He was teaching the same lesson which Peter learned after the Day of Pentecost, "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). Addressing this same subject in Matthew 15:11, Jesus declared "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." The Apostle Paul enlarged on these same principles throughout his epistles, emphasizing the importance of heart attitudes.

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (11:42). These self-righteous Pharisees were expecting commendation for their adherence to the letter of the law, but instead received a total of six scathing woes for their efforts. They were very careful to tithe, even of the small shrubs of mint and rue, but the inward values were passed over. The "judgment" refers to God's judgment upon the sinful heart of man, and the love of God comes only by being born from above.

Some have insisted that tithing is lawkeeping, and not a part of today's Christian responsibility, but such is not the tenor of Jesus' words. There also seems to be a difference in the requirements of tithing and giving. Verse 41 says to "give as ye are able." Paul agrees with that in II Corinthians 8:12: "It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Such gifts do not refer to the tithe, which belongs to God, (Leviticus 27:30), and which Jesus said should not be left undone.

The second woe is pronounced because "ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets" (11:43). This by no means reflects the attitude of Divine Love, which was passed over by these lawkeepers. Paul addressed some specifics which define Jesus words: "charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own" (I Corinthians 13:5-6). These characteristics surely did not fit the Pharisees.

The third woe is the most caustic of all thus far, as Jesus includes the scribes along with the Pharisees, and describes them all as hypocrites. These scribes, above all, had access to the Scriptures and should have been genuine candles. They were only "actors" pretending to be living spiritual men, but there were "as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." They were dead in trespasses and sins, and those around them which should have benefited from their knowledge of the truth, could not see through their pretense.

The Word of God is quick, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and finds its mark in the heart of the lawyers, as one of them says, "Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also" (11:45).

Jesus' fourth woe comes quickly: "Woe unto you, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers." These lawyers, those skilled in the law, used it as a heavy load for others. They did not teach from example, but put themselves beyond its reach and would not so much as touch its burden with one of their fingers.

The fifth woe is pronounced because all of these hypocrites apparently built the sepulchres of the prophets as memorials unto themselves. According to Matthew, it reads: "ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets" (Matthew 23:29-30).

They wanted these sepulchres to stand as a witness that they were different from their fathers, that they were honoring those who had been treated unjustly. Jesus declared that they were of the same spirit. According to Him, their acts were a "witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres" (11:48). Not only that, but the Scripture, the "wisdom of God," declares: "I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation" (11:49-50). Jesus insists that their rejection and treatment of the present prophets and apostles are ample proof that they would have performed the same atrocities as their forefathers and thus the blood of all, from Abel to Zacharias "will be required of this generation" (11:51).

The final woe: "Ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (11:52). The "key" is actually Christ, who has been spoken of throughout Scriptures. These lawyers had access to that message, but they refused to acknowledge Him, and those who would receive "ye hindered" or forbad.

God's Word will not return void, and "as He said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him" (11:53-54). Rather than bringing them to repentance, their rejection of the Word, stirred them even more vehemently against Him. They are living proof of His words concerning treatment of the apostles and prophets, and ultimately, they did make accusations against Him which led to His death.

Keep Looking Up

Keep looking up -

The waves that roar around thy feet,

Jehovah-Jireh will defeat

When looking up.

Keep looking up --

Though darkness seems to wrap thy soul.

The Light of light shall fill thy soul

When looking up.

Keep looking up-

When worn, distracted with the fight

Your Captain gives you conquering might

When you look up.

-- Streams in the Desert

Chapter 12

"Seeking The Kingdom"

"In the meantime, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (12:1).

Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees in the previous chapter, attracted quite a crowd, and He continues to upbraid these false teachers for their opposition to the Truth. The leaven of which He warns is hypocrisy, that is, "deceit," or, "to act or speak under a false part." The Pharisees were very guilty of this, trying to establish righteousness by the works of the law. Aside from this, their hearts were filled with murder under the pretense of pious behavior. It was this murderous intent which prompted the next few verses of this chapter.

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known" (1:2). This verse has been used to strike fear in the hearts of Christians, teaching that every secret word and act will be revealed at some time for the whole world to view. This is not the meaning here. This same scene is recorded in Matthew 10 where Jesus encouraged His disciples to be bold in their testimony: "Fear them not therefore, for there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed" (Matthew 10:27). The things to be revealed are the false accusations of the previous verse.

Jesus was accused of being the "master of the house of Beelzebub." He told His disciples that "those of His household" would be accused in like manner. He encouraged them not to fear, for all these falsities would be brought to light. "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in the closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (12:3). Matthew's record states: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light" (10:27).

Jesus told the disciples many, many things in private, just as He does us, if we will spend time alone with Him. It was these revelations that the disciples were to shout from the housetops, rather than just "speaking in darkness and in the ear in closets," among themselves, for fear of the Pharisees. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body," He said, but rather "fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (12:4-5). Fear has a double meaning. One is to frighten, to alarm. Second, it means to be in awe, revere. The former shows the response toward the Pharisees; the latter gives the right response toward God.

Not only are we delivered from hell because of our reverence and submission to the Lord, but He

takes the greatest care of His own. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows" (12:5-6). The sparrows are "cheap," yet they are still important to God. How much more valuable is man, God's crowning creation, and He continues, "I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before man, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (12:8). This refers to the new birth which places us into the family of God.

"But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (12:9). Rejecting Christ as Savior is not the only way to deny Him. Peter was already a believer when he denied Him three times the night Jesus was arrested. This verse carries the thought of the previous verses concerning a bold testimony. The bolder we are in our testimony here, both in word and deed, the greater His acknowledgement of us in glory.

"And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven" (12:10). This is the only unpardonable sin recorded in Scripture. Matthew 12:24-32 enlarges on it. "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (12:31). The "wherefore" refers to the foregoing verses in which Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus summed it up: "How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? Then he will spoil his house." Satan is the "strong man," and Jesus is the One who bound him at the cross, in order to spoil his house.

The provisions of that victory have not all been fully implemented, but the miracles and mighty works which Jesus did, were in view of that Great Event, for He was the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." When the Pharisees attributed His mighty power to Satan, they were denying redemption. The unpardonable sin means rejecting Christ and His work on the Cross. It is called blasphemy against the Holy Ghost because He is the active Agent of the Godhead in convicting men of sin. "When He (the Comforter) is come, He will reprove (convict) the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Man can only come to Christ as they are convicted by the power of the Holy Ghost, and if that conviction is blasphemed (count vile, to degrade), there is no forgiveness.

"And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (12:11-12). The Master continues to exhort these disciples to be bold in their testimony, even in severe adversity, assuring them that the Holy Ghost is the One in control, and not only must the hearers reckon with Him as to their own attitude of blasphemy, He will also instruct His "preachers" what to say. This does not mean that a preacher need not prepare a message since the Holy Spirit promises to "teach you in that hour" what to say.

We notice in the context where this verse is, that these men were victims of persecution and false accusations, even as Jesus was, and only the Holy Ghost could answer the wickedness of their hearts on the spur of the moment. We can surely depend on the same promise when we are faced with this same dilemma, but we are never released from Paul's exhortation to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

"And one of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And He said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (12:13-14). We might think, who would be better to solve such disputes than Jesus? However, Jesus placed emphasis where it should be, and pin points any wrong motivation, as He said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (12:15). The problem is apparently not with the one who refused to share his inheritance, so much as with the covetous heart of the one seeking Jesus' help. The words of Jesus blast a gaping hole in the modern "prosperity" message. The spirituality of a man is not determined by the abundance of things he possesses. Paul also agrees in I Timothy 6:5, declaring that some suppose "that gain is godliness."

Jesus illustrated His point with a parable, describing a "certain rich man." His lands were so bountiful that he had no more room to store the fruits of them, so he decided to build more barns to heap this increase to himself. This thinking bespeaks the fact that he was very self-sufficient

and independent, as he said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (12:16-19). God will not condone such an attitude, which he calls that of a fool. "This night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast proved? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (12:20-21).

There are many like this man who expend great amounts of energy toward amassing material wealth, laying up treasure only for THEMSELVES, trying to ensure their own rights for personal gain. Such energy must be channeled toward spiritual riches. In addition to this, Jesus instructed His disciples that they must not even put undue emphasis on the NECESSITIES of life, asking, "What ye shall eat; or what ye shall put on" (12:22). Life consists of much more than food and raiment, and the next few verses indicate that those responsibilities belong to God. He sovereignly cares for the ravens who have no storehouses of their own. "How much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?" (12:24-25).

Jesus would have us know that there are certain things which are completely beyond our control. He deems that adding one cubit to your stature is the "thing which is least." If we cannot supply that which is least, how shall we take care of greater responsibilities? "Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (12:27-28). These illustrations refer to much more than natural provisions. They are principles which apply to spiritual growth and clothing which come to us only by faith. We may take the provisions of the Word of God, but only He can obtain the result of "growing up into Him in all things" (Ephesians 4:15). Only He can produce the glory of that spiritual "lily" in our lives. Our responsibility, whether in the natural or spiritual is to "Seek ye the Kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (12:31). The word "seek" indicates our choice in the matter. God will not force us to be spiritual, nor to believe Him for our natural needs. As a Father, He knows that we have need of these things, but making eternal riches a priority, must be our own decision.

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's pleasure

COUNTLESS BLESSINGS

How wondrous are Thy works, O Lord,

Thy thoughts to usward be,

Which never can be reckoned up

In order unto Thee.

Should I declare to speak of them,

Or try to add the score,

They're more than can be numbered; yet,

Thou givest more and more.

How gracious, Lord, Thou art to all;

Unworthy, though we be.

No matter where we look about,

Thy boundless love we see.

Lest we ignore Thy goodness, Lord,

Mid gratitude we say,

"For countless blessings, great or small,

WE THANK THEE, LORD, ALWAYS. "

-- Eva Gilbert Shaver

"Seeking the Kingdom"

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (12:32). All Christians do not enter into this blessed relationship. They have never really known the freedom from fear of which He speaks, because they assume responsibilities which God never intended them to have. They do not fully realize that He "knoweth" their most intimate personal needs. It is His pleasure to give us the Kingdom, and that includes not only the needs of the body, but spiritual riches which we may enjoy now. Paul declares that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, and these blessings are appropriated by faith. By being spiritual and heavenly, these blessings will be enjoyed throughout eternity.

The next exhortation follows: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (12:33). The desires which God requires are those of the heart, and not of the lips only. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Men are controlled by their innermost desires, therefore those affections must be set "on things above, and not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Having such a heart for heavenly treasure dictates our manner of life. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning" (12:35). Our loins are girded with truth (Ephesians 6:14), which in turn produces the light of personal testimony. "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (12:36). This portion of our chapter applies to service. The faithful servant is the one who has the second coming uppermost in his heart. The context points to a future time, as we read that Jesus is coming FROM the wedding. The Church will already be in heaven at this time, and the servants addressed here, refer to Israel. However, the principles outlined, apply to anyone who would be a faithful servant. When He "cometh and knocketh," some will not be asleep and will open the door immediately. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I Thessalonians 5:6). There will be the servants who are blessed "whom when the Lord cometh shall find watching" (12:37).

The remainder of this verse specifically applies to the faithful servants of Israel: "Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." These servants will usher in the Kingdom on earth, when the nation of Israel comes into the banquet of fellowship prepared by the Lord whom they have pierced. They will then become the head of the nations, God's kingdom of priests during the Millennium.

Christ will appear at various times to the Church, and He will likewise appear to Israel. Some will see Him in the second watch; others not until the third. The key to this is for all: "Who is watching?" "And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (12:39-40). Jesus describes His coming as a thief to these servants, and Paul uses the same analogy in describing His appearance to the Church and to the world (I Thessalonians 5:2).

"Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even to all?" (12:41).

This is a very important question, and one to which we must know the answer in order to understand these verses. It is very difficult to apply it to salvation, if we are to reconcile it with other portions of Truth. Jesus has been addressing "servants," and He continues to do so: "And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom His Lord shall make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" (12:42). Jesus is referring to ministers of the Gospel. No one is saved or lost through ministering, but the consequences for unfaithful service are found in the following verses, and they do not refer to salvation. "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

All ministers do not give God's "Household" their meat, or depth of Truth, in due season. Paul portrays this ministry as the construction of a building, using either "gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, and stubble." If his work can stand the test of fire, "he shall receive a reward." If one is unfaithful, his use of wood, hay, and stubble "shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, so as by fire" (I Corinthians 3:12-15). Likewise, we read here, "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when He cometh shall find so doing," that is giving meat in due season. "Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that He hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (12:43-46).

The unfaithful servant's troubles started when he said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." Looking for Jesus is the key to faithful service. If one does not have that pre-eminent hope, he begins to persecute other "servants" because they are proclaiming the proper message. His manner of life will then deteriorate as he enters into fellowship with the world, eating and drinking and being drunken. Such revelry does not mean only worldliness, but also refers to the religious "wine of her fornication," which is dispensed by the false church (Revelation 17:2). Paul

referred to the same intoxicants in Ephesians 5:18: "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."

The consequence of all this is that such a servant will be caught unawares, for "The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for Him." We might think that such language implies going to hell. We emphasize again, that deliverance from the lake of fire comes only by faith, not by service. We must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than depending upon service. These statements must be viewed within their context.

To "cut asunder" means to cut off, but eternal doom is not its only application in Scripture. John 15 records this same truth concerning service. Jesus said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." In verse two, He declares, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away." This branch is cut off because it does not bear fruit, nor because it has no life. It means that such a one is removed from fellowship, sometimes through physical death. James tells the same story: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death" (James 5:19-20). The word for "death" is the same one used throughout I Corinthians 15, and refers to physical death. Solomon saw the possibility of premature death: "Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (Ecclesiastes 7:17),

Second. He "will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." This unfaithful servant is not accused of being an unbeliever, but rather receives the portion of the unbeliever. Paul describes this same scenario in Hebrews 3 and 4, as he tells of the unbelief of Israel, which resulted in their carcasses falling in the wilderness. He does not say that they all went to hell, but they died physically, not entering into their vast inheritance, the land of Canaan, because of unbelief. Their "portion" was that of an unbeliever. Paul exhorts the Hebrews: "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." All of God's blessings are obtained by faith, and Christians will lose that portion which is due them through their unbelief.

Third. "That servant, which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (12:47-48). The key word here is "knowledge." Though the first servant knew what was required, he did not prepare himself. He did not allow the message to work in his own heart; consequently, he did not accomplish what God desired to do through him. Such omission is the occasion of many stripes and much pain. Leniency prevails for the next servant because of ignorance. Both are unfaithful, having committed things worthy of stripes, and both receive their due reward, but the evaluation is not based purely on conduct. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (12:48).

Fourth. Stripes are given for punishment, not the lake of fire. This is in perfect harmony with Paul's decree for the unfaithful servant: "He shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (12:49). This final segment of our chapter is not a departure from the foregoing teachings. Fire in Scripture is symbolic of judgment, and according to Jesus, it has already begun. Peter concurs by telling us that judgment begins at the house of God, and if that be the case, the unbeliever shall scarcely escape (I Peter 4:17). THE JUDGMENT, and God's basis for all subsequent judgment throughout this age, began at Calvary. "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (12:50). That baptism of death occurred at the cross, where Jesus bore the full judgment of God's wrath against all sin and unrighteousness.

Men are without excuse, and will themselves be judged according to their attitudes toward Christ. Such judgment goes far beyond initial salvation to include all areas of our service and walk.

"Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three" (12:51-52). Men cannot remain neutral in their attitude toward the Lord. While He has come to bring "Peace on earth, good will toward men," He is the division, even among members of the same family. The more committed we are to Him, even as Christians, the greater the separation from others who are not so dedicated. This rift is most acutely manifest concerning His second coming.

"And He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" (12:54-56). Paul wrote: "But of the times and seasons brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you" (I Thessalonians 5:1). These were saints who did discern the time, which includes this day of separation and division, and they were not asleep to its significance.

This audience of Jesus was exhorted to judge that which is right, and the remaining verses of this chapter inform us that it is our own attitude and relationship with others, which must be scrutinized. "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite" (12:58-59). These verses are a part of the truth which was given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:26-27).

The instructions to "give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him (thine adversary), are detailed there, and tell us exactly how to conduct ourselves when these divisions occur.

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly" (Matthew 5:23-25). The adversary here is your brother, and many of the divisions are among Christian brothers, not just natural family members.

The principles presented here are most applicable in these final days before the coming of Jesus. Some may try to justify such rifts as normal for the times, but it is vitally important that overcoming Christians do not excuse themselves if they have offended, or "thy brother hath ought against thee." One must not think that "worshiping the Lord," is going to release him from the responsibilities of such offenses. As a matter of fact, none can really worship the Lord with a true heart (bringing "thy gift to the altar"), if he is guilty of unresolved offenses against a brother. Thus we are instructed to be reconciled to our brother, then come and offer our gift, and it is to be done quickly before much more serious damage is done. The object is to judge what is right in ourselves, that our own heart attitude be right. We cannot dictate the attitude of others, in view of Jesus' coming, but we must believe God to "renew a right spirit in me" (Psalm 51:10).

Chapter 13

No Room For Pretense

"There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (13:1-3).

We do not read the specifics of this atrocity anywhere else in Scripture, but given the history of this land and the wickedness of leaders such as Pilate, it comes as no surprise. Further tragedy is described next, as Jesus refers to 18 who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them (13:4-5). From Jesus' words, some evidently thought that the victims in both cases were sinners above all the inhabitants of Galilee and Jerusalem, and therefore deserved such judgment.

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," indicates they were not righteous, but neither were they greater sinners than the rest. Many times today, men make the same mistake of comparing their own lives to others, rather than to the Word of God. They, in turn, feel justified when judgment does not fall. Paul warned Christians against this in II Corinthians 10:12: "But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

"He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none" (13:6). This parable connects directly with the foregoing incident. The fig tree is used in Scripture to portray the Jewish nation, and so it seems to be here. "Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" (13:7). We read in Leviticus 19:23-25 that when a tree began to bear, all fruit for the first three years was to be counted as "uncircumcised" and was not to be used. In the fourth year, all of it was to be given as an offering to the Lord. He must receive the first fruit, which is symbolic of Christ, the firstfruit of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15). Only in the fifth year was the fruit to be eaten.

This parable indicates that the Jewish nation was not on resurrection ground, thus there was no fruit. The number "three" here is a beautiful expression of the resurrection of Christ. The husbandman in the parable asked for a reprieve: "He answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down" (13:8). This is an excellent portrait of Israel under the law. It was that law which exercised every avenue of man's power, as it cut mercilessly, trying to "dig about" this barren tree. Every incentive, including the penalty of death, here referred to as "dung" or refuse, was used, but to no avail. We are not told the outcome of this incident, but from other Scriptures, we know that all of Israel's attempts to bear fruit under the law, failed miserably. For that reason, Jesus assumed all the responsibilities of this "corrupt tree" and He, Himself, was "cut down" at the Cross.

"And, behold there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself" (13:11). This woman appeared as Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath day. The spirit of infirmity was indeed of Satan, but this does not mean that this poor woman was demon possessed. It is the same thing which happened to Job, when Satan was allowed to take all his substance and family, and inflict great pain and bondage on his body. For 18 years this poor woman had been afflicted, and Jesus illustrated again a major reason for coming into this world -- to free humanity from Satan's grasp. We do not read that she sought Him out, but rather that "Jesus saw her, and He called her to Him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (13:12-13).

What a glorious picture of all humanity! We were all bowed down by sin, and powerless to do anything about it. First, Jesus spoke the Word which begets faith, "Thou art loosed." We are, in God's reckoning, freed the moment such a message is spoken. Then, He laid His hands upon her and she was immediately made straight. This figures the practical deliverance from bondage. It was she who glorified God, knowing as we must, that only God is capable of such a feat. What ecstasy and appreciation of grace must have filled the heart of this woman, who had not even asked for deliverance.

"And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day" (13:14). We marvel at the stupidity of some who are so steeped in religious tradition. I believe that it was no accident that so many of Jesus' miracles were done on the sabbath. It was a day in which to rest, and He was the fulfillment of that "resting day." He said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:28). "The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8).

The sabbath was intended to be a BENEFIT to man, not a cold harsh decree to bring him into more bondage. Jesus taught that it was a day to be loosed from bondage. "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?" (13:15). This temple ruler's high regard for animals above humans, shows the inconsistency of those under the bondage of lawkeeping. Their perspective on reality is altered. According to them, it was all right to loose an animal, but not the woman. Jesus said: "Ought not this woman being a daughter of Abraham, who Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (13:16).

"And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him" (13:17). Would to God that all lawkeepers today would get a revelation of such marvelous grace, and bow their heads in shame! It is only the Message of Divine Grace which humbles us, and then we, too, rejoice for all the marvelous things that He has done for us.

"Then said He, Unto what is the Kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?" (13:18). Two parables follow, and both are prophetic of this Church Age. These are only two of the seven given in Matthew 13, as Jesus records God's governmental requirements of the trespass offering. In presenting the peace offering, with its message of fellowship between God and man, especially during this age, Luke records only the parable of the mustard seed and the leaven hidden in three measures of meal. The grain of mustard seed (verse 19) describes the small beginning which the Church had at the Day of Pentecost, as only 120 believers were gathered in an upper room. On that day, they were baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost, and from that humble beginning, a "great tree" has grown. This tremendous growth did not

include the spiritual realm, however, for "fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it." Those birds represent evil spirits which have invaded the Church (Revelation 18:2), and tell us that large enterprises are not always an indication that such growth is of God. The "woman" who hid the leaven in three measures of meal, is a picture of the Church as a whole, who allowed the leaven of error to corrupt the original pure meal. The three measures of meal indicate the fullness of the Trinity operating at the beginning of this Church Age. Religious leaders no longer submit to that fullness of authority, denying the dynamic power of the Holy Ghost in their lives. The Spirit's glorious ministry of revealing Christ and His Truth, has been substituted for the thoughts and ideas of men, thus the whole lump has been leavened.

The Apostle Paul warned of this impending corruption when he addressed the Ephesians elders. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things (leaven) to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). The departure of Paul, means the departure of the Gospel of Grace which he proclaimed, and because of that void, spirituality in Christendom is woefully lacking.

"And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto Him, Lord are there few that be saved?" (13:22-23). We can only assume from this question and the following comments, that many who heard the Master did not take heed to His words. As we have noted before, the ways of God do not always produce changes in the multitude. The last portion of our chapter shows the separation of the true from the false, as Jesus insisted that there was no room for a pretense of spirituality.

"And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in,

and shall not be able" (13:24). Matthew 7:13 records this same admonition, further declaring that "wide is the gate and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." The way to enter the strait gate is by faith: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them" (Matthew 7:24). The many who seek to enter in and are not able to do so, are those who try by means other than simple faith in His words.

"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets" (13:25-26). These are some of the leverages which these faithless ones would use. Matthew 7 describes the same group as those proclaiming their own works. "Many will say to Me in that day . . . have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name have done many wonderful works?"

They are described as "workers of iniquity," even though great things had apparently been accomplished. The simple association with Him, in eating and drinking, or just listening to His teachings, are not enough. Furthermore, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves are thrust out" (13:28). Being of Jewish descent, or having knowledge of the patriarchs and prophets, is not sufficient to enter the Kingdom of God and to sit down in fellowship with them. There are those from "the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God" 13:29), and come into this blessed fellowship because they have discovered the way of faith, as opposed to the way of works.

"And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" (13:30).

Those who are first refers to those who are not only of the first creation, but also to those who tried to justify themselves by the works of the law. Matthew used the same statement twice with the parable of the "laborers in the vineyard" sandwiched in between. (Matthew 19:20 - 20:16) That parable is a description of the Jews entering into a definite contract for "a penny a day," figurative of those who were given the law. Throughout the day, even until the eleventh hour, other groups went into the vineyard, but with this provision: "whatever is right." The "last" are those who agreed with God purely on the basis of Divine Grace. "Whatever is right" was His decision, and that was to give all the workers a penny. Obviously those who had worked only one hour, received the greater reward by comparison; likewise those who are completely shut up to God's grace today, are those who shall be first.

"The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee" (13:31). There is a question whether the Pharisees really had

Jesus' well-being in mind, or not. Perhaps they felt that their toes had already been stepped on enough, and they were using fear tactics to persuade Him to leave. In any case, "He said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (13:32-33). We have already read in chapter nine that He had "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." Nothing could deter Him from that purpose, and He knew that His life was to be given there. His message to Herod is simple. He was not in hiding, but was doing all things openly, and regardless of any onslaught against Him, He must accomplish His work in the "two" days remaining, and He would be perfected, or raised from the dead on the third day.

Finally, Jesus expressed His great love and desire for Jerusalem, symbolic of His love for all His own people. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under wings, and ye would not!" (13:34). Though Israel had rejected and despised all God's offers to them through the prophets, still He longed to take them unto Himself. With the rejection of those overtures of grace, comes their destruction. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Even with this decree, Jesus promises the restoration of this chosen people when the nation finally accepts Him. "Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (13:35).

Chapter 14

True Discipleship

"And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy" (14:1-2). We marvel at the insensitive judgmental Pharisee. This scene has all the signs of a "set up" for Jesus. The previous chapter recorded a similar situation, and had the chief priest and the Pharisees been open to the Truth, they would have realized that God's principles concerning their unbelief did not change. Before any of the Pharisees and lawyers could speak, Jesus posed the question: "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" (14:3). They, in turn, held their peace, and "He took him, and healed him, and let him go" (14:4).

As we have seen repeatedly, they are not dismissed from His school. The Teacher again makes His point using a natural example. "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" (14:5). They could not answer Him, but He continues to pursue them, trying desperately to bring conviction to their proud and arrogant hearts.

"And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lower room" (14:7-9). Jesus' teaching of true humility is fundamental throughout Scripture, but the power to produce such fruit, emanates only from the New Creation. These pious, self-righteous Pharisees constantly "chose out the chief rooms" to promote their own cause. The consequence to such behavior is SHAME.

The Proverbs testify that "before honor is humility" (15:33; 18:12). It is a lesson that all men must learn, for the flesh is filled with a haughty, arrogant, and independent pride, which must be dethroned. This is Jesus' lesson here, as He says: "But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher, then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (14:10-11). The first experience of humbling is when a sinner bows before Christ, recognizing his deep need of a Redeemer. That, however, is only the beginning, for the lessons of true humility and dependence upon Him, are learned constantly by experience throughout our days on earth. "Then said He also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (14:12-14). Jesus continues His lesson on humility by instructing the giver. Giving is paramount to the growth and spiritual maturity of a

believer, but it must be true giving with the Scriptural attitude of humility. One should not give to another who has the potential of "returning the favor," but rather seek out those who cannot repay, and "thou shalt be blessed."

The premise upon which redemption is built is "THEY CANNOT RECOMPENSE THEE." The Pharisees were sorely lacking in this respect. One prominent trait of the flesh is an investment for quick and personal gain, and because of this, the Pharisee did things just to enhance his own image and receive immediate praise. This is completely contrary to the ways of Divine Love, which never gives to receive. "Love seeketh not her own," and God set the example when He gave His only begotten Son. This is the character being reproduced in us, and this is, in essence, what Jesus tried to convey to the Pharisee. He made it clear that the greatest blessings are the eternal ones, but they will not be realized until "the resurrection of the just."

"And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (14:15). This comment sounds like one that came from a man who was trying to speak a language that he did not really understand. It is as though he would take the conversation away from the subject at hand, which may have pierced his own heart, and try to impress Jesus with saying something spiritual. To Jesus, it was an open door to declare who will actually eat bread in the Kingdom of God, and He spoke the following parable.

"Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many" (14:16). Before we continue, it is interesting to note that while Luke wrote about a "man" giving a supper, Matthew, who presents Christ as the King, said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king" (Matthew 22:2). Luke characteristically describes the character as a man who sent "his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready" (14:17). "All things which are ready" refer to all the provisions of redemption, and Matthew adds, "my oxen and fatlings are killed."

Those who were invited, immediately began to make excuses. The different attitudes presented by this parable can be found in many hearts today, but here, Jesus is speaking primarily of Israel's attitude of rejecting the provisions of Calvary. The first excuse was: "I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it" (14:18). This refers to Israel who was so occupied with their works, that they could in no wise give heed to the opportunity offered them. The second one said: "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I go to prove them." The ox is only a type of Christ as the sacrificial servant of God, but Israel was much more occupied with the shadow, or type, than with the Substance who was walking among them. The third one asked to be excused because "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come" (14:20). This represents Israel who was joined to the daughters of religion rather than with Christ.

God's order was "to the Jew first and also to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16). Paul followed this pattern in his ministry, as he said in Acts 13:46: "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been preached to you (Jews), but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." This parable teaches the same truth. "That servant came and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt and the blind" (14:21). The Jews were just as needy as the Gentiles described here, but they did not admit it. The conditions seen in this verse show just how depraved all men are in the sight of God. They are poor, or bankrupt, having no righteousness. They are maimed, having been wounded by sin and Satan, and they are halt, unable to walk in the paths of righteousness. Finally, they are blind, not being able to see the light of God's Word.

All of these people are invited to this great feast purely on the basis of Divine Grace, for there is no way that men can recompense God for such Favor. This is still the message for today, and not only do we receive it into our own lives, but as Jesus has already instructed in verse 13, we are to show the same attitude of grace to others. But there is more to this parable. The house is still not full, and "the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (14:23).

This proclamation speaks of the time when the Gospel will be preached to "whosoever will," after the present Church Age is over. The first invitation carried into the city, corresponds with the commission in Mark 16, that the Gospel is to go to every creature. The second one reaches a much wider area to include the highways and hedges. This refers to the Gospel being preached

to all nations (Matthew 28:19), and will be accomplished by Israel during the Millennium, when they will become God's world-wide evangelists, after they, as a nation, turn to the Lord.

"For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (14:24).

This verse presents another noteworthy contrast with the account given in Matthew, which tells about the one without a wedding garment, who was cast out into outer darkness where there is to be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 22:11-13). The difference is noted because Matthew presents the trespass offering, which demanded absolute satisfaction of God's government against Christ rejecters. Luke, on the other hand, emphasizes the blessings of the peace offering, as men are brought into fellowship with God on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ.

"And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (14:25-26). The rest of this chapter addresses the subject of true discipleship. Throughout this Gospel, Jesus has given instructions to those who would follow Him. To be a disciple means more than just accepting Christ as Savior. The word literally means "a learner, or pupil," and all those who are saved, do not necessarily qualify. The words advocating "hate mother and father, etc.," does not convey the real meaning, for then He would be contradicting the entire canon of Scripture. It rather means that natural affection would be akin to hate when compared with Divine Love. One of His statements is that a disciple must hate his own life also. Satan referred to this characteristic of man: "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). Satan did not know the power of Divine Love, and many have in essence "hated" their own lives, freely laying them down in obedience to God's will. Jesus is the great example, and His love has given motivation to every believer to do likewise. All believers do not become spiritual "learners," even though this same love of which He speaks, is inherent in the new life. It is much more than lip service.

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (14:27).

Bearing one's own cross implies the burden of experience. When we begin to yield to the Lord, we find that there are pressures that bear heavily upon us. It is not necessarily the burden of a ministry. The cross of which Jesus speaks is doing God's will, even as His death on the cross purchased our redemption, and represented God's will for His Son. Only He could bear that cross, but God has a burden of responsibility for every believer. Paul expressed it this way: "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). The workmanship describes what WE ARE, not what we do, and it is only as He works IN US that He can eventually work THROUGH US. Romans 12:1-2 describes the learning process of the disciple: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (on the cross of God's will) . . . that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." By using the term "sacrifice," Paul means that there is a great cost to this kind of discipleship, and Jesus exhorts His followers to consider the cost. "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (14:28).

The term "tower" speaks of a heavenly vantage point above the confines of this earth, where we may behold the magnificent provision of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). It is a place of strength and security which we discover as we follow Him, and call upon His Name, for "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). These benefits do not come without the cost of total commitment. Some believers do not count the cost of total surrender, as the next verses describe: "lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (14:29-30). This is the story of some Christians who begin to search for spiritual things, but lapse back into carnality, and invoke the ridicule of the world.

Jesus' second illustration is closely akin to this one, as He describes a king preparing for war. "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace" (14:31-32). We do not take our place in the heavenlies without a fight, which is against Satan. Jesus is teaching that one must count the cost of that battle, and be willing to endure the

hardships of it, or he will indeed compromise. Such a cost is summed up in these words: "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple" (14:33).

He did not say, "You cannot be a child of God," but He was referring to a disciple, or learner. The one who

follows Jesus all the way cannot compromise his position. This is illustrated by His next statement: "Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men, cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (14:34-35). It is the new life of Christ, which we have been given that is the seasoning, or influence on those around us. Jesus always had an impact on those around Him, both believers and unbelievers. We are to be the same, and this can only happen when we are willing to follow these principles of true discipleship.

God's Best

God has His best things for the few who dare to stand the test.

God has His second choice for those will not have His best.

It is not always open ill that risks the promised Rest;

The better often is the foe that keeps us from God's best.

Some seek the highest choice, but, when by trials pressed,

They shrink, they yield, they shun the cross and so they lose God's best.

Give me, O Lord, Thy highest choice, let others take the rest;

Their good things have no charm for me, I want Thy very best.

I want in this short life of mine, as much as can be pressed

Of service true for God and man, make me to be Thy best.

- A. B. Simpson

*Better the storm with Christ than smooth waters without Him.

*Our character is shaped by what our mind takes in - let's not be a wastebasket.

Chapter Fifteen

Portraits of the Peace Offering

"Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (15:1-2). Two very prominent and contrasting groups are now gathered before the Master. The one, needy and receptive, came to HEAR him. The other, full of their own righteousness and independence, came only to accuse and criticize. It is this unjust criticism which calls forth the three outstanding parables of this chapter. They are a beautiful expression of the peace offering, and represent the Trinity's part in the plan of redemption.

"And He spoke this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" (15:3-4). This parable describes the work of the Son, as the Shepherd coming to seek and save that which was lost. The interpretation of verse seven describes the ninety and nine in the wilderness as the Pharisees, who were in their own "wilderness" of rebellion, in bondage to Satan. They are the "just persons which (think) they NEED NO REPENTANCE," and thus, Jesus was unable to help them. They did not realize that they were in this hopeless condition.

The one sheep who was lost tells of those publicans and sinners who felt their need, and were the "one sinner" that repenteth. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost" (15:5-6). Matthew (18:12-14) also records this parable, but only Luke tells of the tenderness between Shepherd and sheep, as He carries this "newborn," holding it closely on His shoulder. Matthew records the rejoicing, but it is only the Shepherd who is mentioned. In our text, others are invited to join in the festivities.

Again, Luke takes great care to portray the love, joy, and intimacy set forth by the peace offering. "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?" (15:8). This second parable testifies of the Holy Spirit working through the Church, spreading the light in order to find the lost piece of silver - the redeemed. Characteristically of Luke, there is the call to her friends and neighbors to "Rejoice

with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost"(15:9). Jesus' conclusion is the same as before: "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner which repenteth" (15:10). Such sinners were the very ones disdained by the Pharisees and scribes, as seen before.

The third parable, that of the Prodigal Son, is told only by Luke, and shows us the love of the Father. It takes us much deeper into the plan of redemption, than just the initial faith of a repentant sinner. Repentance, as opposed to a self-righteous, independent attitude, is declared, but there are depths other than that, which express the glories and provisions of the peace offering for the Christian.

"And He said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living" (15:11-12). Both of these men were sons; both apparently received his inheritance at this time, for the father divided unto "them" his living. Although it is not manifest until later, the younger son represents the believer with the traits of the "younger" new creation. The elder, who is also a son, is a believer, but is controlled by the Pharisaical attitude of the Adamic or "elder" old creation.

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance on riotous living" (15:13). The young man is a picture of some Christians today who are blessed abundantly in Christ, but all they look for is natural substance. They feel very self-sufficient, and become flagrantly independent of God, thus taking their journey into a far country, away from His presence and fellowship. That with which God has blessed them, is wasted there, and never achieves the purposes for which it was intended. Such blessings, even naturally, are promised to be a never-ending supply to the one who takes care of them. This is not always the case with one who squanders his inheritance.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (15:14). This was really a great blessing in disguise. As long as a person is full of himself, trusting in his own riches and resources, there is nothing God can do for him. His lack was what literally set him on the road home. This is true of sinners, but it is also true of carnal believers. We read, he "began" to be in want. He has not reached the depths of despair. He still has a few "tricks" of his own, some reserve energy and ingenuity with which he will try to extricate himself from this dilemma.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country" (15:15). Of course, the logic of his reasoning mind is filled only with the world. He has no spiritual insight, and such worldly solutions are all he knows. He turns to that which he can see, and is rewarded with a trip to the pig pen. This is all the world has to offer, but he must learn this lesson by experience to really understand it. God allows many Christians to follow this dead-end path, so that they, too, will become utterly filled with the hopelessness the world has to offer. We marvel at times of the amazing capacity of some people for this kind of misery.

There was nothing there to stop the severe pangs of hunger, and "he would fain have filled his belly with husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him" (15:16). He was hungry to be sure, but the void in his heart was more than physical, and could not be filled by what a mere man could supply. It was at the point of desperation that "he came to himself." God also uses this kind of bankruptcy today, to show us our desperate needy condition.

All of this time, we have not read of any remote thought he may have had of home, but now his need wakened memories and visions of the provisions offered by his father. It is the appreciation of the Father's image which God would bring before every Christian. In their carnal state, they, like this young man, dream only of being a servant, and that is certainly better than what he is experiencing at the moment. He knows that even the hired servants "have bread and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" (15:17).

Such thoughts are a beginning, and his resolve is: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (15:18-19). He is a son by birth, but like so many others, who use fleshly reasoning, acceptance is dependent on conduct. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." He was not filled with empty rhetoric, declaring how horrible, worthless, depraved, and hopeless he was, and then doing nothing about it. "He arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (15:20).

Oh, the depths of a Father's love! A disappointed father, who was grieved beyond measure when

his son left, had undoubtedly been looking diligently for him to return, as he saw him a great way off and ran to him. So God is such a Father. He is not vindictive, rehearsing all the shortcomings and failures, and pointing out his present repulsive condition. He accepts his wayward son with open arms, expressing deep and heart-felt affection. The son shows genuine repentance as he declares: "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him" (15:21-22). Although such words of repentance are absolutely imperative for this son to utter, his father apparently does not hear them, and he certainly does not enlarge on them. He is more interested in restoration, and this verse is gloriously typical of the provisions which God has made for us. The "best robe" is the robe of practical righteousness. When we are born again, God imputes or counts to our account the very righteousness of Christ (Romans 4), but it takes some time before we learn to practically and actually put on such a robe.

Next, these servants are exhorted to "put a ring on his hand." The ring is a seal, speaking of that which is eternal, and is symbolic of the eternal seal of the Holy Ghost which is given to us. (Ephesians 1:13). Shoes speak of being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15). But there is more for this one who is, for the first time, finding out what it is like to be a son. "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry" (15:23). John boldly announces: "Beloved now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2), but sadly enough, too few Christians really enter into the blessings of sonship as is seen here.

The fatted calf represents Christ, the Object of mutual fellowship between the Father and His children. The peace offering, of which we have spoken throughout this book, was divided almost equally between God and the priests. It pictures man invited into full fellowship and feasting with God. This son finally discovered the intimate significance of such a feast. He knows now what it is like to really be merry - content with God's choice of blessings rather than the shallow experiences of the world. Such a celebration is held because "this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry" (15:24).

The terms, "being dead and lost," are expressions of a carnal Christian, not one who has lost his salvation and then regained it. Jude describes an unbeliever as "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (V. 12). The meaning is that they look dead and they are dead. Carnal Christians have an appearance of death because there is no fruit or other signs of life. They are described in some cases as being asleep, and as in the natural, only a very close inspection can determine whether the breath of life is present or not. Oftentimes, they appear lost, having no clearly defined direction in their lives. All of this describes the prodigal son. All that is changed now, and notice also, that his experience here is only the BEGINNING of the merry making. The Christian experience becomes more joyful and glorious the farther we travel in fellowship with Him.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him" (15:25-28). Now we come to the elder son, a brother indeed, but not a faithful one. Like his brother, he depicts the carnal Christian, but instead of worldliness he shows the attitude of the Pharisee, who is motivated and controlled by the flesh, regardless of a pious appearance. One of the first responses is anger; another is separation from fellowship, as he refused to go in even though he knew his father was there as well as his brother. He let his own pride keep him from feasting on the fatted calf which was available to him also.

His father came "out to him and entreated him," even as he had gone out to his brother earlier. However, this young man is full of himself, and like the Pharisee, declares the merit of his own works, implying that his father is indebted to him. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Next, he blames his father for being unfair, as he accuses: "thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends" (15:29). The glaring, but unwise characteristic of comparing himself with others, is seen as he points out the sins of his brother: "But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (15:30). Jealousy also rears its ugly head.

The father, still gracious, offers abundant grace to this son also. "And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine" (15:31). He is saying, "Nothing has changed for you; your brother has not taken a thing that belongs to you. "All that I have is thine," implies that the

fatted calf and all the merriment was available to this son also, but there is no record that he ever reached out for them.

Likewise, today many are completely satisfied with natural blessings offered by the Father, but refuse the deep intimate fellowship around the provisions of Calvary. "Rejoice with those that do rejoice," cried Paul (Romans 12:15). "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (15:32). Self-centered folks, as represented by this elder brother, can rejoice only in what is a benefit to themselves.

Joy is love just bubbling o'er,
Peace is love in sweet repose;
All these words express, and more,
Each one, loved and loving, knows.

Chapter 16

Lessons in Faithfulness

"And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward" (16:1-2).

The following story is a strange one in that this unjust steward is commended for some unethical activities. However, when we understand what Jesus is talking about, there is, as always, great wisdom in His words. These two verses give some valuable instruction in conducting our own lives. An accusation had been made against this steward, but notice that the rich man called him and inquired of him, rather than just accepting the words of others.

Scripture is very plain that when there are offenses, we must go to the suspected offender, as an inquirer rather than an accuser. In this case, there was guilt, and the steward is dismissed. In verses 3-4 he considers his options: unable to do manual labor, and much too proud to beg, he resolves "that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses." He then called his lord's debtors and told each of them to rewrite their bills for a lower amount than that which was owed (16:5-7).

"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (16:8). Such a commendation seems almost preposterous, but the wisdom is that one must prepare for the future while there is yet time. The Word of God plainly declares: "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (I Corinthians 6:2). The meaning of Jesus' statement is that the children of the world are much more zealous in their own wisdom than the children of light are exercised in the Scriptures. This man vigorously pursued the only path with which he was familiar. It is the way of the world to get others indebted to you. One favorite saying is: "You owe me one," and Jesus implies that if children of light are not going to pursue their own wisdom, they had better follow that of the world. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (16:9). Interestingly enough, He uses the word "When" rather than "If." Failure is a foregone conclusion of unfaithfulness, and this unjust steward is plain proof of it.

The key thought of this whole portion of Scripture is FAITHFULNESS, and money seems to be the first test. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (16:10-11). There are many applications to these verses. That which is termed least is money, or unrighteous mammon, but there are many things declared to be riches throughout Scripture. They are: wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (Proverbs 21:4); a virtuous woman (Proverbs 31:10; God's people (Exodus 13:5; Matthew 13:45-46). Even reproach is proclaimed as riches in Hebrews 11:26.

The list could go on and on, but the same principle applies in all. We cannot be entrusted with true riches, unless we learn to be faithful in money matters, for the principles regarding them are the same. "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (16:12). Paul tells us that "we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (I Timothy 6:7). "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price," asserts I Corinthians 6:19-20. We are only caretakers of that which belongs to Someone else. People sometimes think that their responsibility with money ends when they give the firstfruit to the Lord, but such is not the case. There are actually four areas of responsibility which God has

given to every man, and they are illustrated by the way we are to handle money.

Number One is God, who must receive the firstfruit, or tithe.

Second comes the family, as we read in I Timothy 5:8: "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

There is no stronger reprimand in Scripture for one who would shirk this God-given responsibility.

Third is the Church, or household of faith. "As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men ESPECIALLY unto they who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Fourth is the world, or "all men." If we are going to be faithful, we must establish these priorities in the unrighteous mammon as well as the spiritual riches entrusted to us. Everything that we have and are, must be viewed as His possession, and if we are faithful stewards now in all that He has given us, we will one day attain eternal riches which will belong to us.

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (16:13). This verse can be applied to many situations, but the primary context is a continuation of Jesus' discourse on money. He explains that being faithful in this unrighteous mammon is not the same as being controlled by it. Greed causes many people to become a slave to filthy lucre. We also read that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (I Timothy 6:10). It is not the money itself that is evil, but our attitude toward it determines whether or not it is a master over us.

In summary, verses 8-13 present a beautiful seven-point outline of what it means to be faithful in mammon. These same points also apply to spiritual riches.

1. Verse 8 declares the wisdom of immediate preparation for the future.
2. Such wisdom must be zealously pursued. Complacency will not be tolerated - V. 8.
3. Unfaithfulness will result in failure - V. 9.
4. Money must be recognized as that which is least in believing God -- V. 10.
5. Faithfulness is the door to true riches - V. 11.
6. We are only caretakers of Someone Else's goods while in this world - V. 12.
7. We must choose which master we will serve - V. 13.

The Pharisees "who were covetous heard all these things: and they derided Him" (16:14).

Throughout the Gospels, these religious folk are assailed for trusting in riches rather than God, and once again, the Sword of the Spirit hits its mark. But rather than being changed by the Message, their hearts are filled with derision. Jesus' response is that they justify themselves before men, the inference being that their riches proved their own righteousness (16:15). This is one outstanding characteristic of a Pharisical attitude. If men approve, or are impressed, that is sufficient justification for any manner of conduct. Such thinking, however, is diametrically opposed to Scripture, for "God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among man is abomination in the sight of God" (16:15). Isaiah agreed with this precept long ago when he wrote: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

"The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (16:16). Jesus now refers to the law which had become a real point of controversy between Himself and the Pharisees. He tells them here that the Age of Law is over. Officially, it was not over until the triumph of the Cross, but beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist, and continuing throughout His own ministry, the demands and forms of the Mosaic economy have been superseded by the teachings of Divine Grace. Many were laying hold of this new order, as we read "every man presseth into it." Every man cannot mean all, for the Pharisees and others like them, had uniformly rejected the offers of grace, and Jesus is quick to point out that the law must be dealt with.

Let's seek to make our witness clear

And labor well to see

Our friends and neighbors drawn to Christ

While reading you and me. - Anon.

*If we worry, we can't trust. If we trust, we won't worry.

*It is wiser to choose what we say than to say what we choose.

Lessons in Faithfulness

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail" (16:17). The law demanded death to the one who had broken it, and that decree could not be disregarded. Every

portion of the law was fulfilled in Christ. He kept it and obtained its blessing for us, but since it had been broken, He also bore the penalty for all who will accept Him. For those who refuse Him, "as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:12-13).

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (16:18). It might seem at first glance that this verse is out of context with the rest of Jesus' teaching here. However, this is not the case, and we must also realize that the Teacher is speaking of much more than natural infidelity. The Pharisees gloried in the law, but it is this law which will convict them of adultery. Paul relates his experience in Romans 7:7-8: "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." This agrees with Jesus' words in Matthew 5:27-28: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The Pharisees have already been determined to be covetous, and are prime candidates to be filled with lust and adultery even in the natural. Jesus', however, is speaking of something which is far more serious than that. He referred to them in Matthew 12:39 as an "evil and adulterous generation" seeking after a sign. This is an accusation against the nation of Israel for their spiritual adultery against God. They were always in pursuit of some supernatural sign rather than just heeding the simple Word from their Heavenly Husband. These Pharisees, using the law as a leverage for their own purposes, were in fact taking a place of headship that belonged only to God. They lorded it over the people, putting a yoke of bondage upon them, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

"There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores" (16:19-20). This chapter begins and ends with a rich man. The former could well represent God and His dealings of righteousness, but the latter is most emphatically speaking of the Pharisee. Clothed in purple expresses his own royal exalted opinion of himself, while the fine linen portrays self-righteousness. He fared sumptuously every day, taking thought only of his own comfort, and at the same time, ignoring the desperate needs of someone else. This also describes the Pharisee's spiritual condition. They were supposed to be well-versed and exercised in spiritual things, and they made a great show of it, but those who were laid at their gates, hungry and full of sores, remained in that miserable condition.

Beggars, such as Lazarus, would have been content with a few crumbs which fell from the table, but even that is not said to have been forthcoming. "Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores" (16:21). Nothing was done to stop the devastation of Satanic dogs who prey on such defenseless folks. However, God is always mindful of His own, even though some caretakers are unfaithful. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried" (16:22). Our needy condition is the very thing that brings us into the presence of God, and though apparently forgotten while in his body of humiliation, Lazarus is rewarded with eternal comfort.

The self-sufficient rich man discovers another path. "And in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, and being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (16:23-24). We are given a look into the spirit world as it existed before Christ's resurrection. Abraham's bosom is the same as Paradise, the promised destination of the repentant thief in Luke 23:43. At this time, it was in the lower parts of the earth, but was taken to heaven when Jesus was resurrected (Ephesians 4:8-9). Hell, hades, or the lowest hell (Deuteronomy 32:22) is seen as a place of torment, which has already begun for the wicked dead.

The message to the "former" rich man is plain. He lived only for the day with no preparation for the future, and is now reaping the consequences of such a devastating choice. "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; and neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (16:25). There are no second chances after this life is over. Eternal destinies must be settled now.

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment"

(16:27-28). Though it is too late for himself, these torments are so severe, that he is greatly concerned that his brethren do not share the same fate as he. His request is denied as Abraham tells him that Moses and the prophets have everything that is needed to keep them from such condemnation. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (16:31). Many people today believe that great miracles will bring men to salvation, however, we are told that there is no recourse if men will not believe the simple Word of God. Moreover, Jesus was raised from the grave, but alas, these self-righteous Pharisees and religious Israel still refused to believe.

The believer is justified - not by works,
but by faith.

He stands - not in law,
but in grace.

He waits - not for judgment,
but for glory.

- C H. M.

Chapter Seventeen

The Spirit of Divine Grace

"Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." (17:1-2)

According to Matthew 18:6, the little ones of whom Jesus speaks here, are those who believe in Him. They are the children of Divine Grace, having humbled themselves as lowly dependent children. Great judgment is pronounced on one who would offend ("trap, trip up, entice to sin") one of them, and those offenses are said to come from the world (Matthew 18:7). In our chapter, Jesus tells that there will be faults or trespasses whereby one brother will be damaged by another. As we see here, there is no "woe" pronounced against the offender as in Matthew, but instructions are given on how to handle such difficulty. Matthew 18:15-20 is a detailed account of that process.

Luke concentrates more on the attitude of the offended one, rather than the accountability of the offender, as found in Matthew, who presents the trespass offering phase. First, the physician records, "Take heed to yourselves," meaning that such offenses are not to be disregarded, leaving Satan with fertile ground to sow seeds of bitterness. Second, "IF thy brother trespass against thee," means that there could be some doubt. Matthew says to go to him, and that means as an inquirer rather than an accuser. Third, "Rebuke him," and from Paul's gospel, that is to be done with his good in mind, not the offended taking vengeance upon him. Even with the terrible sin committed in I Corinthians Five, Paul's ultimate desire was not that the offender be destroyed, but rather restored, and that the saints would confirm their love to him (II Corinthians 2:8-9).

Fourth, "If he repent, forgive him." This is exactly the same spirit which grace has displayed toward everyone of us, and Paul declares: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Fifth, If he trespass even seven times in a day and is repentant, forgiveness is to be granted. Such a repetition of offenses can only be handled when one is filled with the Grace of God.

The disciples seemed to recognize that they might not measure up at this point, and said to the Lord, "Increase our faith" (17:5). Jesus knew that His Message of Grace was being put to the test. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (17:6). Such victory is accomplished with such minute-sized faith, as of a grain of mustard seed. As great as such a victory is, there is much more available to these children of grace.

"But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken: and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (17:7-10). These verses are a commentary on the responsibilities of God's people for which the apostles declared that they needed more faith. Jesus' instruction means that it is the very

spirit of the children of grace which causes them to act as He has outlined in the previous verses. "Unprofitable" does not mean they were to view themselves as worthless and of no consequence; rather, they were not entitled to any special profit or reward, any more than the servant is entitled to some special treatment just because he obeyed the command to serve after having worked in the field all day. They would only be doing what came naturally, or "that which was our duty to do." When God's people yield to the new life in them, there is a natural, or perhaps, we should say a spiritual outflow of blessings to others, with no thought of special commendation or reward.

SHOWING Grace has been the subject thus far. In the following narrative, we are given varying responses of those receiving it. "And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off" (17:11-12). These lepers are typical of all humanity who are afflicted with the leprosy of sin. There are many parallels between these two, the greatest being that both are incurable, except by God. Not only so, but just as leprosy kept these ten men "afar off," alienated from the camp of society, sin banishes one from the camp of God. These men found the only remedy as they "lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (17:13). They cried to the Savior, who was also the Master (appointee over, commander) over this devastating disease.

Notice that they sought access to Him purely on the basis of grace: "have mercy on us." His heart of compassion responded immediately to them. "And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go, show yourselves unto the priests." This was the requirement under the law. Only the priest could pronounce one clean, and in this we see that Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Faith is manifest on the part of these men because "as they WENT," though still in their unclean condition, "they were cleansed" (17:14). Faith was manifest in all of them, but praise and thanksgiving for the marvelous grace which had just been bestowed was found in only "one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan" (17:15-16).

All of those men were needy, but the despised, rejected Samaritan realized it more acutely than did the others, and found a place, open to all those who experience the depths of grace. Not only did he glorify God, giving thanks for the special favor shown, but he entered into the depths of worship, as he fell on his face at Jesus' feet. He is symbolic of all those who truly realize their "Samaritan condition" of having no right or claim to any blessing, and know that grace alone has wrought this glorious transformation in them. This man was a stranger, but it was he who received the commendation which the others did not hear. "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole" (17:18-19).

"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: (or, outward show" (17:20). The Pharisees had many unsavory characteristics, and here is one, as they demanded of Him, rather than simply seek Him for more truth. His response was far more spiritual than they desired, and it is doubtful that they understood His message, for they were obsessed with outward appearance. He warned them: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." He was speaking of His spiritual presence, and of those who would believe on Him.

The rest of this chapter dealing with the outward manifestation of Christ's Kingdom, seems to be addressed only to the disciples. "And He said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: Go not after them, nor follow them" (17:22-23). The days to which Jesus referred, are those when all difficulty and trouble are over. Even today, we long for days of ease and tranquility, away from the tremendous hurt and pressures of this world, whereby "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22). Jesus knew that there would be those who would announce that He had come, but warned against following them, because other events must transpire before the day of rest would come.

"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in His day" (17:24). The lightning means judgment, which is to come upon this earth. These are the days just before He sets up His Kingdom on the earth. This is what the disciples looked and hoped for, and the judgments of which He speaks, usher in "the Son of Man and His Day," as opposed to man's day, which is

quickly drawing to a close. Before that time even begins, "He must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man" (17:25-26). In reality, an entire age comes between these two verses. Jesus was rejected and suffered, even unto death at His first advent, but the days likened unto Noah are happening now in the end of this Church Age. Matthew refers to these days as the "beginning of sorrows," and we are eye witnesses of such signs. Notice how closely the events of today match the days of Noah. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came, and destroyed them all" (17:27). It was then, and is now, a day when men are concentrating on their own pleasures and appetites. Jesus' reference to marriage seems to indicate the volume of marriages taking place in these last days. Marriage has been an institution from Eden to the present time, and is pronounced "honorable." It is seen here in a negative context, and undoubtedly speaks of rampant RE-MARRIAGES, many of which are a result of divorce.

Sadly enough, the Christian Community has not escaped this scourge, and such a pattern that we see, does not really portray the holy estate of matrimony which God intended. It is just another proof of men bowing to their own physical pleasures and appetites. The days of Lot are next called to witness as they, too, "did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded" (17:28). What a picture of our day when man is controlled by his own appetites, both physical and materialistic! His desire is to build great monuments to himself and accumulate great riches. He has never learned the secrets of Solomon: "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand" (Ecclesiastes 5:16).

All such efforts were just a predecessor of judgment as "the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (17:29-30). It is important that we establish the exact time of which Jesus speaks, for we are viewing days well into the tribulation. What we see here is a description of events which will happen after the seventh seal of judgment is opened in Revelation 8-9. The company of believers, known as the Bride of Christ, will have been in heaven for some time, because not only is she promised to be "kept from the hour of temptation" (Revelation 3:10), but we see her as the four living ones and 24 elders in heaven, even before the first seal of judgment is opened (Revelation 6).

Our present chapter is especially dealing with Israel, and they are exhorted: "In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife" (17:31-32). This looking back and returning for worldly goods, is an example of one's heart being where his treasure is. We have already noticed that such worldly mindedness has been rampant leading up to these very devastating days. However, where Israel is concerned, the story of Lot's wife can be viewed as a tremendous expression of grace. She was turned to a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26), and represents well the nation of Israel who, though judged for their rebellion and unbelief, are yet to be the "salt of the earth." They will be God's nation of evangelists after all the judgments of tribulation are past.

Our text continues giving instruction applying especially to Israel at that time. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (17:33). These are lessons also found throughout Paul's Gospel, and we must learn them today. For Israel, they will be especially applicable because by this time, many will have put their trust in the anti-Christ to save them. Just as we are learning now, however, Israel as a nation must learn that their only hope of existence is in Him Whom they have pierced. Some will learn that lesson and some will not, as we see by the following separations:

"I tell you, in that night (of devastating judgment) there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (17:34-36). Many have concluded that the one "taken" was the one who was taken to heaven, but that is not the teaching here nor in Matthew 24:38-39. Matthew describes the days of Noah almost identically to that found in Luke, but adds: they "knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." These were not taken to heaven, but rather taken away by the flood of judgment; and though we know Noah warned them, they were still taken suddenly, by surprise. "They knew not until the flood came."

He applies the same principle to the time when Jesus comes: two are together, one is taken in judgment, and the other left alive. Luke reinforces this same interpretation. "And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? (Where will they be taken?) And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (17:37). Jesus' answer to their question is a direct reference to the judgment at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:17-18).

BRIDAL SONNET

Once dead with guilt, dark garments of my soul
Hung burden there; so even good turned sin.
Lord Savior, mine, who guiltless, paid the toll,
Removed the pondrous weight and dwelt within.
No greater love I know, for on the cross
You gave me life! Praise God! You died for me!
Thy precious Gift of Grace drew gain from loss,
And from discordant flesh flowed harmony.
Now songs of wondrous praise pervade my heart,
As I vie for Redeemer's prized hand.
Bless me with mind of Christ, full-bloom'd - not part-
That pure and glory-robed I ready stand.
Swift come the day I shall at altar meet
Dear Lord and Lamb - my Love - my Bridegroom sweet
- Dominique Reynard Clark

- * All creation is an outstretched finger pointing to God.
- * The world crowns success, but God crowns faithfulness.
- * Anything suffered in the body can profit the soul.
- * Every house where love abides and friendship is a guest,
is surely home, sweet home; for there the heart can rest.
(Henry Van Dyke)
- * Returning good for good is commendable;
returning good for evil is Christlike.

Chapter Eighteen

"Pray Without Ceasing"

"And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (18:1).

Jesus' words are surely applicable to our day. In the previous chapter, He described the time of the beginning of sorrows when men would long to be delivered from their misery. One sad tendency we have, is to give in to our groanings and give up fighting the good fight of faith. This parable is given to illustrate His point that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." The word "faint" means to lack courage, or lose heart, and carries the thought that one tries to desensitize himself to the pain around him. Paul describes it as a time of sleep; the remedy is to pray. If we are not in an attitude of prayer, the devastating result is heart failure.

This parable describes one who must be persistent despite less than ideal circumstances, as "there was in a city a judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary" (18:2-3). Her only recourse was an appeal, which is likened unto prayer, but that appeal must be made to a man who has no fear of God, nor any regard or compassion for his fellowman. We are certainly not at a loss to identify with this woman, for such an attitude prevails in the hearts of some in authority today.

Scripture tells us, however, that we must be subject to those authorities, for they are ordained of God (Romans 13:1). Verses four and five indicate that this woman was persistent in her quest to be heard, even though she faced impossible odds. Personal gain by the judge is given as the only reason he finally listened to her: "Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me" (18:5). The result of this woman's insistent appeal was deliverance. Though the reasons may vary, Jesus insists that God will hear the cries of His own.

"And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night, though He bear long with them? Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (18:7-8). God is not of the same heart as was this judge, for His interests are not selfish. His deliverance is sure, even though He has reasons for bearing long with them. When His purposes are completed, He will answer speedily. This verse also tells us of the speedy judgment which will come upon the oppressor, even as the lightning seen in the previous chapter. It will be a time of great declension and Jesus wonders whether there will be any faith manifest upon the earth at that time. How many will He find praying, rather than fainting?

"And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others" (18:9). The Teacher continues to instruct by parables. This one is directed at the Pharisees, who were constantly measuring the righteousness of others with their own.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess" (18:10-12). There are several things about this man which we must guard against. First, his prayer was with himself, meaning that he was claiming center stage rather than putting God there. Second, he address "God," showing that he did not have a revelation of Him as the Father. Third, he compares his character to that of others, pointing to the absence of some glaring social sins in his life. Fourth, he points to his works, which like his "spotless" character, are in his own eyes, and are proof of his justification. These things are tremendously important to the good moral man, but they become a great detriment to God's Message of justification by grace through faith.

It was the lowly publican who found the glorious path of Divine forgiveness and acceptance. "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (18:13). The publican's prayer illustrates some beautiful points of true repentance and humility. He stood afar off, not only indicating his true condition of being away from God's fellowship, but also his perception of this condition. Next, he shows his shame by not even being able to lift his eyes to heaven, but simply smote his breast, which was a symbol of acknowledging his wretchedness. His words tell us that he was shut up to grace alone, and he knew it. His address was also to God, for he in no wise knew the Father, but unlike the Pharisee, his appeal is "be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus' message is clear to all who would be saved. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (18:14). In spite of all man's attempts to attain righteousness, there is but one way of deliverance, and that is to acknowledge utter helplessness, and come to Him solely on the basis of Divine Grace.

"And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them; but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God" (18:15-16). These helpless little children are in direct contrast to the self-sufficient Pharisees. These children represent the attitude of absolute dependence upon Him, which trust must be present in the hearts of all those who would enter the Kingdom of God. "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (18:17).

"And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (18:18). That question has already been answered for those who have ears to hear. This man was a ruler, but whether or not he was a Pharisee, we are not told. He does manifest the Pharisaical attitude, however. His question, "What shall I DO to inherit eternal life?" has been asked many times, and indicates that even though this man had made every possible effort to achieve righteousness, he was still uncertain. Jesus countered with: "Why callest thou Me good, none is good save one, that is God" (18:19). The Master must make this enquirer understand that He is more than just a good mortal man. His goodness is only because, He, too, is God. Jesus' next comments are directed to exactly what this man wanted to hear, but He will soon point out that this ruler falls woefully short. "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother" (18:20). The law, according to Exodus 20, can be easily divided into three parts. The first four commandments are man's responsibilities to God. In the middle, we read: "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," indicating a respite, or a rest. The covenant of law had to be tempered with grace, or Israel

would not have survived beyond the first day. The last six commandments outline man's responsibilities to man. It is upon these which Jesus enlarges, for this is exactly where the Pharisees put their emphasis. However, though this rich young ruler had "kept these from my youth up," he still presents a picture of one who is fearful and insecure. If righteousness comes by the law, this man should have felt very confident with himself, and should have been highly commended by Jesus.

This is not the case, however, as Jesus brings greater condemnation upon him, as He points to the other side of the law saying: "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (18:22). Jesus is not talking about "buying" our way into the Kingdom with our own resources. He is telling this young man to do something that is impossible to do, outside of a new creation heart, gained by a born-again experience. Jesus also wanted to bring this young man to a place where he cannot trust and glory in himself. Not only that, but He is telling him that the first priority of the law must be to God: "Come and follow Me." These words did not arouse great joy in this man, as he went away "very sorrowful, for he was very rich." His riches speak more than monetary, but also of an attitude which refuses to be dependent upon the grace of God.

"And when Jesus saw he was very sorrowful, He said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God: For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God" (18:24-25). Man is by nature, self-sufficient, and it is difficult for him to renounce trust in self long enough to accept God's Gift to him. The reason is that he will have nothing whereby he might glory.

These words of Jesus bring forth a pertinent question: "Who then can be saved? (18:26). This question comes from the reasoning, law-keeping mind of humanity. If one cannot pull himself up by his own bootstraps and find favor with God, how then can it be done? The answer is consistent with all Scripture: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (18:27). This is the truth which every man must learn if he is to be set free from destruction. It not only applies to initial salvation, but to every level of spiritual experience. The principle is always the same. Man's need is met only by God and His glorious grace displayed through redemption. Any other way is an absolute impossibility.

HUMILITY

Least practised and most difficult
Of virtues to attain -
To reach it takes a lifetime,
But to have it is great gain.
It takes all the grace of God within
The heart of man to see,
That the foremost of God's lessons
Is just plain humility.
Be clothed with it, for God resists
The arrogant and proud,
The humble under God's own hand
With grace will be endowed.
Not one faithful ministry, or life
Will unrewarded be;
In due time we'll be exalted,
If we show humility.

-- Frank Roberts

* One good deed is of more worth than a thousand brilliant theories. Let us not wait for large opportunities, or for a different kind of work, but do just the things we "find to do" day by day. (C. H. Spurgeon)

* The Law shows the distance there is between God and man; the Gospel bridges that awful chasm, and brings the sinner across it. (C. H. Spurgeon)

"Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee" (18:28). It seems that Peter has been listening intently to all these proceedings and knows that he and others have left all their own "riches" to follow Jesus. He was undoubtedly curious as to what the benefits are for such

wholesale dedication in following Him. "And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more IN THIS PRESENT TIME, and in the world to come life everlasting" (18:29-30). There are two very important issues which we must consider from this verse. First is salvation, the second is ministry. No individual is saved or lost on the basis of someone else's decision. Parents cannot make the decision to accept Christ for their children, nor vice versa. By the same token, one cannot blame others for the fact that they did not accept Christ. There have also been many who have accepted Christ and were disowned by their family. Such sacrifices are unavoidable.

Jesus' teaching here does not contradict the essence of Scripture, which is Divine Love. Some believers have "left" relatives, as to thought, purpose, attitude, values, life style, or concept of life, but never does the Word of God give license to rebel against authority, nor to shirk responsibility, in the name of following Christ. Children who have accepted Jesus, are not told to rebel against ungodly parents. Rather, they are told to "honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise" (Ephesians 6:2). Christian wives are not to rebel against unbelieving husbands, but are to be examples, with the hope of winning them to the Lord (1 Peter 3). Husbands are not to forsake their wives, but are to love them as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5).

In all of these examples, there remains the same conclusion: we cannot win others if we alienate them. Verse 30 teaches that there is great reward for the one who has left all to follow Him. Some who have claimed such a sacrifice, are not the better for it. Why not, since we know that God is true to His Word? Though they may have accepted Christ, their "forsaking all" is really motivated by rebellion against authority, not submission to Christ. Some people develop a martyr complex, supposing that everything they suffer is because they have become a Christian. According to our verse, such should "receive manifold more" both now and in eternity.

This benefit certainly does not mean great material wealth, but among other blessings, it does bring a victorious spirit, and a joy and contentment which we did not have before we were born again. Only in eternity will it be revealed the full extent of these promised treasures.

The second application of this verse is in the area of ministry. Some suppose that it means that family must come second to ministry, but this is also contrary to Scripture. We saw the order of man's responsibilities outlined in Chapter 12, using money as an example. That order must prevail in all areas of our lives. As to ministry, Paul tells us: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And THIS (the order of verses 32-34) I speak for your profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction" (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).

Paul does not mean that one who is married cannot be in the ministry, but neither is he implying that family must be secondary, disregarded, or forsaken. The apostle is not trying to establish a rigorous bondage for ministers, but is establishing priorities. The profit and comeliness comes by observing the order outlined above. If a man is unmarried, with no family obligations, he is free to devote all his time and energy to the business affairs of the Lord. If he is married, he must claim that responsibility first. Another exhortation emphasizing this same truth is found in 1 Timothy 3:2-4: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife . . . one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?)"

There have been some ministers of the Gospel, whose families have literally been reduced to shambles due to neglect. With such a loss, how can they be receiving "manifold more in this present time"? These same ministers have tried to justify themselves by declaring, "The Lord must come first." They must realize that the Lord and the ministry are not the same. The work of the ministry is primarily to the Church, but why must some members of the Church be considered a more important part of the Body of Christ than the minister's own family? In fact, according to Paul's instructions to Timothy, the family is the very guideline for a man's fitness to minister. A man's family is also the Lord's work, and must be attended to as his first priority. It would be wrong for a Gospel minister to take funds intended for the genuine needs of his family and give

them to the Church. (This does not refer to the first fruit which should already have been given to the Lord). Likewise, his love, time, energy, and dedication must first meet the needs of his own family. If this pattern is not followed, there is no way that such a "bishop" can rule his own family well.

"Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished" (18:31). Although a number of other things must yet be accomplished, Jesus' hour is drawing near. All the prophecies concerning Him, from Genesis to this present hour must be fulfilled. He outlines the path which has been foreordained for Him saying that "He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again" (18:32-33). He was to suffer rejection by His own people and unspeakable cruelties by the Romans. Death was imminent, but was certainly not the end, for He would rise again, living proof that God would accomplish all His purposes for mankind.

Even though He had spoken so plainly, we read that the disciples "understood none of these things: and this saying was hidden from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken" (18:34). With such plainness of speech, how could such a thing be? It is proof, however, that we, too, can only understand God's Word and His purposes by divine revelation. Later on, after He was raised from the grave, these same men remembered what He had said to them and were able to testify to others about all these things (24:6-9).

"And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant" (18:35-36). The rest of this chapter is a beautiful portrait of the redemption resulting from Jesus' path of suffering and glory, outlined above. Jericho, meaning "fragrant place," is typical of man's view of this world. Rather than being a place of sweetness, however, it is found to be one of misery and need, as indicated in chapter ten and in our present text. Mark's Gospel declares that the name of this needy soul was "Bartimeaus," meaning, "son of the unclean." He clearly shows the filthy condition of all those born of Adam. Being blind indicates the gross darkness of unregenerate man, and the fact that he was begging, very emphatically declares the bankrupt condition of all men who are without Christ.

There is great hope, both for this man, and for all who are plagued with this condition, for there is the noise of a multitude. Bartimeaus took the first step toward deliverance by enquiring what it all meant. "And they told him Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." He had undoubtedly heard that glorious Name and what He was able to do, for he "cried, saying, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He claimed no ground for special treatment except his own desperate need, and pleaded for grace and mercy from Jesus. This is the only way to receive the fruits of redemption. Notice that some "rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me" (18:39).

Who can imagine anyone so callous as to stand in the way of such a desperate needy man! This man is not to be denied, as he follows the principles of persistence outlined at the beginning of this chapter. His cries among all the shouts of the throng, did not escape the ear of Jesus. He "stood and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight" (18:40-41). This pattern is the same today. One must first be brought near. Next, he must recognize his need and reveal the faith that Jesus is able to meet that need. You will notice into a relationship based upon Divine Grace, he forfeits the reward which he could have had.

The conclusion of the message to this unfaithful servant is a rebuke. "Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?" (19:23). He is saying that rather than letting it lie completely dormant, it could have at least been invested for interest. There is no excuse for doing absolutely nothing. "And He said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds" (19:24). If one is not faithful, someone else will do the job and receive the accompanying reward.

"For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him" (19:26). These words seem to have been spoken for two reasons. The first is that they are a continuation of Jesus' words in verse 24, explaining why the pound of the unfaithful is given to the one with ten. Second, it is an answer to the natural reasoning which is interjected in V. 25: "And they said unto Him, Lord, he hath ten

pounds." Jesus uses the expression, "That which he hath" in a number of places, such as Matthew 13, where it refers to one who "hath ears to hear." In this parable, it means one who has the initiative and opportunity to conduct himself wisely. When men are faithful, they are entrusted with even more. When they are not, even the opportunities and resources provided them are taken away and given to one who will make good use of them.

"But those enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me" (19:27). These are the "citizens" referred to in V. 14, who refused to submit to the authority placed over them. They are specifically declared to be enemies, which means they are Christ rejectors and they are dealt with accordingly.

Dying for me, dying for me,

There on the cross He was dying for me;

Now in His death my redemption I see,

All because Jesus was dying for me.

-- Roberts

Chapter 19, Continued

The Road to Jerusalem

"And when He had thus spoken, He went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass, when He was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither" (19:28 -30). The names of these cities are very significant as to Jesus' journey and purposes concerning Israel and redemption. Jerusalem, meaning the "foundations of peace," cannot fulfill its name until the Prince of Peace provides it. Bethphage "the house of green or unripe figs," refers to the "green" unspiritual, immature, condition of the house of Israel. Bethany, meaning both "house of affliction" and "response" describes the options of this chosen people. They were sorely afflicted by the oppression of the Romans, but will such affliction bring a positive response to Him, who has come to deliver them? The next few verses record what is known as "Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem." There are those who received Him and some who refused. Two disciples were sent to bring a colt on which He was to ride, symbolizing His official presentation as their King. Matthew, who portrays Christ as the King, gives more detail concerning this event, and is the only Gospel writer who records two animals rather than one. The reason for that is because he shows us that the King must have His Queen. Though she is veiled at this time, provision is made for her. In Luke we are informed only of the colt on which Jesus rode, and the fact that it had never been ridden, tells us that this is a place reserved only for Messiah. Jesus is King, but riding the lowly beast is another symbol of the way of humility which He trod at His first advent. Contrariwise, when He comes the second time, He will be riding the white horse of war, and He will put down all who would dare rise up against Him.

The disciples obey His voice and find things exactly as He said they would be" (19:31-33). The owners of the colt do ask the question, "Why loose ye the colt?" but offer no resistance, when they said, "The Lord hath need of him." "And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen" (19:35-37). Such a demonstration can by no means do justice to the Inauguration of the King of kings which is yet to come, but it is sufficient to give the nation Israel an opportunity to accept Him.

There were those who had the correct response: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (19:38). That sentiment is by no means shared by all, for "some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (19:39). Christ must be worshiped, but it is quite evident that the true worshipers are the minority, for "when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (19:41-42).

This was the chance for Israel to accept Him as their Messiah, but aside from those who paid homage to Him as they spread their garments in His path, Jesus was uniformly rejected. His tears are not for Himself, but for a nation who had rejected the opportunity to enter into the

choicest blessings of peace and prosperity. Now they are blinded to the embodiment of those blessings, and instead of peace, judgment is prophesied. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (19:43-44). This prophecy was fulfilled in 71 A.D. as Titus invaded Jerusalem and destroyed it. "And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (19:45-46). The cleansing of the temple is symbolic of the time, after Jesus takes His throne, that He will cleanse the earth of all sin and unrighteousness. These verses have been used to teach against exchanging monies in a church building, and while the church is not to be used as a merchandising center, this is really not the meaning of the context. From Matthew 21, we learn that they were selling doves, and doves and pigeons could be offered as sacrifices in cases of poverty (Leviticus 5:7). Jesus' parents offered two turtle doves when they took Him to be circumcised when He was eight days old.

From Jesus' words, "ye have made it a den of thieves," we conclude that these money changers were taking advantage of the poor, who were already in desperate straits. Matthew tells us that after these unsavory characters were driven out, "the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple; and He healed them" (Matthew 21:14). For that immediate time, the temple became a house of prayer, a haven of rest for the poor and needy.

Luke continues his discourse saying, "He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and chief of the people sought to destroy Him" (19:47). We are not told how long this daily ministry continued, but we do know that Jesus' time is drawing quickly to a close. The chief religionists are bent on His destruction, but they "could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him" (19:48). Though it was short, Jesus continues to redeem the time, for there were in His final days and hours of ministry, those who still wanted to hear the glorious Message which He taught.

He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is love, no pride,
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.
- Bunyan

Chapter Twenty The Trial Begins

"And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as He taught the people in the temple, and preached the Gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon Him with the elders, and spoke unto Him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest Thou these things? or who is He that gave Thee this authority?" (20:1-2)

Although this occurred prior to Jesus being taken before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, He is put on the witness stand. It is like a preliminary hearing, as He is interrogated by the chief priests and scribes. Like so many of us today, He had "one of those days," even as He was about His Father's business teaching the people. He was rudely interrupted as He ministered when these high-ranking officials questioned His authority. "Tell us," sounds more like a demand than a request. We learn by this encounter that even though we are about the Father's business, things do not necessarily go smoothly.

Jesus' response, however, gives us some very valuable insights on how to conduct ourselves when we, too, are viciously attacked. He answered their question with one of His own. "He said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of man? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; He will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered that they could not tell whence it was" (20:3-7). One of the most dangerous things we can do today is to allow those who desire a confrontation to put us on the defensive. It is here that Jesus shifted that burden of responsibility to the attackers. Such strategy proved very effective, and He was well justified in replying: "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (20:8).

"Then He began to speak to the people this parable: A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandman, and went into a far country for a long time" (20:9). How different is the voice of the Master when He speaks to those who are teachable! The matter concerning His authority is apparently closed, but He still has much instruction and warning to those who have ears to hear. This parable is easily interpreted, for it tells of God's dealings with Israel, from the time they became a nation, to that time then present. The vineyard is the nation of Israel founded by God for the purpose of bringing forth much fruit to Himself.

Verses 10-12 tell of three different servants sent to collect the expected fruits. They seem to represent different time periods in Israel's history. The first servant is beaten and sent away empty, suggesting men, like Samuel, who were not actually killed, but who felt the sting of rejection. The second one is beaten, shamefully treated, and also sent away empty. He could speak of those who ministered during the time of the kings when there were prophets such as Elijah, who were dishonored because people listened to false prophets rather than to the true ones. Finally, the third servant is wounded and cast out. This brings us to the time just prior to the coming of Jesus. As you will note, the treatment of these faithful servants grew progressively worse, the same as Israel's rebellion.

God warned Israel again and again, yet they continued their idolatrous ways, even after God had so abundantly blessed them in the land of Canaan. Their rejection resulted in the carrying away of the ten tribes into Assyrian captivity, from which they never returned. The two tribes were taken captive about one hundred years later and were exiles in Babylon for 70 years, after which they were allowed to return to their land. However, that "revival" was short-lived, and in Jesus' time, they again showed gross rejection of God and His pleas, by killing such prophets as John the baptist.

It is at this time that the Lord of the vineyard said: "I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him" (20:13). Such a scenario was not to be, for "when the husbandman saw Him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast Him out of the vineyard, and killed Him. What therefore shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them?" (20:14-15). The husbandman, or the leaders, are held accountable and their fate is sealed, as He said: "He shall come and destroy these husbandman, and shall give the vineyard to others." When they heard that sentence, they said: "God forbid" (20:16).

That promised judgment came to pass when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., and as a nation, was set aside. God then began to form a fruitful vineyard of the Church. He must pour out judgment on all unrighteousness, but hope springs eternal because of His marvelous grace. The next two verses reveal that God has not cast off this nation forever, but is bringing them to Christ, for "He beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written. The stone which the builders rejected (the heir which was killed) the same is become the head of the corner?" Whosoever shall fall upon that Stone shall be broken; but on whosoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (20:17-18). To "fall upon Christ," means to come to Him with a broken and contrite spirit, which will bring salvation. When someone resists that offer, the Stone becomes a devastating judgment.

"And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on Him, and they feared the people; for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them. And they watched Him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of His words, that so they might deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor" (20:19-20).

Even when God's Word is rejected, it finds its mark, and these rebellious religionists are examples of it. Jesus' piercing words have stirred them into action to lay hands on Him, and only their greater fear of the people prevents them from doing so. His hour is not yet come, but they continue to spy on Him. Such Satanic tactics have been used throughout the years, as wicked men have tried to sway God's ordained earthly authority against the righteous. In our text, the attempt is made to accuse Jesus of openly defying such authority.

"And they ask Him, saying, Master, we know that Thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest Thou the person of any, but teaches the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?" (20:21-22). Their words are filled with flattery rather than real commendation, and it seems that they are trying to "set Him up" to openly disregard Caesar's authority, by declaring that they knew He did not regard persons. "But He perceived their

craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye Me?" (20:23). The Proverbs carry warnings against those who would flatter: "Meddle not with them," 20:19 emphatically declares.

Jesus is not deceived, and once again, turns the tables on them. "Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered, Caesar's. And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's" (20:24-25). He had declared earlier that "a greater than Solomon is here," and this is just one more example of that super abounding wisdom. His statement is so simple and yet so very piercing and powerful. "And they could not take hold of His words before the people: and they marvelled at His answer, and held their peace" (20:26). It seems that some declare that if one is subject to God, he cannot be subject to the powers that be, because of their wicked ways. Some foolishly refuse to pay taxes, because some governmental programs are against the ways of God. However, we must realize that those governments are not our responsibility, but God's. Remember that Joseph and Mary paid taxes to the very government which sought to kill their Son. Our only responsibility is to submit to the authority which God has placed over us, and we are to render to Caesar his due. It was his picture on the penny, not God's.

"Then came to Him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection" (20:27). This sect is next in line to question Him, and they, too, want to trap Him rather than search for Truth. They present a ridiculous hypothetical situation, using the law of Moses as a basis for it. Moses did write: "If any man's brother die, having a wife, and she die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother." The rest of their words come from their own reasoning minds. They present this hypothesis: "There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she?" (20:28-33).

Their reasoning is that there can be no resurrection because it would present such complicated situations as this. Jesus destroys all their fleshly cogitations with one blow: "The children OF THIS WORLD marry, and are given in marriage." That one statement should be sufficient, but as He so often does, Jesus gave His accusers more than they bargained for, and because they hear such an abundance of the Word of God, they are without excuse for their rebellion against God. "But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (20:35-36).

His message is clear. Not all men of this world will be accounted worthy of the resurrection, for as we know from other Scripture, all will not submit to Him and experience the new birth. Those who do believe on His Name shall live forever. The Master demonstrates that He, too, is very familiar with Moses, and preaches from the Scriptures with which they are familiar. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him" (20:37-38). At the time Jesus spoke these words, all of these men were in the grave, but God speaks of them as though they are very much alive, and such is the case because of the resurrection.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). This verse is clearly proven here as "certain of the scribes answering said, Master, Thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask Him any question at all" (20:39-40). Their mouths have been stopped, but Jesus still has more to say to them. "How say they that Christ (the Messiah for whom they looked) is David's son? And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies they footstool. David therefore calleth Him Lord, how is he then his son?" (20:41-44). This question is not answered by Jesus, nor do the scribes attempt to reply. We know from the Scripture that the answer is quite simple. Jesus, the Christ, or Anointed of God, is the Son of David after the flesh, but He is also the eternal Son of God, and thus David called Him Lord. It is this stumbling block which, from that day to the present, the Jewish nation cannot avoid. Jesus is the Son of God.

"Then in the audience of all the people He said unto His disciples, Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues and the chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a show make

long prayers, the same shall receive greater damnation" (20:46-47). These characteristics sound like some of the modern day "clergy", who by their long robes and required special greetings, love to call attention to themselves, rather than to Christ. Being scribes, they should have been like Ezra of old, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" (7:6), seeking to point men to the ways of God.

Likewise today, such "scribes" who should know God's Word and should be declaring the fulness of it, are more concerned with their own ego, exalting themselves into the highest religious seats and occupying lavish rooms while feasting at luxurious banquets. This is done at the financial expense of poor widows, as they devour their very houses. Is it just a coincidence here that the next statement made of them is that they pray long prayers just to make a show? Or is it perhaps an indication of our day when some prominent preachers are "trading" money for prayer? Such judgments belong to God, but Jesus declares that if they are true, "the same shall receive greater damnation."

Lead me to some soul today,
Oh, teach me, Lord, just what to say;
Friends of mine are lost in sin
And cannot find their way.

-- Houghton

* If a Christian is careless in Bible reading, he will care less about Christian living.

* Let Christ first work IN you, then He will work THROUGH you.

Chapter 21

SIGNS OF THE END

"And He looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all." (21:1-3)

This scene is still being unfolded in the midst of the temple. In the previous chapter, Jesus imparted many lessons, both to the hungry and to those who came only to criticize and entrap Him. The widow in our text is seen in sharp contrast to the religious "takers," who devour widow's houses (20:47), as well as the rich men who cast their gifts into the treasury. The lesson is given again that God is not so impressed with the size of a gift as with the attitude of the heart that bestows it. This woman gave out of her poverty, and according to Jesus "hath cast in more than all." The Apostle Paul commended the Macedonian saints who also gave out of their poverty. The rich gave of their abundance and did not miss it, but "she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (21:4).

"And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (21:5-6). The temple is still the subject here, and perhaps the gifts given in the previous verses were to further beautify it. However, Jesus declares that it is doomed to destruction. This literal plundering came in 71 A.D. when Jerusalem was overthrown by Titus. The events of our chapter, though, reach even beyond that devastating time to the Great Tribulation. According to Matthew 24:3, the disciples ask the questions: "When shall these things be?" and "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?"

The disciples did not know of the Church Age which was to come between the time then present and the devastation predicted and described here. Jesus let them know that many things must transpire before all this prophecy is fulfilled. No specific time of "when" is given, but the signs identifying that period abound. Paul gave the same instructions to the Church when he wrote: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you" (I Thessalonians 5:1). Matthew, who presents Christ the King and His Kingdom, is much more specific than Luke in describing the events of the Tribulation, but Luke gives a definite overview of those things which must come to pass.

Great deception is described in verse 8, when "many shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ." Then political signs follow: "Ye shall hear of wars and commotions," which testify of the unrest, rumblings, and threats of war among the nations, and these rumors finally give way to actual conflicts, as "nations shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom" (21:10). Next

are the great signs of upheaval in creation, as "great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (21:11). All the foregoing signs are described by Matthew as the "beginning of sorrows," and we can see them coming to pass right now in the end of this Church Age.

It is a desperate day of subtlety, as men, both religiously and politically, try to take a place belonging only to Christ, trying to solve the ills of mankind. Some are not only declaring things that are contrary to Scripture, but are also taking a place of headship over the Church, which only belongs to Jesus. Sadly, many Christians are being led away after them (Acts 20:30).

In the political arena are men who truly believe that they can unite this world into one great Utopia. Out of all these would-be saviors, there will emerge a man who will apparently bring about all the things that are to be accomplished by Jesus when He reigns as King of kings. Other signs, such as rumors of war, disasters in the earth, and unexplained phenomena in the heavens, we have already witnessed in our day. The time is right for the escalation of all these signs which define the end time, of which Jesus speaks. Another sign is that Israel will become the center of attention.

"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My Name's sake" (21:12). We know from their past history, when they were cast into prison and brought before kings, that they have been a thorn, politically, in the sides of their tormentors. As we read here, they are to be delivered up "to the synagogues," which seems to indicate that true believers will be persecuted by religious leaders, even as the early apostles were oppressed by the Jewish hierarchy of Jesus' day.

Religion will play an active role in the end-time drama which unfolds before Jesus takes His throne. Satan will be allowed to go the limit in his endeavor to induce man to worship the image of the beast. The Jew will see his own religious sacrifices taken away, and we can only speculate on other compromises he will make with Satan's false regime. The next verses indicate that these compromises will come at the expense of true believers.

"And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (21:13-14). Some people have interpreted these statements to mean that study and meditation on God's Word are not necessary; that when one would stand before a congregation to minister, his mouth would automatically be filled with all sorts of wisdom and instruction, a proof of Divine Inspiration. This is not the interpretation of Jesus' words here, for He would never contradict the instruction of II Timothy 2:15. Rather, He is telling them that they need not prepare a defense when they are unjustly called before a tribunal during these days of severe persecution. God will give them such forceful wisdom that their adversaries will be unable to answer them (21:15).

They are also warned that "Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish" (21:16-18). Being betrayed by friends and family, their righteous answers to the ungodly authorities does not guarantee that they will be released, for many of them will be martyred. Jesus' words to them seem to be contradictory, but of course, they are not. There will be many of them martyred, for they will be hated of all men. In comparison, Matthew 24:9 states: "Ye shall be hated of all nations." This refers to Israel, the nation, and while some individuals will "endure unto the end" and be saved physically, as Matthew states, not a hair of Israel's head (as a nation), will perish. "In your patience, possess ye your souls" (21:19). All of God's promises to this ancient nation are going to be fulfilled. All their days of waiting, and finally believing His Word, are going to be rewarded; but before this happens, there are devastating days ahead for the ancient city. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (21:20-22). This points to the beginning of the time when the holy city shall be trodden down of the Gentiles for forty-two months (Revelation 11:2). According to Matthew 24 and Daniel 9:27, it will occur in the middle of the week of great tribulation when the abomination of desolation stands in the holy place. The instruction here and in Matthew 24 is to get out of Jerusalem as quickly as possible, for

"there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon the people" (21:23). A special woe is pronounced upon pregnant women, and those with nursing children, indicating that there will be no considerations or mercies shown for these special conditions. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled" (21:24).

The times of the Gentiles is a certain period of time and authority given by God to the Gentiles to rule over this world. When that time expires, those same Gentiles will not readily relinquish the reins of government to Christ. Instead, they will rise up in all their wickedness and rebellion against Him, and the events just described will be the result. All their fury will be unleashed against His chosen people. It is quite true that God has used the nations to punish Israel, and will do so yet again, but

Chapter 21

SIGNS OF THE END

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the dearth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (21:25-26). In addition to the devastation wrought by the wickedness of ungodly nations, the heavens also are seen to be in a state of chaos. This could be the result of the warfare going on in the heavens between Michael and the dragon with their respective forces. It could also be the result of nuclear war being waged on earth. Regardless, it presents a very fearful atmosphere, and Matthew tells us that unless "those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:22).

"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (21:27). This is not His coming for the Church, as some seem to think. "They" who shall see the Son of man, refers to the men of verse 26 whose hearts are failing them for fear. That fear was justified. Matthew 24:27 describes this appearance as "lightning coming out of the east, and shining even unto the west," meaning that it will be a time of great judgment. The next verse describes the battle of Armageddon: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Furthermore, note that Jesus is coming in a cloud. Hebrews 12:1 indicates that a cloud can refer to people, and that seems to be the context here. It is quite likely that the cloud which received Jesus when He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9) was the Old Testament believers who came out of the graves after the resurrection and appeared unto many (Matthew 27:52-53). By the time the events described here in Luke take place, the Church will have already received their glorified bodies, and many will have officially become a part of His "armies," or cloud, according to Zechariah 1:15, "they helped forward the affliction," meaning that they went beyond the limit of punishment which God intended. Thus they, themselves, will be the target of God's vengeance, and He will bring their "times" to a decidedly violent end.

THE TRUTH IS

If God isn't real
And His Word isn't true,
Then who am I,
And who are you?
And what is this place
In which we dwell?
Is it heaven,
Or is it hell?
And what is the meaning
Of what we do?
Is it for me,
Or is it for you?
And what will one day
Become of us,
If all we do
Is fume and fuss?
If earth is a campground

For people at play,
And life has no meaning
From day to day;
If the end of each creature
Is just "dust to dust,"
Then what is so special
About each one of us?
If God isn't real
And His Word isn't true,
Then Who am I,
And who are you?
But suppose God is real
And His Word is true,
And we are each His;
I am and you;
And the place where we're living
Is just temporary,
But heaven's home is most extraordinary.
Suppose "love" is what
It's all about,
And that Jesus will soon
Call us up with a shout.
Each one loving Him
And loving each other,
And living forever
As sister and brother.
It's a much better thing
For me and for you
To believe God is real
And His Word is true!
-- Rosemary Oetinger

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (21:28). Though these words can be applied to the Church when we see the signs marking the end of this present age, the context refers to the redemption of Israel as a nation, as is indicated by the following parable. "Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (21:29-31). According to prophecies, both in the Old and New Testaments, the nation Israel is destined to go through a "hard winter" of experience because of their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah.

Following the devastating events outlined in this chapter, their spring time of resurrection will be sure. The awful expressions of death, are in fact, forerunners of coming life, wherein they will be revived from the rubble of the tribulation to emerge as God's fig tree, with fruit both for Him and the nations to whom they will now be ready to minister. We see also that Jesus alludes to the time period when such shall take place, for He says: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (21:32). The same generation that witnesses the horror described earlier, is assured of living to see this chosen Nation lead the way to spiritual fruitfulness. Notice the order in verse 29: "the fig tree - and all the trees." It is this Jewish nation, which will lead the rest of the trees, or nations, into the millennium. These promises are sure, for "heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (21:33).

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (21:34-35). The word "surfeiting" indicates one who suffers from a headache because of drunkenness. Jesus warns against people becoming so involved with the cares of this life, or trying to escape the pressures

through drunkenness (which produces its own headache) that they become oblivious to the nearness of His coming.

Paul gives similar instruction to the Church. "But ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" (I Thessalonians 5:4-7). It seems that the greatest danger before ANY of the appearances of Jesus, is that those on the earth will not know that He is coming and will be caught unawares. Let Paul's words and those of Jesus in our chapter speak to your heart: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The things of which Jesus speaks refer to those snares of verses 34-35, which would prevent one from being able to "stand before the Son of man," fully aware of His presence. He will come as a thief only to the unsuspecting ones.

"And in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple, for to hear Him" (21:37-38). The time of Jesus' departure is at hand. The events of the next chapter set in motion the final days of His walk to Calvary. In the day time, He busied Himself in the temple, teaching, but in the night seasons, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. According to chapter 22:39, it was His customary place of prayer, and in view of the events of these next two chapters, that was undoubtedly His purpose for going to prayer.

Luke shows more vividly than all the other Gospel writers, the special need for prayer which Jesus as a Man possessed. Whether He prayed all night, we are not told; nor are we informed whether the disciples went with Him, as they often did. We are told that with, or without rest, He returned early in the morning because all the people came to hear Him. He would in no wise disappoint them, and He is true to His instruction to us of praying and occupying with the business at hand, until He was taken out of the world.

Chapter Twenty-two

GOD'S PASSOVER

"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. And the chief priests and Scribes Sought how they might kill Him; for they feared the people. " (Luke 22:1-2) God's time has come for THE FULFILLMENT of this very special Passover feast. He instituted it many years earlier, just prior to Israel coming out from under Egyptian bondage. It tells of the innocent lamb whose blood was spilled and then put on the door posts of each home in Israel. God said: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). This meant that none of the firstborn in Israel who were "under the blood" would die as did the firstborn of Egypt.

In addition to applying the blood on the door posts, the children of Israel were instructed to eat the Passover, symbolic of understanding and appropriating the provisions of Calvary. The type was wonderful, but now the time has come for Christ to accomplish all that was written of Him. The prophetic wheels have been in motion for some time as we have seen the hatred of the Jews against God's chosen Vessel. It is no accident that such hatred climaxed at the very time of the Passover, and though God did not force these men to commit the murderous acts which followed, He did use them to accomplish His purposes. Psalm 76:10 declares: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee," and this is just one example of it. Men may think they are doing exactly as they please, but God sees to it that His purposes are accomplished and even Satan himself is used like a puppet.

"Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them" (22:3-4). As in the garden of Eden, Satan needs a vessel to do his bidding, and he finds such subjects, both in Judas, and the Chief Priests who were willing to buy his services. "And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray Him" (22:5-6).

"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat" (22:7-8). The two disciples inquire of Him as to where this should be done, and Jesus is very explicit in His instructions. "Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the good- man of the

house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready" (22:10-12). We are not told whether this homeowner was known of Jesus, nor of any questioning on his part. What we do read is that the disciples found everything exactly as Jesus had said to them, "and they made ready the Passover" (22:13).

"And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him" (22:14). This was a very meaningful time for Jesus, and in spirit this same scenario must be found in our lives, for we, too, must be willing to sit down with Him and comprehend the meaning of this great feast, as it applies to our own experience. As with the disciples, He would say to us: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (22:15). The next verse indicates that it is much more than a traditional feast: "For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" (22:16). He was God's Passover and would henceforth eat no more of it because the day of types and shadows is now giving way to reality.

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of God shall come" (22:17-18). We read of THREE CUPS in this chapter, and each instance tells a different story. This one portrays a cup of joy, for Jesus declared that He would not drink of it until the Kingdom of God should come. At this point in time, only sorrow and death lay before Him, but there will come the day when He will be able to partake of the joys of the Kingdom. It is interesting that only Luke records this cup, and that is in keeping with his picture of the peace offering, which describes the great joy and peace with God which have been provided by this special aspect of redemption. We note that it was the disciples who were to consume it, speaking of the fact that we do enjoy the joys and blessings of the peace offering during this age. One glorious demonstration of it happened on the Day of Pentecost.

After this "He took bread and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me" (22:19). This bread represents much spiritual instruction concerning redemption. It figures the body of Jesus as an offering for sin (Hebrews 10:5-9). Next, it represents Christ as the True Bread from Heaven as John 6 records, and where we are told: "For My flesh is meat indeed" (John 6:55). Literally, there was not one bone of His body broken, as was prophesied by Scripture, but because that body was totally submitted to the will of the Father in our behalf, all men can now partake freely of this glorious spiritual meat which results in abundant life and power. And then we read that the veil in the temple which was rent in twain, is figurative of Jesus' flesh (Hebrews 10:20). By literally opening that veil, God was showing that the Way into the holy of holies, which speaks of the closest place of fellowship with God, is now open to all people.

"Likewise also the cup AFTER supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you" (22:20). This is the SECOND CUP mentioned, and it is the cup of suffering and death. The faithful Lamb poured out His life-blood to purchase for us the New Testament, or Covenant, wherein are contained all the purposes and provisions of Divine Grace for those who will appropriate them.

"But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (22:21). Again, this was a very special time in the life of Jesus, as He "desired to eat this Passover" with them, but there is also a great cloud of darkness hanging over Him. He knows His appointed destiny - "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed" (22:22). Jesus was also a man, and He felt the pangs of rejection just as any of us would. These feelings are summed up in Psalm 41. Even though God uses this act of betrayal to accomplish His purposes, woe is pronounced upon the betrayer.

As one might well expect, the disciples are thrown into a real quandary as to who the culprit might be, and "they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing" (22:23). Judas is not named as the traitor here, but he is in both Matthew and John. Mark seems to single out one disciple, but refuses to name him. "And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto Him one by one, Is it I? And ANOTHER said, Is it I? (Mark 14:19).

The details being different, are important when we realize that each author presents Christ and His redemption in a different light. Matthew, who shows the trespass offering whereby all men are seen as absolutely responsible to God's righteous Government, not only reveals the traitor's name, but he is the only one of the writers to tell of his judgment (Matthew 27:5). Throughout his Gospel, Mark shows Christ's atonement for sin, and his reluctance to name specifically the guilty

party, shows that atonement was made for him and available to him, should he choose to accept it. Luke continues to show Christ making peace by the blood of His cross, but ends this incident very abruptly with no indication of anyone being singled out. John, on the other hand, in presenting Christ as the Son of God, indicates clearly that He knew all things.

In the midst of all the enquiry of the previous verse, another disturbing situation begins. "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (22:24). Immediately, we accuse the disciples for being callous in view of the announcement of His betrayal just being made and the pressure which He was under. However, we know that we can become so wrapped up with our own difficulties or ambitions, that we, too, lose sight of Jesus and what His interests might be - for Himself and also for us. As always, He is very gracious and we read of no reprimand.

He simply uses the opportunity to further instruct them in the ways of righteousness. "And He said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors" (22:25). The ways of God and the ways of man are by no means the same. Here the Master

declares that those who are in places of authority over others are the benefactors and receive the benefits of their office. In God's scheme of things, just the opposite is true. "But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve: for whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth" (22:26-27).

Jesus was the prime example of what He was teaching, that the day of temptation, humiliation, and service precedes the day of glory. He was indeed the greatest. However, at the present time, He was in the place of service rather than sitting as chief among those gathered in the banquet house. He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, tells the same story, and is just opposite to the thinking and conduct of natural man. Though Jesus should have been receiving the respect and honor due a Sage, He assumed the place of the young one, and became the servant to all. Not only so, but He exhorted the disciples to follow the same rule, for His day of exaltation is coming and they have the opportunity to share in it. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (22:28-30).

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (22:31-32). Jesus in repeating Peter's name gives us a little hint of His exasperation at this point. Matthew's record of this feast announces Jesus' declaration: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad" (Matthew 26:31). Peter's answer to that is: "Though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended" (22:33). Peter undoubtedly meant what he said, but he did not understand his own weakness, nor the forces beyond his control which were working to exploit that weakness.

We are given some insight into the spirit world as we read: "Satan hath desired to have you." Nothing has changed since the days of Job, when Satan had to get God's permission to touch one of His own. We can be encouraged that our arch enemy can go no further than God allows, but we must realize that in both cases, God granted Satan permission without consulting the principals involved. In Luke we are told that Satan was going to "sift you as wheat," and we can expect no less in our own lives, as God will use Satan as an instrument to separate the flesh from the spirit. Jesus' prayer is two-fold. He did not pray that Satan would not be able to touch this very vocal disciple, but rather that Peter's faith would not fail.

The chaff must be blown away, but genuine faith will stand as gold, even as Job declared (Job 23:10). Secondly, Jesus petitioned, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The word "convert" means to revert or to turn about. It has no reference to a sinner being converted, for Peter was already a saved man. It means rather that Peter would be turned from going his own way after having denied Jesus. At that time, he boldly declared: "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (22:33). Jesus knew better, and He said: "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (22:34). As we read later, this prophecy came to pass verbatim and Peter was devastated, and he went out and wept bitterly. John informs us that he contemplated going back into the fishing business

from whence he came, when Jesus appeared to him (John 21:3). As we read John 21, we see the gradual conversion of Peter as he decided to follow Jesus and obey Him by feeding His sheep. After he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he became a powerful minister and was indeed able to "strengthen" the brethren.

INCENTIVES

Our work is solemn: do not trifle.

Our task is difficult: do not relax.

Our opportunity is brief: do not delay.

Our path is narrow: do not wander.

Our Prize is glorious: do not faint.

"And He said unto them, When I sent you without purse (a container for food) and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing. Then said He unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (22:35-36). Things are about to change drastically for these chosen men. They are to be introduced to the world of rejection and hardship, as they are going to embark on the same path which has been trod by the Savior. He is telling them that they must make provision for the way, that they can expect no special favors from the world. Moreover, it is going to be a hostile environment and even swords are now to be a part of their equipment.

This seems to be strange language especially in view of Verse 37: "For this I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end." The aforementioned sword was surely not to be used in defense of Jesus, whose path had already been decreed. We do not read of such an instrument being used, even in self-defense, after the Day of Pentecost. It is evident, however, that there is a reason for obtaining one, even to the point of one "selling his garment" to obtain it. "And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And He said unto them, It is enough" (22:38). One was found later in the hands of Peter, and this was no accident in view of Peter's bold declaration to defend Jesus. The nearest he could come to defending Jesus was to "lop off" a man's ear (John 18:10). Even given such a weapon, Peter's strength and resources still failed him. Sometimes, God may give us space to make similar mistakes in order that we might learn that it is not "by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

"And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (22:39-40). The beauty and joy of the intimate fellowship experience in the upper room are over. The words "pray that YE enter not into temptation" seem to indicate that Jesus had already entered into a season of tremendous pressure, which the disciples could not understand. Both in spirit and in physical presence, He "was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not My will but Thine be done" (22:41-42). According to Matthew, He left the disciples at a certain place and took only Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with Him. This indicates that some, even today, enter into more of the sufferings with Christ than do others, but none can "go all the way" with Him. This was something just between the Father and Him, and thus Jesus addresses Him.

It is at this point that we are introduced to the THIRD CUP of this chapter, which is the cup of God's will. It is a cup of suffering and death, and while as a man, Jesus would love to have it removed, He is willing to drink it in obedience to His Father's will. This scene is more graphic in Luke than in any of the other Gospels, for He alone tells us that "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him" (22:43). Scripture never even hints that the angel would deliver Him from His appointed destiny, only that He was strengthened to accomplish the will of the Father. This same non-deliverance may also be God's plan for us, even as Paul discovered when his thorn in the flesh was not removed. He did hear those glorious words though: "My Grace is sufficient for Thee" (II Corinthians 12:8-9).

"And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (22:44). This is another detail reported only by Luke. It is a phenomenon documented in medical literature known as "hematidrosis," or bloody sweat. It can happen under great emotional stress, when tiny capillaries in the sweat glands break, mixing

blood with sweat. This process alone is able to produce marked weakness and possible shock. Only Luke mentions it, because he was not only a physician, but because it reveals both the psychological and physical pressures Christ was suffering as a man. "And when He arose up from prayer, and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, and He said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (22:45-46). For Jesus, the victory has already been won. There is an air of peace and tranquility about Him, and His attention is now turned from Himself to His disciples. Luke only records the very human characteristic of the disciples sleeping because of sorrow. This is a common escape which men use to get away from reality, and while it seems that this Man among men understood it, He does not allow them to give in to it. His instruction applies today, in the end of this age, which is described as a day of drunkenness and sleep. Paul declares: "For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night"(I Thessalonians 5:7). According to Jesus, the remedy for this dangerous condition is to "pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

WHEN WE CANNOT SEE OUR WAY

When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust and still obey,
He who bids us forward go,
Cannot fail the way to show.
Tho' the sea be deep and wide,
Tho' a passage seem denied,
Fearless let us still proceed,
Since the Lord vouchsafes to lead.
Night with Him is never night,
Where He is, there all is light;
When He calls us, why delay?
They are happy who obey.

-- T. Kelly

- * Don't borrow trouble. Be patient and you'll have enough of your own.
- * The Lord doesn't take us into deep water to drown us, but to develop us.

Chapter 22, Continued

"And while He yet spoke, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (22:47-48).

As with all men, Judas had a choice and he has made it. What should have been an expression of affection and intimacy, is revealed to be a mark of betrayal. The ways of escaping out of the wicked hands of men have come to an end and Jesus begins the final lap of His race on earth. A feeble attempt to defend Him is made: "When they which were about Him saw what would follow, they said unto Him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" (22:49). As noted previously, these provisions had been made, but they only serve to emphasize that NOTHING can deter Jesus from His appointed path. The very best that man has to offer must fade helplessly into the background. John 18:10 tells us that the one who smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear was Peter. Even this damage was not lasting, for Jesus "answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him" (22:51). "Suffer ye thus far," is not only a message to Peter, but to all mankind, that this is the road which God had ordained for Him and any effort to change it would not be allowed.

"Then Jesus said unto the chief priest, and captains of the temple, and the leaders, which were come to Him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (22:52-53). In the final analysis, Jesus was not only treated as a thief, but as the worst criminal of all time, as He took upon Himself all the sin and transgressions of the entire Adamic race. Though He enquires as to why they did not take Him as He stood daily in the temple, Jesus knows the answers. We read, first of all, that they "feared the people" (Chapter 20:19). Here Jesus declares: "This is your hour," meaning that God is going to allow them to accomplish the evil that is in

their hearts. It is also "the power of darkness," revealing the forces of evil will be allowed to descend upon Him.

"Then took they Him, and led Him, and brought Him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off" (22:54). He who had called the worlds into existence, the One who was the Sovereign of the universe, equal with God, for He was God, permits Himself to be led away as Isaiah describes, "as a sheep to the slaughter." The first destination is to the house of the high priest, which tells us of the very blatant rejection by that religious faction which should have recognized Him as the Son of God, and instructed the people concerning Him. The saga of Peter also continues here as we read that he "followed afar off." This reflects the battle raging within Peter, wherein we see his desire of wanting to stand with Jesus, but also the fear of making such a stand. It also tells us that this is just the beginning of the apostle's gradual process of learning his own weakness.

Next, Peter entered into the hall where all the activity is about to take place and sat down among others, warming himself by the fire, "But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied, saying, Woman, I know Him not" (22:55-57). The maid's eyes must have been rather piercing as she stared at him, and Peter withered under it as he denied knowing Jesus. "And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not" (22:58). We do not know exactly how much time had elapsed between Peter's first denial and this one, but it is evident that his patience was wearing thin. Matthew says that this time "he denied with an oath" (26:72).

This same pattern takes place in our lives as we, too, are "broken down" over a period of time. The final step of denial comes "about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him: for he is a Galilaen. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately while he yet spoke, the cock crew" (22:59-60). Matthew is more explicit as to Peter's denial as he says that Peter "began to curse and to swear." Luke records only the word "Man." It is fitting for Matthew to include such detail, for he portrays the trespass offering, which points out specific infractions against God's righteous government and shows that man is indeed, responsible for his actions.

Luke records something here that is omitted by all three of the other writers, and that is: "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (22:61). The maid had earnestly scrutinized him earlier, but nothing could compare with this look, which brought conviction that pierced his heart. It was undoubtedly painful for Peter, but at the same time, it speaks of an intimacy which is very much a part of the peace offering aspect of redemption. Peter's heart was smitten and he "went out and wept bitterly" (22:62). Peter's denial of Jesus was most assuredly a great failure in his life, but it worked good for him, as he learned first hand the awesome power of Satan's "sieve" and his own human frailty. It was an incident, however, that affected only himself.

Later in his life, he committed a far greater error, even after he had been mightily used of God. "For before certain came from James, he (Peter) did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation" (Galatians 2:12-13). As Paul explains in the remainder of that chapter, Peter's actions did great damage to the Gospel and were tremendously detrimental to others. Thus we see that this was a far greater failure than his denial of Jesus on that fearful night. We must also remember that we do not experience only one battle with Satan. We do not get so spiritual that we can never be tempted, motivated by fear, and used by this arch enemy to thwart the purposes of God.

"And the men that held Jesus mocked Him, and smote Him. And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee? And many other things blasphemously spoke they against Him" (22:63-65). We can hardly imagine such stupidity and rash blasphemy as we are witnessing here. With all the signs and wonders which had already been performed, all these wicked men are without excuse as to knowing who He is. Such trivial actions of blindfolding Him and demanding that He name His tormentors by prophecy, are only outward expressions that their foolish hearts were so darkened to the Light from Heaven they could not discern that Light, even though He was standing in their midst. This "trial" has continued through the night, "And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led Him into their council, saying, Art

Thou the Christ? Tell us. And He said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe" (22:66-67). We notice that those who are in authority should have pointed people to Christ, are the chief doubters. Like Korah's band of long before who rose up against Moses, so these "men of renown" rise up and reject Christ. Had they listened, they would have indeed known that a Prophet was among them, as He told them plainly what was in their rebellious hearts; that they would in no wise believe Him had He declared Himself to be the Christ. Furthermore, "If I ask you (if I am the Christ), you will not answer me, nor let me go" (22:68).

"Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (22:69). This final assertion seems to be what incensed the Jews more than anything else. They realize the inference and enquire plainly: "Art Thou then the Son of God?" He indicates that their own mouths declared it, "Ye say that I am" (22:70). In their own distorted minds and hardened hearts, their feelings and actions are totally justified. "What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth." They have heard the truth, but because their foolish hearts are darkened, they perceive it as a lie, and have become fools (Romans 1:21-22). Such is the fate of those today who follow the same path.

FIVE MINUTES AFTER I DIE

Oh, what a fool! Hard the word but true;
Passing the Savior, with hell in view,
Doing a thing I can ne'er undo -
Five minutes after I die.

If I am flinging a fortune away,
If I am wasting salvation's day,
"Just is my sentence," my soul shall say,
Five minutes after I die.

-- Author Unknown

Chapter 23

The Crucifixion

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King" (23:1-2).

The trial before the Sanhedrin has ended, but the Jews themselves cannot carry out the desired death sentence. They are still under the iron hand of the Roman Government and are forced to deal with Jesus through those governmental channels. Pilate's name means "close pressed" and he surely receives an opportunity to live up to it here, as he finds himself caught between the hatred of the Jews and the conviction of his own conscience.

Part of what they accused Him of could be considered true, but the way in which it is used is completely false. The idea is from Satan, and the same tactics are often used today when people utter "half-truths" to their own advantage. The perversion of the nation which they ascribe to Him stems from the fact that Jesus challenged their hypocritical hearts in matters concerning the law. They did not realize that they were the ones who had perverted God's purpose for the law and the nation.

The second point is a complete lie, as they accused Him of "forbidding to pay tribute." He had, in fact, said to "render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's" (Luke 20:25). The interesting thing is that they took the true statement, "He Himself is Christ a King," and drew a completely false conclusion. They were trying to demonstrate to Pilate that Jesus was a personal threat to his authority. Pilate acted in a Scriptural manner when he spoke to Jesus as an enquirer rather than an accuser. "And Pilate asked Him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?" (23:3). Whether or not he had heard this statement before, we are not told. It is interesting and proper that he began to enquire as to specifics rather than generalities.

The Jews had asserted that Jesus was "a King."

When Pilate asked "Art Thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered affirmatively, but Pilate perceived Him as being no threat to himself or to Rome. "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man" (23:4). The Jews were the more incensed by this statement, saying, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (23:5). These religious leaders continue to press their case with more

accusations, but Pilate is once again very alert to every detail, and when he perceives that Jesus is a Galilean, he shows that he is a true politician and begins to shift the burden of responsibility to someone else. "And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time" (23:7).

"And when Herod (meaning, "heroic") saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he was desirous to see him of a long season because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned with Him in many words; but He answered him nothing" (23:8-9). Herod is now the man of the hour, and though he was exceedingly glad to see Him, it was not for the purpose of knowing Him. It was because he wanted to witness a miracle, even as many are searching after today. We do not read that he was rewarded with such a phenomenon, and though questioned extensively, Jesus remains silent, even as "a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

During this silence, the "chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him" (23:10). Still, there is no response from Jesus, and the animosity against Him turns from mere words and questions to blasphemous actions. "And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate" (23:11). We can hardly imagine that the Creator of the universe could silently accept such treatment, but so it is written. The robe is simply a mockery of His claim to being King, and reflects their attitude of total denial concerning God's rulership over them. When their sport is done, Jesus is returned to Pilate. That same day, "Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves" (23:12). Jesus was sent to bring men together, but how strange that these two enemies were willing to forget their differences, because they focus on Him as a common problem, rather than recognizing the offer of their salvation.

Pilate called together the rulers of the Jews, and his message is simple: "Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to Him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him" (23:13-15). On more than one occasion, God had gone on record declaring "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Though they tried again and again to prove it, the chief priests and elders were unsuccessful in their attempts to prove that the law found fault with Him. Pilate, representative of all men, is forced to admit that he has found no fault in Him. At this point, he seems committed to try and release Him, hoping that chastisement would satisfy the mob. It was undoubtedly a political decision rather than interest in justice, as we read: "For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast" (23:17).

The hate-filled Jews are not appeased, "and they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas" (23:18). They are indeed united by a common cause as was Pilate and Herod, but it is surely not a unity to be desired. Their cry for Barabbas, "who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison" (23:19), to be released to them, is almost more than we can comprehend. It reflects, however, the irrational and beastly behavior of men when they rebel against God and His purposes. This scene is also a dramatic expression of what was taking place on a much larger scale, for Barabbas is representative of the entire human race, which was released when the innocent Christ died in its place. To personalize this: each of us was the guilty Barabbas, and Christ bore the unspeakable death of the cross which was due us.

Though Pilate tried again to release Jesus, his words seem to be completely drowned out by a mob, crying out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" (23:21). This mode of death was no accident. It shows that this crowd was not satisfied with just any death. Their bloodthirsty hearts were demanding the most gruesome and cruel death known to mankind, one which was reserved for the most hardened and dangerous criminals. This is the place which Jesus took. He became the worst criminal, guilty of the most heinous crimes, and was the victim upon which all God's righteous wrath was poured.

Pilate continued his appeal in behalf of Jesus as "he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that He might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed" (23:22-23). The prophecies concerning Jesus now give way to actuality. He has known from the beginning where His path would end, and through all this melee we read of no resistance. Pilate, unable to quell the building dissension any longer, "gave

sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (23:24-25).

This is the point at which Matthew records that Pilate "took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it" (27:24). He records this special detail in keeping with the trespass offering, which requires every individual to be accountable for his deeds. Furthermore, the response of the people is also in keeping with this trespass offering requirement: "His blood be upon us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). The other three writers omit these two points and in Luke, it is because Christ is seen as the peace offering, bringing God and man together, having borne all the penalty and judgment Himself. "And as they led Him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus" (23:26). The time for "slaughter" has come for the Lamb, and He permits Himself to be led away without the slightest hint of resistance. From the difference in John's account that Jesus bore His own cross (19:17) and our present text, we can only conclude that Jesus started to Golgotha beneath the weight of the cross, but because of the scourging already endured, He was unable to continue. Thus Simon was compelled to carry it.

Although Simon obviously had no choice in this matter, the meaning of his name ("hearing") and the act of bearing the cross, hold much fragrant instruction for us. He is a picture of those who are dedicated and listen to the voice of the Master today. The cross which Simon bore is not a cross of redemption whereon he died, but rather speaks of the sufferings which he endured for the cause of Christ and His people. Paul describes this same truth in Colossians 1:24: "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind (lacking) of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church." It is apparent from this verse that some of the sufferings of Christ were left behind on purpose for us to bear. As noted, we do not in any way make atonement, but those who would totally follow Christ are going to suffer some of the same persecutions and feel the tremendous pressure from the same rebellious attitudes which Jesus felt. All these are symbolized by the cross which Simon was willing to bear.

"And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck" (23:27-29). We see, once again, the unselfish and gracious attitude of Jesus disregarding His own hurt and agony to instruct and comfort others. He knows that His race is about run and He will shortly be with His Father, so He has no need for their tears. We are sure that He did appreciate their love and concern, but His instructions to them concern the days of the great tribulation, which are even now yet future. Those women who are childless are called blessed as they do not have to witness the death of their children.

As we see from the next verse, there is a concerted effort to escape the judgments as "they shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" (23:30). Jesus is insistent that these things are coming because "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (23:31). These things are what was being done to Him. He was the Green Tree, the only thing with any life in it, and they were destroying it. The dry refers to the massive spiritual declension which is even now occurring in the end of the age. Unregenerate man has not improved from the time of Jesus, and thus the attitudes and actions which He witnessed, continue even on a larger scale. Truly it is a dry and desolate wasteland, devoid of spiritual life and vitality.

"And there were also two other, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death" (23:32). We note immediately that there were two OTHER MALEFACTORS with Him, showing that Jesus was also regarded as a criminal and wrong doer. He is literally taking that place in direct fulfillment of the Scripture: "And He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bore the sins of man" (Isaiah 53:12). Death is the only acceptable penalty.

THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT

We seek for joy in worldly gifts,
All tied with ribbons bright,
But the greatest Gift that was ever given,

Came that first Christmas night.
That holy night our Savior was born.
A precious Gift from God to me.
He came, a Babe, in human form.
He died, from sin to set me free.
Risen, He went to Heaven above.
His gifts are still so freely given;
All wrapped in tenderness and love,
And sent all the way from Heaven.
No earthly Gift such joy can give
Than Jesus' promise that I shall live
With Him forever in Heaven above,
Earth cannot match His Gift of Love.

-- Dorothy Rangel

* A mule cannot kick while he is pulling a load, and he cannot pull while he is kicking. Neither can you or I.

* Do not carry a grudge. It is too heavy a load for anyone.

* Time flies. It's up to you to be the navigator.

* To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Chapter 23, Continued

THE CRUCIFIXION

"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left" (23:33). Out of all the comparisons and contrasts of the four Gospel writers, the scene at the cross is, perhaps, the most intriguing, as each one portrays the offering of Jesus in a different light. Though "Calvary" is such a common word among Christians today, both in song and sermon, it is found only one time in Scripture. This is surely not just because Luke was a Gentile, using the Greek, rather than the Hebrew word. Both Golgotha and Calvary mean "skull," but the latter comes from a word meaning "the hair of the head," and also "horn." The inspiration of the Holy Ghost is marvelous! Hair, in Scripture, signifies weakness; horn means power. In one word, Luke who portrays Christ as the Man, has captured the very essence of Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it (He) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." The Seed of the woman assumed all the frailties, limitations, and weaknesses of humanity and is now come to Calvary where He bows to the ultimate weakness of death. It is this weakness however, which provides the power through the resurrection, to crush the serpent's head. Furthermore, it is fitting that here, at the place of the skull, Jesus not only crushed Satan's "skull," or head, but He also won back the headship, or authority, which Adam lost to this arch enemy in the Garden of Eden.

"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots" (23:34). Only Luke records this prayer, as Jesus, the Man, addresses His Father. The content of the prayer is also in keeping with the peace offering, as He pleads forgiveness for His tormentors, that they might find peace with God and Divine fellowship. Gross greed and indifference is seen in this chapter, as well as in the other Gospel accounts, as the soldiers gambled for His clothing. This was in fulfillment of Scripture. We also see various groups identified: "The people stood beholding." "The rulers also with them derided Him." "The soldiers also mocked Him." "And one of the malefactors railed on Him" (23:35-39). All of these tell us of the united rejection of Jesus by all men, whether common, religious, Gentile, or criminal. Their messages, though spoken in derision, do have a thread of redemptive truth to them, as they declare: "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God." He had indeed saved others; however, that was the very reason that He could not save Himself. How different are the ways of God and man! The demands which they made in order to prove that He was the Christ, was diametrically opposed to God's requirement that He remain on the Cross. "And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar" (23:36). As noted, the overall attitude is one of mockery; however, there does seem to be a bit of compassion mixed in, as these men offer vinegar to Jesus. It was used as a pain killer, and according to both

Matthew and Mark's records, it was offered to Him twice. The first time was just prior to His being placed on the cross, and we read that "when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink" (Matthew 27:34). Mark says: "He received it not" (Mark 15:23). The reason for this is that Jesus, as both the trespass and sin offering, must bear the full impact of God's judgment upon sin. All the Gospel Writers record the second offer of the drug, but only John, who portrays the Son of God in absolute control, reveals that it was because Jesus cried, "I thirst," and also that the Scripture might be fulfilled (John 19:28).

"And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS." (23:38) Matthew and Mark declare that this superscription was actually the accusation, or reason for which He was crucified, and it records the absolute Truth. According to John, the chief priests tried to persuade Pilate to change the wording to read: "He said, that I am King of the Jews" (John 19:21). Their request was denied, and so it stands that Jesus, the King, assumed all the sins and responsibilities of His own people and died for them. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou are in the same condemnation?" (23:39-40). The repentant thief is a detail that only Luke records. Matthew and Mark declare that the two, along with others, reviled Him. John says that Jesus was crucified with one on either side of Him, but does not record their comments. Luke alone, is very precise in this matter, for even in death Jesus shows that He has come to bring peace between God and man.

The glorious Grace of God is manifest here as we do have Scriptural evidence of "death-bed conversion," for a very ungodly, corrupt, and undeserving individual. All the requirements are present as this guilty thief declares that condemnation is upon them. Secondly, he acknowledges God's righteousness in bringing it to pass, as he says: "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds." Next, he admits that Jesus represents true righteousness: "this Man hath done nothing amiss." Finally he reaches out by faith to claim salvation purely on the basis of Divine Grace as "he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom" (23:42). He owned Him as Lord, showing surrender. There is not one indication of his deserving to be spared, but faith cries out, "Remember me WHEN YOU COME INTO YOUR KINGDOM," not IF you happen to obtain one. The response is both immediate and conclusive. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (23:43).

"Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," also answers a pertinent question concerning life after death. It is an immediate happening with no speculation or doubt. The fate of the believing thief is just as sure as that of Jesus. Luke 16:23-26 informs us that Paradise, or the abode of the righteous dead, is also referred to as "Abraham's Bosom" and is separated from the abode of the wicked dead by a great fixed gulf, so that one cannot come near the other. The Old Testament refers to the abode of all dead as "Sheol," which is translated "hell, or grave." Hades is the Greek equivalent for Sheol. It is evident that there are two compartments to it, for we read of the "lowest hell" in Deuteronomy 32:22, and hell beneath or from beneath in Proverbs 15:24 and Isaiah 14:9. Referring to Jesus, David writes: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (Sheol); neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). The hell to which the psalmist refers is "upper sheol," or Paradise, and according to Peter, "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (I Peter 3:19-20). There were those in Noah's day who apparently repented when the judgment waters began to fall. They were too late to enter the ark and their bodies drowned, but like the thief on the cross, they too, were remembered and their spirits went to Paradise. The message which Jesus preached to these spirits was probably one of deliverance, for having been raised in resurrection, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive" (Psalm 69:18).

The captivity which Jesus led, were all those in Paradise whom He took back to heaven with Him. According to Matthew, some of them received their glorified bodies at that time, but all of them were transferred to heaven with Jesus. Thus Paul emphatically declares: We are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:6). He also said: "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:23). Today, "to be with Me in Paradise," means to be with Christ in heaven, waiting for a glorified body.

"And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (23:44-45). It was during this period that Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). These words of extreme agony are noticeably omitted in Luke because they would be completely out of context with the peace offering. The sin and trespass offerings were both non-sweet savor offerings, which depicted God's severest judgment poured upon sin. Both of them attest to Christ being banished without the camp to bear the full fury of God's rejection and wrath. Because of this, both Matthew and Mark, record these awful words, but Luke and John do not. The closest that Luke comes to recording such a negative thing, is to report that the sun was darkened. John, who portrays the incomparable, all inclusive burnt offering, omits even this.

The first three Gospel Writers tell us that the veil in the temple was rent, and the reason Luke shares that with us, is to show that the way to God has now been opened. Man is free to come into the very presence of God and have intimate fellowship with Him, by virtue of the peace offering. Some of the evidences of this fact are portrayed in Chapter 24.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost" (23:46). Matthew, Mark, and Luke all mention Jesus crying out, but only John tells us that He said: "IT IS FINISHED" (John 19:30). It was a cry of victory and it means that because of His complete dedication, represented by the burnt offering being totally consumed by fire (Leviticus 1:9), He has finished all of God's plan for Him. As with the other offerings, the peace offering just enlarges on one phase of redemption, and as wonderful as it is, it does not present the overall picture of completion that is found in John's Gospel. Furthermore, Luke continues his portrait of the Man, by being the only writer to tell us of Jesus commending His spirit into the hands of His Father.

"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man" (23:47). Men will never be allowed to remain neutral on the subject of Jesus of Nazareth and what He came to do. The varied responses and reactions of men, following the events of the cross and Jesus' subsequent resurrection, bear this out. In our present text, the Gentile centurion recognized what Israel, as a nation, and the religious leaders did not, and he glorified God for it. The people of Israel in no way recognized and confessed Him as the righteous Man, as "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned" (23:48). And we can only imagine the grief and shock of the close friends, or acquaintances who followed Him from Galilee, as they stood afar off, beholding these things" (23:49). But there were those, who though grieved, and perhaps fearful of the rebellious Jews, showed outwardly their support of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea was such a man.

He was a counselor, and he was a good man, and a just: "(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them); he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who also himself waited for the Kingdom of God" (23:50-51). This man had the boldness to go to Pilate and beg for the body of Jesus. "And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid" (23:53).

Such an entreaty to Pilate indicates the supreme desire which Joseph had, and tells us that God was taking care of every detail concerning His Son, the Sacrifice for sin. This spent body was not cast off as something that was now worthless and unimportant, but was placed in the hands of one who was determined to treat His body with the greatest of respect and tender loving care. It is first, wrapped in linen, indicating that it has been and remains, a vessel of righteousness. This priceless treasure is laid to rest in a sepulchre which had never been occupied. Under the Old Covenant, God took great care to insure that, even in type, the death of Jesus was not confused with any other. The ashes of the offering were not to be treated as something commonplace, but were to be put beside the altar, and then carried forth without the camp to a clean place (Leviticus 6:10-11). If a sin offering was sodden at all in an earthen vessel, that vessel was to be broken so that no other remnants of death could come in contact with it. So it is that the Body of Jesus was laid in a sepulchre where death had never entered, and thus remained separate from all others.

"And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath according to the commandment" (23:54-56). These women represent the final group which declared their loved

and adoration for the Master. Their intentions are good as they have a mind to anoint His body, but that chance will never be afforded them. We learn from John's Gospel, that Mary of Bethany was the only one who was able to perform this select ministry, for she alone had the insight to do it BEFORE "the day of My burying" (John 12:7). For the ladies of our present chapter, they must rest on the sabbath day according to the commandment, and as we shall see in the next chapter, by the time they do arrive, Jesus is gone.

Chapter Twenty Four

The Last Mile

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (24:1-3).

Jesus' work of redemption is now complete. He has gone to the cross, bearing the sins of the world, and the last forty days of His tenure on earth have begun. The empty tomb is God's signature that He is fully satisfied with the efforts of this Sacrificial Lamb. He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25). The resurrection is proof that Jesus was indeed who He said He was, the Son of God. If He had remained in the grave, He was no different from any other man and succumbed to the fate of all mortals, and we would have been left in our sins. (I Corinthians 15:17). Such however, is not the case, and victory abounds for all. The scenes in this final chapter of Luke testify the results of His mighty triumph over death. It tells of the joy and ecstasy which filled the hearts of those left behind, and we can rejoice because such experiences are still available to us some 2000 years later.

The good intentions of these women to anoint His body, are never brought to fruition. Mary is the only one who was afforded this opportunity, for it seems that she was the only one who had really listened to His words concerning His death and resurrection (John 12:7). Jesus had often testified of this day to His disciples, but still we read, "And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, two men stood by them in shining garments" (24:4). They had in no wise anticipated this turn of events, and undoubtedly this same perplexity will prevail when the full overcomers are taken out of the world in the end of this present Church Age, even though Scripture has foretold it for centuries. "He that hath an ear, let him hear" (Revelation 2:7).

Mary had heard and was fully prepared, and there is no record that she came to the tomb, for she knew He would not be there. She did not even need to see His glorified appearance to prove His resurrection. We can only imagine the feelings of those who did arrive at the tomb that first Easter morning. "And as they were afraid and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (24:5-7). What a glorious comfort to know that God's Word is true and will, without fail, come to pass. These Godly women had the right response as they are said to have been afraid. Due to the fact that they bowed their faces to the earth, shows such fear is a healthy reverential awe because of the glorious happenings before them. Upon hearing the testimony of these heavenly messengers, "they remembered His words" (24:8).

As must be the case in our lives, those words prompted a response from them, and they "returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest" (24:9). Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, along with other women, are said to have been in this company. The first heralds of the resurrection were women. The next verse indicates why God was able to use women at this time, rather than men: "And their words seemed to them (the men) as idle tales, and they believed them not" (24:11). There seems to be one major difference in the thought process of men and women. A man thinks with his mind and is more prone to reasoning, which can be a great deterrent to faith. The woman thinks with her heart and is less prone to rationalize, but like Mother Eve, a woman can make a very devastating decision based purely on emotion. How wise was the Creator in making one a safeguard to the other.

"Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass" (24:12). Peter, the man, had to check it out for himself. This is the way God made him, and though wondering in himself, Peter was willing to acknowledge "it was come to pass." In the end, the

reasoning mind which was purposely given by God for a very important reason, must give way to faith.

"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened" (24:13-14). This section of our chapter presents some of the most delightful reading found in Scripture. It records lessons and insights which can be a glorious reality in our lives today. These two people are to be envied and their example followed. They were on their way to Emmaus, meaning "in earnest longing." It speaks of having a burning desire for the spiritual knowledge and blessings of Christ, and they were in no way disappointed. Their discussions center around the events which had just transpired, "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him" (24:15-16).

What a picture of one who has such an appetite for the deep things of God! for he is headed in the right direction, and may not realize that the risen Christ is in his company. That is the experience of all of us in the early days of our Christian walk. Jesus is there, but we really do not know Him; we have not actually had a revelation of His presence. But as it is here, so it happens with us, the Master begins to speak. "And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" (24:17). He meets us on our own level of experience. They were walking, but sad. Had they realized and believed the things which were spoken, they should have been elated that He, who was dead, is risen again. It is this truth of which they, as well as we, must be fully convinced.

"And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, ("famed of all"), answering said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (24:18). They still do not have a clue as to who He is, supposing Him to be a total stranger, unaware of the events which have brought them to this present dilemma. How like our own lives, before we know that He fully understands everything about us! His patience prevails as He continues to draw them out, asking, "What things?" And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him" (24:19-20).

His questions are effective, for they begin to verbalize the things with which they are so deeply concerned. It is evident that Jesus has captured their attention, but we notice that rather than acknowledging Him as the King, He is referred to only as a prophet. They had expected Him to be their deliverer from the Romans, "But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel" (24:21). However, in owning Him only as a prophet, it is evident that He did not have the place which should have been accorded Him. They were only looking from man's point of view, only that which they could see, and they had seen this Object of all their hopes crucified before them. Surely He could not have been the answer to those hopes and dreams of freedom. Their confusion is further agitated as they continue: "And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive" (24:21-23). They agreed that the reports of the empty tomb were confirmed, but no one had seen Jesus.

"Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:" (24:25). Their testimony was a confession of their unbelief to this point. It is interesting, however, that He does not upbraid them for failing to grasp the report of the women, but that they have NOT BELIEVED THE SCRIPTURE. What they held as a great mystery waiting to be discovered, had already been declared, had they only read and heard what God had said. As it is in His dealings with us, so we read it here. Jesus is not obsessed with enlarging on failure and shortcomings, but rather in building up their faith. Thus, He begins to expound on the Scripture. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (24:26-27). They were dwelling on outward appearance, concerned only with that which could be brought to pass immediately. They, even as we, did not see the overall plan of God and realize His ways and thoughts, which are so much higher than ours (Isaiah 55). All these things had been previously written of Him, so it should serve as no mystery that they were brought to pass. These verses confirm again that the Old Testament is not a book of dry history of the Jew,

nor is it a series of ritualistic examples to imitate, but rather a deep, refreshing well, filled with inexhaustible lessons of Christ and His redemption. When seen under the lens of Holy Ghost revelation, it becomes alive with insights into the Man and what He came to earth to accomplish, both in the plan of redemption and in our own personal lives. It is The Christ who is the one found on every page.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further" (24:28). How time flies when we are enjoying ourselves! This has been a very intriguing time for these choice ones and they are reluctant to take their leave of this One who has captured their attention, even though they have reached their destination. "They constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them" (24:29). This same Jesus will also respond to our invitation, for He delights to engage in deep, intimate fellowship with us. He is invited as a guest, but quickly becomes the host as "He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them" (24:30).

Likewise, He becomes the distributor to us of "spiritual meat" when we open to Him the doors of our hearts and give Him the opportunity. Such fellowship and enjoyment of the blessing received at His hand always lead to a greater revelation of the Man, Christ Jesus. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight" (24:31). His purpose for them has been realized, and the events serve as a pattern for us. Paul shouted: "That I may know Him!" (Philippians 3:10), and that must be the prayer on the lips of every Christian who desires the most choice place with Him. We must also experience the full impact of His words in the very depths of our being. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" (24:32). Such a sensation is not something which takes place in our intellect, just a figment of the imagination. It can only be understood by experience, and we can rejoice that it was not limited to these two chosen vessels on the road to Emmaus.

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (24:33-34). This revelation of Jesus should have the same effect upon us today. These two immediately returned to Jerusalem to share the Good News of the resurrected Christ with the other disciples. There is also some tremendous food for thought here concerning Peter. We are told in Verse 34 that Jesus had already appeared to him. This is corroborated by Paul in I Corinthians 15:5. Mark declares that these two, after witnessing Jesus' appearance to them, announce it to the residue (the eleven) and they did not believe them (Mark 16:13). We are faced here with several unanswered questions. How did the two know that Jesus had appeared to Peter? Had Jesus told them, or had they talked to Peter, and were they using his name to confirm their story? Why did not Peter witness to the others? Is there a possibility that he had said something, and was met with the same attitude of unbelief that Mark records? He was there ahead of Cleopas and his companion, for we are plainly told that they made their announcement to the eleven of which he was definitely numbered. We know that he had denied Jesus at His trial, and that he was tremendously distraught because of it. We also know that he was very reluctant to answer Jesus' call to service later, having been in hiding because of the Jews. All of this could have contributed to his silence here, but it is only conjecture.

We can rejoice in this fact, that after he was filled with the Holy Ghost, he became a very dynamic preacher of righteousness and was willing to suffer great persecution because he obeyed God rather than man. As for these two, "they told what things were done in the way, and how He was known of them in breaking of bread" (24:35). This is, in fact, where we also learn of Him - sitting in His presence as He breaks for us the Bread of Life.

"And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (24:36). Such a salutation should come as no surprise, for we have had the record of the peace offering throughout this Gospel. It is interesting to learn that Matthew does not record this meeting. In his Gospel, the eleven are told only to go into Galilee and meet Him in the mountain (Matthew 28:7, 16). Mark tells us of the meeting in Jerusalem, but we do not read of any great depth of fellowship which is told here. In addition, he enlarges on Jesus' reprimand for their unbelief which is totally omitted by Luke. The reason for the differences is because the beloved physician takes great care to disclose the elements of communion associated with the observance of the peace offering. Thus, there is great detail given here, as Jesus is seen drawing

the disciples into a oneness of spirit with Himself.

"But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit" (24:37). We can only imagine the emotion in that room, so charged with the Presence of Jesus. They are indeed troubled, and their thoughts racing, as might well be expected - "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" However, the heavenly Teacher seizes the opportunity to teach, and His instruction answers some questions for us as well, about the spirit world. The disciples are invited to "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" This is true of evil spirits also.

God, who is Spirit, is purported by some writers to have the same features as our human bodies. Our text would contradict that. Others have reported experiences of having been touched by evil spirits, apparently displaying the same characteristics as bodies of flesh and bones. For that to happen, they would have to dwell in a body. In Luke 8:31-33, the legion of demons requested to go into the swine rather than into the deep. These demons had inhabited the body of the man, and according to Jesus' words here, spirits do not have a body of their own.

Jesus, though God, is no longer only Spirit. He became a Man and will forever be in a human body. His body is now glorified, a spiritual body, but a body, nonetheless. He proves it by showing them His hands and feet, the same hands and feet which have been pierced by the cruel nails that held Him to the Cross. John is more emphatic, as he describes the scene with Thomas. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27).

Notice also that Jesus said that His new body has flesh and bones, not flesh and "blood." Scripture is very emphatic in declaring that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). God declared long ago that the life of all flesh is in the blood, and it was that life which Jesus poured out at Calvary, because it became corrupted with our sin. It represented the life blood of all mankind, from Adam until the end of time. Thus, His body of glory is one of flesh and bones, but neither His blood, nor ours, will ever enter heaven.

"And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat?" (24:41). Here is recorded an unusual reason for unbelief - joy. It is a common human emotion, and it is no wonder that Luke, who declares Jesus as a human, does not omit such a detail. We well understand the sentiment of something "being too good to be true." This is the emotional state of the disciples at this point. Do they dare to forget all the sorrow, grief, and fear of the joy they were now feeling? While they ponder this, He requests meat of them, "And they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them" (24:42- 43).

Jesus had a glorified body and did not need to eat to build up the blood, or life, but He had the ability to do so. The significance is symbolic, and is, once again, in keeping with the peace offering. Eating, in Scripture, expresses fellowship, and this glorified Christ is partaking of the fish, which is a testimony of Himself, coming out of the waters of judgment, into glorious resurrection. The honey testifies to the sweetness of God's Word. He has set the example before us, and we are to enter into that same fellowship.

"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (24:44-46). These are basically the same words as those directed to the two on the road to Emmaus. Jesus is still opening the Scriptures to them, and He has the same message for us who will listen today. His death, burial, and resurrection are just the beginning for the ministry today - "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (24:47-48).

Such a witness is most assuredly His purpose for them, but as we have already seen, these disciples are reluctant even to be seen in public, let alone testify of the same things which brought Jesus to Calvary. It is for this reason that He announces the following promise. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endured with power from on high" (24:49). Luke is more specific in the book of Acts where he announces "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost

part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

That glorious power descended on the Day of Pentecost and changed the fearful disciples into dynamic witnesses for Him. No longer did they cringe before the merciless magistrates who inflicted such terrible physical pain, and even death, upon them. Rather, they were bold in their declaration of the risen Christ, preaching the message of repentance to a rebellious people. It all began at Jerusalem, but quickly spread throughout the known world at that time. This same Divine Force is for us today, as we become, first of all, "witnesses" unto Him. It is this glorious Power which enables us to offer the firstfruits of our lives as a perpetual witness UNTO HIM.

After that, men can receive the glorious riches of redemption through our testimony.

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (24:50-51). The hands which had been lifted up in sacrifice, are now lifted up in blessing, a direct result of His death on the cross. Note also that He specifically led them to Bethany - "the house of affliction, or response." These chosen men were just about to embark on a course of severe affliction, and the outcome of their lives depended on their response. It is here at Bethany that we, too, are confronted with the same prospect. Like the disciples, we also have been promised power and blessing from His stretched-out hands.

Their response was that "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen. (24:52-53) This same scene has been repeated again and again in spirit throughout this present Church Age. There have been those, like the disciples, who received a definite revelation of this Christ in resurrected glory, and they, too, have worshipped Him. They have also experienced the ecstatic joy of knowing Him, and have been obedient to go to Jerusalem. They have discovered the real meaning of dwelling at Jerusalem, "the foundations of peace," as they have come to know, by experience, both the peace with God and the peace of God. By resting in Him, confident of His promise, they have remained in His temple, praising and blessing God, until they were endued with power from on high.

Thus we come to the end of this marvelous discourse on the life of the MAN, CHRIST JESUS. The desired results of reconciliation, made possible by the peace offering, have been realized, and these last few verses are a little summary of the more complete picture, unfolded in Luke's sequel, the Acts of the Apostles.

The End

MY BELOVED! MY LIFE!

Oh, how wonderful is my Beloved!

None other to Him can compare.

He speaks and saturates my soul with love.

He looks and melts my heart to His.

He laughs and I dance in the springs of life!

Oh, let me stay forever here

With You, my Beloved ... my Life!

-- Marcia Keely

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.