

**THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

MATTHEW

CHAPTER 1 Jan. 1 Jul. 2

The Genealogy of Jesus

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. ³ Judah begot Perez and Zerah of Tamar and Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram. ⁴ Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, Nahshon begot Salmon. ⁵ Salmon begot Boaz of Rahab and Boaz begot Obed of Ruth and Obed begot Jesse. ⁶ Jesse begot David the king. And David begot Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah. ⁷ And Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, Abijah begot Asa. ⁸ Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, Joram begot Uzziah. ⁹ Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, Ahaz begot Hezekiah. ¹⁰ Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, Amon begot Josiah. ¹¹ Josiah begot Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the captivity in Babylon. ¹² And after the captivity in Babylon, Jechoniah begot Shealtiel, Shealtiel

begot Zerubbabel. ¹³ Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, Eliakim begot Azor. ¹⁴ Azor begot Sadoc, Sadoc begot Achim, Achim begot Eliud. ¹⁵ Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, Matthan begot Jacob. ¹⁶ Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations and from David to the captivity in Babylon fourteen generations and from the captivity in Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

The Birth of Jesus

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not willing to make her a public example, decided to send her away secretly. ²⁰ But as he thought on these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: Joseph you son of David, do

1:1 The Gospel records are transcripts of how e.g. Matthew preached the Gospel. Matthew begins his explanation of the Gospel [“good news”] by demonstrating that Jesus was the descendant of Abraham and David. This is important because the Gospel was contained in the promises to those men (Gal. 3:8) that they would have a literal descendant, who would be God’s Son, Jesus. Therefore Jesus didn’t exist as a physical person before He was born; He had our human nature.

1:19 Joseph could have told others of her situation, and made her a “public example”, or put her through the “law of jealousy” of Numbers 5. But exactly because Joseph was truly “righteous”, he didn’t do that. He was sensitive to her – as we should be to others who are caught up in situations beyond our full understanding.

1:20 *Conceived* – Jesus began within Mary. He didn’t pre-exist. He was born ‘of her’ (1:16).

not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she shall give birth to a son, and you shall call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. ²² Now all this happened so what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying: ²³ The virgin shall be with child and shall give birth to a son; and they shall call his name Immanuel, which means God with us. ²⁴ And Joseph woke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual intercourse with her until she had given birth to a son; and he called his name Jesus.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 1 Jul. 2

Wise Men Visit Baby Jesus

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea in the days of Herod the king, astrologers from the east came to Jerusalem, saying: ² Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to worship him. ³ And when Herod the king heard it, he was disturbed and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where

the Christ should be born. ⁵ And they said to him: In Bethlehem of Judea. For thus it is written through the prophet: ⁶ And you Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least among the princes of Judah. For out of you shall come forth a Ruler, who shall be shepherd of My people Israel. ⁷ Then Herod secretly called the Magi and learned from them exactly what time the star appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said: Go and search carefully for the young child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I may also come and worship him. ⁹ And they, having heard the king, went their way; and the star which they saw in the east went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. ¹⁰ And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. ¹¹ And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him, and opening their treasures they offered to him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country by another route. ¹³ Now when they had departed, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying:

1:21 ‘Jesus’ means ‘Saviour’; ‘Christ’ means ‘Anointed’.

2:5 *Through the prophet* – The prophets wrote the words of God, not just their own words. Hence the significance of *through*. The Bible is the inspired word of God.

2:6 Jesus came forth “out of” Bethlehem – He didn’t come down from Heaven as a person. Note how Matthew so often shows that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies.

2:8 The astrologers didn’t obey the King, because God told them not to (:12). We shouldn’t always do what those in authority tell us, if it contradicts God’s word (Acts 4:19).

Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt and stay there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. ¹⁴ And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt, ¹⁵ and stayed there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Out of Egypt did I call My son. ¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the astrologers, was furious and sent out soldiers and slew all the male children that were in Bethlehem and in all the borders of it aged two years and under, according to the time which he had determined from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not. ¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying: ²⁰ Arise and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel, for they are dead that sought the young child's life. ²¹ And he arose and took

the young child and his mother and came into the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee, ²³ and he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 2 Jul. 3

John the Baptist Baptizes Jesus

And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying: ² Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ³ For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying: The voice of one crying in the wilderness — Make ready the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight. ⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather girdle about his loins and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him. ⁶ And they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sad-

2:14 *He arose* – Joseph's immediate obedience to God's word is emphasized (as 1:24; 2:10) – an example to us.

2:15 *Out of Egypt* – As Israel were called out of Egypt. All God's children are to leave 'Egypt' – which is often a symbol of the world.

2:20-22 Joseph was told that it was safe to return. But he doubted. And so God made a concession to his weakness by telling him to go and live in Galilee.

3:6 *Baptized... in the river* – Baptism [Greek *baptizo*] means to dip, to immerse – not to sprinkle. So baptism was performed in a river. Note 3:16 *out of the water*.

3:7 *Offspring of vipers* – They were the descendants of the snake spoken of in Gen. 3:15. There will always be opposition between those in Christ, the descendant of the

ducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the anger to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹ And think not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham as our father, for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ And even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ I indeed baptize you in water to repentance, but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire; ¹² whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor and he will gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire. ¹³ Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan, to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ But John would have stopped him, saying: I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me? ¹⁵ But

Jesus answering said to him: Permit it now, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he permitted him. ¹⁶ And Jesus when he was baptized immediately came up out of the water, and the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and coming to rest on him. ¹⁷ And a voice came from the heavens, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 2 Jul. 3

Jesus is Tempted

Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he hungered. ³ And the tempter came and said to him: If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. ⁴ But he answered and said: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. ⁵ Then the Devil took him into the holy city and set him on

woman, and the descendants of the snake. We will be temporarily wounded by them, but we will triumph in the end.

3:9 *Within yourselves* – The Bible is aware of how we are likely to respond. God’s concern is with our state of mind, how we think within. For this is the ultimate source of human sin.

3:12 *Unquenchable fire* – not literally. A symbol of complete destruction (Jer. 17:27).

3:15 Jesus was baptized as an adult by immersion – as an example to us. We should also be baptized.

4:1-8 ‘The Devil’ doesn’t exist as a fallen Angel or evil cosmic being – see *Bible Basics*.

Jesus was “tempted in all things like as we are” (Heb. 4:15), and: “each man is tempted... by his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). We are tempted by the “devil” of our own mind, and so was Jesus. We are not tempted by an evil being prompting us to sin – sin and temptation come “from within, out of the heart of men” (Mk. 7:21).

The temptations cannot be literal:

the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ and said to him: If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you, and on their hands they shall carry you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said to him: Again it is written, You shall not make trial of the Lord your God. ⁸ Again, the Devil took him to an exceeding high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. ⁹ And he said to him: All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then said Jesus to him: Away with you Satan! For it is written: You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. ¹¹ Then the Devil left him, and angels came and ministered to him.

Jesus Begins to Preach

¹² Now when he heard that John was imprisoned, he withdrew into

Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth, he went and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁵ The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles- ¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. ¹⁷ From that time began Jesus to preach and to say: Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ¹⁸ And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And he said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ²⁰ And they immediately left the nets and followed him. ²¹ And going on from there he

4:8 implies that Jesus was led up a high mountain to see all the kingdoms of the world in their future glory “in a moment of time” (Mk. 4:5). There is no mountain high enough to see all the world – the earth is a sphere.

- Comparison with Luke 4 shows that the temptations are described in a different order. Mk. 1:13 says that Jesus was “in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan”, whilst Mt. 4:2-3 says that “when he had fasted forty days... the tempter (Satan) came to Him...”. Thus these same temptations kept repeating themselves – e.g. to turn stones into bread.

- It’s unlikely the devil led Jesus through the wilderness and streets of Jerusalem and then they scaled a pinnacle of the temple together, all in view of the inquisitive Jews.

- If the devil is a physical person who has no respect for God’s Word and is interested in making people sin, then why would Jesus quote Scripture to overcome him? According to the popular view, this would not send the devil away. Jesus quoted a Bible passage each time. Ps. 119:11:”Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin”.

- Jesus was “led of *the spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil”. How could the Spirit of God lead Jesus to be tempted by a superhuman being existing in opposition to God. He had just received the power of the Spirit (3:16). Now He was tempted to use it to turn stones into bread, jump off buildings unharmed etc.

saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. ²² And they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals Many

²³ And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people. ²⁴ Then his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them. ²⁵ And great crowds followed him, those from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other side of the Jordan.

CHAPTER 5 Jan. 3 Jul. 4

Jesus Preaches About Kingdom Life

And seeing the crowds, he went into the mountain and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is

the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ Blessed are you when men reproach you because of me, and persecute you and falsely accuse you of all sorts of evil. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for likewise they persecuted the prophets that preceded you. ¹³ You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savour, with what shall it be salted? It becomes good for nothing but to be thrown out and trodden under the feet of men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a basket but on the stand; and it shines for all that are in the house. ¹⁶ Likewise, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

5:5 *Inherit the earth* – The Kingdom of God will be established here on earth at the return of Christ. ‘Inheritance’ refers to the promises to Abraham that his children would inherit the earth. Eternity on earth and not Heaven is promised to those “in Christ” and thus Abraham’s children.

5:15 If a candle is put under a basket, it will go out. If we don’t publically witness to our faith, we will lose it. We can’t be secret Christians.

Jesus Interprets the Law of Moses

¹⁷ Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I came not to destroy but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the law, until all things be accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men to do so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²¹ You have heard that it was said to those of old: You shall not kill, and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. ²² But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever shall say to his brother Raca shall be in danger of the council, and whoever shall say Moros shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna. ²³ If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are with him in the street. Lest the adversary deliver you to the judge and the judge deliver you to the officer and you be

thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. ²⁷ You have heard that it was said: You shall not commit adultery. ²⁸ But I say to you, that everyone that looks on a woman lustful for her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ And if your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away, for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away, for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish and not your whole body go into Gehenna.

³¹ It was also said: Whoever shall send away his wife, let him give her a contract of divorce. ³² But I say to you, that everyone that divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever shall marry a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³ Again, you have heard that it was said to them of old: You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord. ³⁴ But I say to you: Swear not at all, neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet. Nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Neither shall you swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your Yes mean Yes, and your No, No. For whatever is more

5:17 The Mosaic law was fulfilled by Christ in His death (Col. 2:14-17). We therefore don't need to keep that law, nor the Sabbath.

than these comes from evil. ³⁸ You have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹ But I say to you: Do not resist him that is evil but whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take away your coat, let him also have your cloak. ⁴¹ And whoever shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. ⁴³ You have heard that it was said: You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you might be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love them that love you, what reward have you? Even the tax collectors do the same! ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what do you more than they. The tax collectors do likewise. ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

CHAPTER 6 Jan. 4 Jul. 5

Jesus Denounces Hypocrisy

Take heed you do not do your good deeds before men, to be

seen by them. Else you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. ² When therefore you do alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you do alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, ⁴ that your alms may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you. ⁵ And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, enter into your room and shut your door, pray to your Father who is unseen, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you.

Jesus Teaches How to Pray

⁷ And in praying do not use vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Therefore, do not be like them! Even before you ask Him, your Father knows what things you need. ⁹ In this manner you should pray: Our Father who is in

5:45 *Makes His sun* – God hasn't wound the world up and left it ticking. Every action within creation is consciously from Him. We are therefore never far from Him – just feel Him acting in nature.

6:3 *Left hand know* – Don't be conscious of your good works. Do them and forget them. Those accepted into God's Kingdom will honestly not remember the times they fed the hungry (Mt. 25:37).

6:4 *Shall reward* – when Jesus returns to establish God's Kingdom on earth. "I come quickly and my reward is with me" (Rev. 22:12).

heaven, let Your Name be glorified.
 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. 14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

More About Hypocrisy

16 Moreover when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. For they disfigure their faces, so that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. 17 But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, 18 so you will not be seen by men to fast, but by your Father who is unseen; and your Father, who sees in secret, shall reward you.

Jesus Teaches About Treasure in Heaven

19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,

where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves cannot break in or steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Jesus Teaches About Light and Darkness

22 The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is healthy, your whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Jesus Teaches About Money and Possessions

24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. 25 Therefore I say to you: Do not be anxious for your life; what you shall eat, or what you shall drink. Nor for your body; what you shall wear. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the garment? 26 Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow, nor do they reap or gather crops into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they?

6:10 *On earth* – We pray for the Kingdom of God to come on earth, i.e. for Jesus to return soon.

6:18 *Not be seen* – We must consciously try to conceal our good works so that other people do *not* notice them. When was the last time you did this?

6:24 Few would say they “hate” God. But if we love wealth [“mammon”], then in His eyes, we do.

6:26 *Father feeds them* – As 5:45, God is consciously in contact with His creation, and has some kind of relationship with the animals (Job 41:1-5). 7:1 *Judge not* – The

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin! 29 Yet I say to you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is here today but tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not more surely care for you, O you of little faith! 31 Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, How shall we be clothed? 32 For the Gentiles clamour for all these things; even though your heavenly Father knows you have need of them all. 33 So seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

CHAPTER 7 Jan. 5 Jul. 6

Jesus Teaches About Pre-judging

Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you use, it shall be applied to you. 3 And why do you see the splinter that is in your brother's eye but ignore the plank that is in your own eye? 4 Or how will you say to your brother: Let me remove the splinter in your eye, when you have

a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye and then shall you see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye. 6 Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the pigs, lest they trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces.

Jesus Teaches About His Generous Father

7 Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. 8 For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. 9 Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him. 12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus Teaches How to Test for Good and Evil

13 Enter in by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. 14 For narrow is the gate and straight the road that leads to life, but few are

Greek word translated "judge" can mean both to condemn, and to make a judgment of right and wrong. We must not condemn others, but we must judge between right and wrong.

7:14 The majority are usually wrong in spiritual matters.

they that find it. ¹⁵ Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.

²¹ Not everyone that says to me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that pleases my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name do many mighty works? ²³ And then will I tell them: I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity. ²⁴ Everyone therefore that hears these words of mine and does them, shall be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. ²⁵ And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and

beat upon that house; and it did not collapse, for it was founded upon the rock. ²⁶ And everyone that hears these words of mine and does not obey them, shall be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. ²⁷ And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it collapsed, and great was its collapse. ²⁸ And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words that the crowds were astonished at his teaching. ²⁹ For he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

CHAPTER 8 Jan. 6 Jul. 7

Jesus Heals a Leper

And when he had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. ² And a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying: Lord, if you desire, you can make me clean. ³ And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying: I do desire. Be made clean! And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him: See you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priests and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.

7:22 *Lord, Lord* – There will be people who called Jesus “Lord” and who thought they did miracles in His Name who will be rejected at the last day. They actually did “iniquity”. Possessing the gifts of God is no guarantee of salvation.

7:25 *Floods came* – The day of judgment will be like a storm which shakes us to the core and reveals who we really are. True spiritual progress is slow – like bashing away at the rock of our hard hearts. Quick spiritual progress is likely to be a building upon sand.

8:3 *Touched him* – All would've been shocked. Touching a leper made a person ritually unclean, and risked contracting the illness. Jesus did this to show the extent to which He did not believe in “guilt by association”.

Jesus Commends a Roman Soldier

⁵ And when he was entering into Capernaum, there came to him a centurion, begging him, ⁶ saying: Lord, my servant lies in the house paralysed, grievously tormented. ⁷ And he said to him: I will come and heal him. ⁸ And the centurion answered and said: Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant shall be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers and I say to one: Go! And he goes. And to another: Come! And he comes. And to my servant: Do this! And he does it. ¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him: Truly I say to you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast into the outer darkness. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. ¹³ And Jesus said to the centurion: Go your way. As you have believed, so it is done for you. And the servant was healed in that hour.

Jesus Heals Many Sick People

¹⁴ And when Jesus had entered Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ And he touched her hand and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to him. ¹⁶ And when evening had come, they brought to him many possessed with demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all that were sick, ¹⁷ so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Jesus Calms a Great Storm at Sea

¹⁸ Now when Jesus saw great crowds about him, he gave commandment to depart to the other side. ¹⁹ And there came a scribe and said to him: Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go. ²⁰ And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. ²¹ And another of the disciples said to him: Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. ²² But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead. ²³ And when he had boarded a boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And without warning, a furious storm arose on

8:16, 17 'Demon possession' was the language used in the first century to describe mental illness. Note the parallel between 'casting out demons' and being cured of disease. 'Demons' don't in fact exist – see the "Doctrinal Summary".

8:20-22 Jesus, the Lord of all grace, can at times be very demanding. He wants our *immediate* response. Likewise He exaggerated the situation in :21 – He did often have somewhere to sleep, e.g. the home of Martha and Mary, but that night perhaps He had nowhere.

8:23 *His disciples followed him* – The impression is given of them walking behind Him. They are symbols of us all.

the sea, so much so that the boat was covered with the waves; but he slept. ²⁵ And they came to him and awoke him, saying: Save us Lord! We perish! ²⁶ And he said to them: Why are you fearful? O you of little faith! Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marvelled, saying: What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Jesus Heals a Mad Man

²⁸ And when he had arrived on the other side, in the country of the Gadarenes, there met him two possessed with demons, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could go that way. ²⁹ And they cried out, saying: What have we to do with you, you Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? ³⁰ Now there was afar off from them a herd of many pigs feeding. ³¹ And the demons begged him,

saying: If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs. ³² And he said to them: Go. And they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the hill into the sea and perished in the waters. ³³ And they that fed them fled, and went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to them that had been possessed with demons. ³⁴ And all in the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to depart from their borders.

CHAPTER 9 Jan. 7 Jul. 8

Jesus Heals and Forgives a Paralysed Man

And he entered into a boat and crossed over and came into his own city. ² And they brought to him a paralysed man, lying on a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralysed man: Son, be of good courage. Your sins are forgiven. ³ And certain of the scribes said within

8:25 *Awoke Him* – Jesus surely only appeared to be sleeping, in a small boat about to sink. But as in our lives, He appears silent only to bring us to the point of realizing our desperation for Him.

8:26 *O you of little faith!* – Remember the Gospel records were written by the disciples. They are transcripts of their preaching to others. They appealed for others to believe in Christ by pointing out how they had themselves been of such weak belief in Christ. Such humility, recounting our failures to others, is what makes our witness powerful rather than pretending we are perfect. Self-righteousness turns people off.

8:32 Jesus agreed to the mad man's request in order to provide him with a visual *aide memoire* for the rest of his life. Mental illness is usually intermittent, and the man needed assurance that this time the cure was total. His illness may have been caused from eating pig meat.

9:2 *Jesus seeing their faith* – He cured and forgave a person because of the faith of third parties. If our faith can influence the eternal destiny and wellbeing of others, then we should be making every effort for them, in prayer and practically. Either our efforts and prayers can be a factor in others' salvation and blessing, or they are not. They are. So we should give our lives to prayer and care for others.

themselves: This man blasphemes. ⁴ And Jesus knowing their thoughts, said: Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵ For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, or, Arise and walk? ⁶ But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he then said to the paralytic: Arise, take up your bed and go to your house. ⁷ And he arose and departed to his house. ⁸ But when the crowds saw it they were afraid and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Jesus Mixes with Social Outcasts

⁹ And as Jesus left there he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him: Follow me. And he arose and followed him. ¹⁰ And it came to pass, as he sat eating in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to his disciples: Why does your Teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners? ¹² But when he heard it, he said: They that are sick need a doctor, not they that are healthy. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I come not to call the righteous but sinners. ¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying: Why do we and the Pharisees often fast but your disciples do

not fast? ¹⁵ And Jesus said to them: Can the sons of the bride chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will fast. ¹⁶ No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. ¹⁷ Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl Back to Life

¹⁸ While he spoke these things to them, a ruler came and knelt before him, saying: My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay your hand upon her that she shall live. ¹⁹ And Jesus rose and followed him, as did his disciples. ²⁰ And a woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind him and touched the border of his garment. ²¹ For she said within herself: If I only touch his garment I shall be healed. ²² But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Daughter, be of good courage. Your faith has healed you. And the woman was healed at that moment. ²³ And when Jesus came into the ruler's

9:13 *Not to call the righteous but sinners* – All are sinners, it's just that some think they are righteous. We will never be good enough for God, never morally ready enough for baptism – but the whole purpose of Jesus is to save us who are sinners.

9:17 The new wine represents the new covenant in the blood of Jesus; the old wine is the old covenant, Moses' law. If we have received the new wine of Jesus, we *must* change – otherwise it will destroy us.

house and saw the flute-players and the crowd making a tumult, ²⁴ he said: Leave! For the little girl is not dead but sleeps. And they Laughed at him in scorn. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he entered in and took her by the hand, and the little girl arose. ²⁶ And the fame thereof went into all that land.

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men and a Dumb Man

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying out, and saying: Have mercy on us, son of David! ²⁸ And when he had arrived into the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them: Do you believe that I am able to do this? They say to him: Yes Lord. ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying: According to your faith be it done to you. ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus strictly ordered them, saying: See that no one knows it! ³¹ But they went and spread abroad his fame in all that land. ³² And as they were leaving, a dumb man who was possessed with a demon was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke and the crowds marvelled, saying: Such a thing has

never been seen in Israel! ³⁴ But the Pharisees said: By the prince of the demons he casts out demons.

Jesus Preaches with Compassion

³⁵ And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. ³⁶ But when he saw the crowds, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. ³⁷ Then said he to his disciples: The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. ³⁸ Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.

CHAPTER 10 Jan. 8 Jul. 9

Jesus Authorises His Disciples to Preach and Heal

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. ² Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. The first Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother. James the son of Zebedee, and John his

9:35 The theme of Christ's preaching was "the gospel of the Kingdom", the good news ['Gospel'] of having God as our King now, and looking forward to the return of His Son to establish God's Kingdom physically here on earth for ever.

9:37 The symbols suggest that the harvest is lost and spoilt because there aren't enough workers to harvest it. The harvest refers to converts, spiritual fruit being given to God, the owner of all. God in some ways chooses to be limited by us. There will be some who will not be harvested for God because the church didn't make enough effort for them, or there were simply not enough of us to reach them. "Few" in Greek can also imply weak, as well as numerically few.

brother. ³ Philip and Bartholomew. Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, ⁴ Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. ⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out and ordered them, saying: Do not go unto the Gentiles and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans. ⁶ Instead go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ And as you go, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give. ⁹ Acquire no gold, nor silver, nor brass for your purses, ¹⁰ no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff; for the labourer is worthy of his food. ¹¹ And into whatever city or village you shall enter, search out who in it is worthy, and stay with them until you go. ¹² And as you enter into the household, greet it. ¹³ And if the household be worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it be unworthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, as you go out of that household, or that city, shake off the dust of your feet. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, it shall

be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. ¹⁶ I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and in their synagogues they will scourge you. ¹⁸ Yes and before governors and kings you shall be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them, and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not be anxious how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given to you at that time what to speak. ²⁰ For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you. ²¹ And brother shall deliver up brother to death and the father his child, and children shall rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²² And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ²³ But when they persecute you in this city, flee into the next. For truly I say to you, you shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord.

10:11 *Until you go* – Jesus wished to focus upon families and homes, which later developed into the house churches of the later New Testament. His focus is still very much on the family unit as the foundation for His church.

10:15 *More tolerable* – There will be degrees of reward and punishment at the day of judgment when Jesus returns. All our behaviour in this life will be judged sensitively, nothing will be overlooked and everything will receive an appropriate response.

10:16 *Wise as serpents* – We are not asked to be naive; but the opposite.

10:23 *Gone through the cities of Israel* – This may imply there will be persecution of believers and also a strong witness to the Jews in Israel immediately prior to Christ's return. We should be prepared.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more them of his household! 26 Therefore fear them not. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and nothing hid that shall not be known. 27 What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light, and what you hear in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops. 28 And do not be afraid of those that kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a very small coin? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Therefore, fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. 32 Therefore, everyone who shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Fa-

ther who is in heaven. 33 But whoever shall deny me before men I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven. 34 Think not that I came to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace but a sword. 35 For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. 36 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37 He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that does not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it. 40 He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that sent me. 41 He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receives a right-

10:25 We should therefore not be surprised to be persecuted; in fact we should expect it, because if this world treated Jesus as they did, they will treat us the same.

10:26 *Revealed* – at the day of judgment (1 Cor. 3:13). If we will be revealed for who we really are eternally, there's no point in acting out a false image to our brothers and sisters in this life.

10:27 *Proclaim upon the housetops* – This is alluding to 1 Sam. 9:15,25, where God speaks “the word of the Kingdom” in Samuel’s ear, and then he speaks that word to Saul on the housetop. The Lord is saying that in essence, we are all in Samuel’s position; we hear the word of this world’s salvation, the word about “the Kingdom” as it was for Saul, and that very fact is in itself the imperative to overcome our natural reservations and share it with those for whom it is intended – even if, as with Saul, we consider them unlikely and unspiritual hearers.

10:28 Gehenna was the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem. The fires were always burning there because new garbage was always being thrown onto it. It became a symbol of complete destruction. Some Bibles translate it [wrongly] as “hell”.

10:40 Peoples’ attitude to us is their attitude to Jesus. This means that we, as baptized into the body of Christ, are Him to this world. Our behaviour should be appropriate to this.

eous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple; truly I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

CHAPTER 11 Jan. 9 Jul. 10

And it came to pass when Jesus had finished commanding his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.

Jesus Talks About John the Baptist

² Now when John heard about the works of the Christ while in prison, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him: Are you he that comes, or look we for another? ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: Go and tell John the things which you hear and see. ⁵ The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised up; and the poor have good tidings preached to them. ⁶ And blessed is he, whoever shall find no

cause to stumble over me. ⁷ And as these went their way, Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Those that wear soft garments are in king's houses. ⁹ But what did you go out to see? To see a prophet? Yes! And I say to you, much more than a prophet! ¹⁰ This is he, of whom it is written: Listen, I send my messenger before your face; he shall prepare your way before you. ¹¹ Truly I say to you, among those that are born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. Yet he that is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and men of violence take it by force. ¹³ For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to receive it, this was Elijah that has to come. ¹⁵ He that has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁶ But unto what shall I liken this genera-

11:1 *Their cities* – Jesus encouraged people to preach to their network of friends and relatives, in their home areas; He visited those places to back up their witness. Witnessing to friends and family is the most difficult yet most important witness we make.

11:11 Whoever is least in the Kingdom of God in the future will be greater, spiritually, than John the Baptist was in his human life. We learn from this that there will be degrees of reward in God's Kingdom – one star will shine brighter than another (1 Cor. 15:41), some will rule over ten cities, others over five (Lk. 19:17-19). Do we have the spiritual ambition to want to shine then as much as possible? If we love and seek God's glory, then we will want to extend it as far as possible, reflecting it as far as we can.

11:12 *Men of violence* – The image is of commandos storming a city. Whatever our position in life, we now have a cause to totally give ourselves to – to enter and take the Kingdom of God for ourselves.

tion? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call to their fellows¹⁷ and say: We piped to you and you did not dance. We wailed and you did not mourn.¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say he has a demon.¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they say, Look, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! But wisdom is justified by her children.

Jesus Reproves Those Who Fail to Respond

²⁰ Then he began to chastise the cities wherein most of his mighty works had been done, because they had not repented.²¹ Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.²² But I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.²³ And you Capernaum, shall you be exalted to heaven? You shall go down to Hades, for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in you, it would have remained until this day.²⁴ But I say to you, that

it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.

Jesus Prays and Appeals to His Followers

²⁵ At that time Jesus answered and said: I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You did hide these things from the wise and prudent, and did reveal them to babes.²⁶ Yes Father, for so it was well-pleasing in Your sight.²⁷ All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son save the Father. Neither does anyone know the Father, save the Son and to whomsoever the Son wishes to reveal Him.²⁸ Come to me all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

CHAPTER 12 Jan. 10 Jul. 11

Jesus Challenges the Pharisees About the Sabbath

At that time, on the Sabbath day, Jesus went through the grain-fields, and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears of grain to

11:27 Reading the Bible alone will not reveal the Father to us. There's also an element of grace – Jesus reveals His Father to those whom He chooses.

11:30 The heavy weight remains, but Jesus is a yoke, binding us together with many others, and so the weight seems far lighter to us. The purpose of the body and person of Christ is to bind us together with other believers – with all the personal problems and conflicts this can create. Christianity isn't intended to be lived in isolation from others.

12:1 Jesus and the disciples were prefigured by David and those who followed him (12:3). Those who followed David were those in debt and 'distressed' (1 Sam. 22:2). It is the desperate and broken who follow Jesus today.

eat. ² But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to him: Look, your disciples do what is unlawful on the Sabbath. ³ But he said to them: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him- ⁴ how he entered into the house of God and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the law, that on the Sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ But I say to you, that one greater than the temple is here. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. ⁹ And he departed from there and went into their synagogue, ¹⁰ and saw a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? So that they might accuse him. ¹¹ And he said to them: Which of you, if having only one sheep, and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath

day, will not grab hold of it and lift it out? ¹² How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day. ¹³ Then said he to the man: Stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out and it was restored whole, as the other. ¹⁴ But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him. ¹⁵ And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from there; and many followed him and he healed them all, ¹⁶ and charged them that they should not make him known. ¹⁷ That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: ¹⁸ Look at My servant whom I have chosen, My beloved in whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon him and he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ He shall not strive, nor cry aloud, neither shall anyone hear his voice in the streets. ²⁰ A bruised reed he shall not break and a smoking wick he shall not quench, until he sends forth judgment to victory. ²¹ And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

12:11 The man who had only one sheep was poor; that was why he was so concerned to rescue his only sheep. Yet he represents God and Jesus in their constant search for us. They therefore identify themselves with the very poorest of society. God is in search of man; and we search for Him. Hence the joy of our meeting with Him in baptism.

12:13, 14 *Then* – The pure grace and love of Jesus often produces a harsh reaction and rejection from those who refuse to be moved by it. We can't be passive to it.

12:16 Jesus sometimes did ask people to tell others about what He had done for them. Maybe He asked the extroverts to be quiet, and the introverts to tell others? The preaching of the Gospel in the right spirit is something done against our will; it's difficult (1 Cor. 9:17).

12:20 Jesus tries to fan into life whatever weak spirituality a person has, rather than expecting perfection at His first encounter with them. We should treat people likewise.

Jesus Heals and is Slandered by the Pharisees

22 Then was brought to him one possessed with a demon, blind and dumb, and he healed him, so much so that the dumb man spoke and saw. 23 And all the crowds were amazed, and said: Can this be the son of David? 24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said: This man does not cast out demons but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. 25 And knowing their thoughts, he said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. 26 And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand? 27 And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. 28 But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man and ruin his goods, except he first bind the strong man? And then he will ruin his house. 30 He that is not with me is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters. 31 Therefore

I say to you: Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. 32 And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in the age to come. 33 Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by its fruit. 34 You offspring of vipers, how can you being evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man out of his good treasure brings forth good things, and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 And I say to you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned.

Jesus Speaks of Signs, Unspiritual Attitudes and His True Family

38 Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying: Teacher, we would see a sign from

12:28 The kingdom of God will be established literally on earth when Jesus returns; but the essence of the Kingdom is that God is King and that is true today. The sphere of His rulership and authority in the lives of His people can be understood as His Kingdom.

12:32 This is only true for those who saw the miracles of Jesus and blasphemed them. But if a person stops going against the clear evidence provided by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is God's Son, then he is no longer blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

12:34 Therefore control of our thinking is so important. The environment we chose, what music we listen to, affects our thinking.

12:36 The judgement process will involve a recall of our words – and we shall have to explain them.

you. ³⁹ But he answered and said to them: An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall no sign be given it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, one greater than Jonah is here! ⁴² The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, one greater than Solomon is here! ⁴³ When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ Then it says: I will return to my house from which I came out. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation. ⁴⁶ While he was yet speaking to the crowds, his mother and his relatives stood outside, seeking to speak to him. ⁴⁷ And someone said to him: Look, your mother and your relatives wait outside, wanting to speak to you. ⁴⁸ But

he answered and said to him that told him: Who is my mother? And who are my relatives? ⁴⁹ And he stretched out his hand towards his disciples, and said: Behold, my mother and my relatives! ⁵⁰ For whoever shall please my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.

CHAPTER 13 Jan. 11 Jul. 12

Jesus Speaks in Parables

The Parable of the Sower

On that day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea side. ² And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³ And he spoke many things to them in parables, saying: Listen, the sower went out to sow. ⁴ And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵ And others fell upon the rocky places where they had not much earth, and immediately they sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth. ⁶ And when the sun had risen, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ And others fell upon the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ And others fell upon the good ground and yielded fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He that has ears, let him hear. ¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to him: Why do you speak to them in parables? ¹¹ And he answered and said to them: To you

13:9 Not everyone has the capacity to hear and understand the Gospel; not all have faith (2 Thess. 3:2). But those of us who do should use the potential we've been given.

13:11 The parables weren't stories with an obvious, easy to understand meaning. Je-

it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ¹² For whoever has, to him shall be given and he shall have abundance, but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. ¹⁴ And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which said: By hearing you shall hear and shall in no wise understand, and seeing you shall see and shall in no wise perceive. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and repent, so that I should heal them. ¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I say to you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which you see and saw them not, and to hear the things which you hear and heard them not. ¹⁸ Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and understands it not, then comes

the evil one and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is he that was sown by the way side. ²⁰ And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that hears the word and immediately with joy receives it. ²¹ Yet he does not have root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. ²² And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that hears the word, and the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. ²³ And he that was sown upon the good ground, this is he that hears the word and understands it- who truly carries fruit and brings it forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Other Parables of the Kingdom

²⁴ He set another parable before them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men slept, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶ But when the plants sprang up and brought forth fruit, then the weeds appeared also.

sus used them in order to filter out those who didn't want to understand. For them the parables were confusing and obscured His message. There's an upward spiral and also a downward spiral in our relationship with God.

13:12 How can a person who has nothing have what he has taken away from him? Maybe Jesus meant us to read in an ellipsis: 'the person who [thought he] had nothing [even though he does], will have even that taken from him'. This would be like the one talent man of Mt. 25:24. People have more than they think; for God's generosity is greater than we imagine.

13:21 Trial comes into our lives soon after baptism, as Israel were 'baptized' in the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1,2) and very soon encountered problems in the wilderness [no food or water].

27 And the servants of the householder came and said to him: Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds? 28 And he said to them: An enemy has done this! And the servants said to him: Then do you want us to go and gather them up? 29 But he said: No. Lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up the weeds first and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn. 31 He set another parable before them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. 32 Which indeed is smaller than all seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the sky come and lodge in its branches. 33 He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour until it was all raised. 34 All these things spoke Jesus in parables to the crowds, and without a parable he said nothing to them. 35 This was to fulfil what was

spoken by the prophet: I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world. 36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying: Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field. 37 And he answered and said: He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the weeds are the sons of the evil one. 39 The enemy that sowed them is the Devil, the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are angels. 40 As therefore the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. 41 The Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, 42 and shall cast them into the fiery furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. 44 The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and in his joy he went and sold all that he

13:28 Jesus foresaw that His followers would have a tendency towards trying to do God's judgment for Him; He explains (:29) that it's not possible for us to judge who is who. It's therefore a fact that there will be insincere people growing within the field of the church, next to those who are sincere. They have an appearance of growth. But we must leave them until harvest – the return of Jesus.

13:32 From tiny beginnings – reading a Bible, noticing an advertisement, meeting someone 'by chance' – we will come to eternity. We will be a refuge for others then. We will look back on this life and it will seem so disproportionate – that we got 'there' from 'here'.

13:39 *Angels* – First we will know that Jesus has returned is that our Angel will be standing next to us and inviting us to go meet Him.

had and bought that field. ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a man that is a merchant seeking fine pearls. ⁴⁶ And having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. ⁴⁷ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. ⁴⁸ When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. ⁴⁹ So shall it be in the end of the world. The angels shall come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and shall cast them into the fiery furnace. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁵¹ Have you understood all these things? They said to him: Yes. ⁵² And he said to them: Therefore every scribe who has been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is a householder, who brings out from his treasure things new and old.

Jesus Visits His Home Town

⁵³ And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed from there. ⁵⁴ And coming

into his hometown he taught them in their synagogue, so much so that they were astonished, and said: From where has this man received this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶ And his sisters, are they not all with us? From where then did this man get all these things? ⁵⁷ And they were offended by him. But Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, except in his hometown and in his own house. ⁵⁸ And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

CHAPTER 14 Jan. 12 Jul. 13

Herod Murders John the Baptist

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report concerning Jesus, ² and said to his servants: This is John the Baptist! He has risen from the dead and therefore do these powers work in him. ³ For Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. ⁴ For

13:46 Often Jesus intends us to think how the stories continue or end. So, what did the man do now? No wealth or possessions, just one stone. Surely he looked at it and loved it and treasured it more than anything else. This should be our attitude to the Kingdom of God.

13:50 Banging teeth is a symbol of anger with oneself.

13:55 Jesus never sinned, neither in commission nor omission, for all those 30 years He lived amongst them in Nazareth. But they never noticed He was anything special. This isn't only an essay in His utter humanity. It challenges us, for whenever we appear righteous in the eyes of the world, they perceive it and dislike it. But somehow the perfection of Jesus wasn't outwardly noticeable. Hence He was indeed perfect.

14:4 Should we therefore also rebuke unbelievers for their breaking of God's law? God feels every breach of His law, by whomsoever. His sensitivity, and thereby His pain, sorrow and joy at obedience is far greater than we can perceive.

John had said to him: It is not lawful for you to have her. ⁵ And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. ⁶ But at Herod's birthday party, the daughter of Herodias danced before all and pleased Herod. ⁷ Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she should ask. ⁸ And she, being encouraged by her mother, said: Give me here the head of John the Baptist on a platter. ⁹ And the king was grieved, but for the sake of his oaths and of his dinner guests, he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰ He sent word and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹ And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹² And his disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him, and they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men Plus Their Families

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place to be alone; but when the crowds heard, they followed him on foot from the cities. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them

and healed their sick. ¹⁵ And when evening had come, the disciples came to him, saying: This place is deserted and the day is now over. Send the crowds away, that they may go into the villages and buy for themselves food. ¹⁶ But Jesus said to them: They need not go away. You give them something to eat. ¹⁷ And they say to him: We have here only five loaves and two fishes. ¹⁸ And he said: Bring them here to me. ¹⁹ And he commanded the crowds to sit down on the grass; and he took the five loaves and the two fishes and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were filled, and they collected what was left over of the broken pieces- twelve baskets full! ²¹ And they that ate, besides women and children, were about five thousand men.

Jesus Walks on Water

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side of the sea, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was

14:16 Jesus knew this was impossible for them to do. But He asks them to do it, in order they might learn that whatever little we have can be used by Him; and He challenges our faith and horizons likewise.

14:19 The food was mediated through the disciples; just as His salvation of others is mediated to them through our hands. Note the similarities with how Jesus 'broke bread' at the communion service. The way Jesus prayed with open eyes looking up to Heaven reflects His good conscience with God. Can we do that?

14:23 The way Jesus sent the people away is a window into the power of His personality, the strength of His will and mind.

there alone. ²⁴ But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking upon the sea. ²⁶ And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were disturbed, saying: It is a ghost! And they cried out for fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying: Be of good cheer. It is I! Be not afraid. ²⁸ And Peter answered, and said: Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you by walking on the water. ²⁹ And he said: Come. And Peter got out of the boat and walked upon the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind was strong, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying: Lord, save me! ³¹ And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and took hold of him and said to him: O you of little faith, why did you doubt? ³² And when they boarded the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And they that were in the boat worshipped him, saying: Of a truth you are the Son of God. ³⁴ And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Genesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognised him, they sent word

to all in that region and brought to him all who were sick, ³⁶ and they pleaded with him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

CHAPTER 15 Jan. 13 Jul. 14

Jesus Criticises Traditions

Then there came to Jesus Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, saying: ² Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. ³ And he answered and said to them: Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ⁴ For God said: Honour your father and your mother, and he that speaks evil of father or mother must surely die. ⁵ But you say: Whoever shall say to his father or his mother: That with which you might have been profited by me is given to God- ⁶ he shall not honour his father. Thus you have made void the word of God because of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying: ⁸ This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far from me. ⁹ But in vain do they worship me,

14:26 The disciples went back to their beliefs in ghosts. People still hold wrong understandings even after they come to Christ.

14:28 *If* – Peter knew that only Jesus would ask such a demanding thing. That’s His style. We see it in our lives too.

14:30 Peter only saw the wind because he must’ve taken his eyes off Jesus and looked at something blowing in the wind – maybe he looked back to the boat. We too will sink if we take our eyes off Jesus.

15:6 Traditions are dangerous. God’s commandments are intended to have an effect upon our lives; human traditions tend to find an easier way, whereby His commands lack cutting edge in our lives.

15:9 Note the parallel between doctrines and commandments (:6). Understanding cor-

teaching doctrines which are the precepts of men.

Jesus Teaches About the Source of Evil

¹⁰ And he called to himself the crowd, and said to them: Hear and understand. ¹¹ It is not what enters into the mouth which defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man. ¹² Then came the disciples, and said to him: Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? ¹³ But he answered and said: Every plant which my heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up. ¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind guides. And if the blind are guided by the blind, both shall fall into a pit. ¹⁵ And Peter answered and said to him: Explain to us the parable. ¹⁶ And he said: Are you still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not understand, that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the belly and is expelled? ¹⁸ But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of the heart, and it is they that de-

file the man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immorality, thefts, false witness and slander. ²⁰ These are the things which defile the man — but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.

***Jesus Goes to Other Countries
He Heals a Gentile Girl***

²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying: Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon. ²³ But he did not answer her. And his disciples came and begged him, saying: Send her away, for she cries out after us. ²⁴ But he answered and said: I was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying: Lord! Help me! ²⁶ And he answered and said: It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. ²⁷ But she said: Yes, Lord. But even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall

direct doctrine is important because doctrine shapes our lives; it is a commandment.

15:16 We feel Jesus' frustration with the disciples. He expected them to have reached a higher point of perception than they had. He may set similar benchmarks for us, as any good teacher does, and be disappointed at the slowness of our growth. Matthew was telling his hearers that he too, and all the founders of the early church, had been terribly slow to understand, and had been a great disappointment to Jesus. He preached the Gospel with humility and an awareness of his own weakness.

15:19 Sin comes from within; nothing outside of us, e.g. demons or spirits, can enter us and possess us, thereby making us sin. The source of sin is internal and not external. The real battle is for self control and spiritual mindedness. See notes about Satan.

15:27 The dogs were the Gentiles; crumbs were the miracles; the masters were the Jews; the meal or table was Jesus' fellowship and ministry to the Jews. She showed humility and faith by saying this; she knew that even the miracle she so sought was a mere crumb of what Jesus was offering Israel. They refused so much.

from their masters' table. ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her: O woman, great is your faith. Be it done to you even as you wish. And her daughter was healed from that moment.

Jesus Heals and Feeds Many Gentiles

²⁹ And Jesus departed from there and came near to the Sea of Galilee; and he went up the mountain and sat there. ³⁰ And there came to him great crowds, having with them the lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others; and they put them down at his feet, and he healed them; ³¹ so much so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel. ³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him, and said: I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way. ³³ And the disciples said to him: Where can we get so many loaves in this deserted place to fill so great a crowd? ³⁴ And Jesus said to them: How many loaves have you? And they said: Seven, and a few small fish. ³⁵ And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ He took the seven loaves and the fish; and he gave thanks and broke the bread and

gave it to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ³⁷ And they all ate and were filled, and they collected what was left over of the broken pieces- seven baskets full! ³⁸ And besides women and children, they that had eaten were four thousand men. ³⁹ And he sent away the crowds, boarded the boat and went into the region of Magdalla.

CHAPTER 16 Jan. 14 Jul. 15

Jesus Describes Pharisees And Sadducees as Evil

And the Pharisees and Sadducees came to test him, and asked him to show them a sign from heaven. ² But he answered and said to them: When it is evening, you say: It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. ³ And in the morning: It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of Jonah. And he left them and departed.

Jesus Teaches the Meaning of Yeast

⁵ When the disciples reached the other side, they had forgotten to bring any bread. ⁶ And Jesus said to them: Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ⁷ And they discussed this

15:32 Jesus perceived that the crowd was hungry. Jesus is the same today as He was then (Heb. 13:8). He's just as perceptive to our needs as He was then.

15:39 See on 14:23. The power of Jesus' personality and words deeply impressed Matthew.

among themselves, saying: We did not bring any bread. ⁸ And Jesus, aware of it, said: O you of little faith! Why do you discuss among yourselves that you have no bread? ⁹ Do you still not understand? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered ¹⁰ nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many baskets you took up? ¹¹ How is it that you fail to understand that I did not speak about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ¹² Then they understood that he told them not to be careful concerning the yeast in bread but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus Leaves Israel Again and Tests His Disciples' Understanding

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying: Who do men say that the Son of Man is? ¹⁴ And they said: Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He said to them: But who do you say that I

am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said to him: Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you but my Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ²⁰ Then he ordered the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

Jesus Teaches His Disciples about His Forthcoming Death and Resurrection

²¹ From that time Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised ²² And Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying: Be it far from you, Lord. This

16:11 Again note Jesus' frustration with His followers' lack of understanding. We should so seek to understand Him, for clearly it's pleasing to anyone who loves us that we understand them. See on 15:16.

16:12 Doctrine is compared to yeast; it influences a large mass of dough, out of proportion to its own volume. This is the power and importance of doctrine. We must understand correctly.

16:18 The rock was the rock of Peter's belief that Jesus was God's Son (:16), and Peter's personal preaching of it. 'Peter' means 'rock'; it was a nickname, something like 'Rocky'.

16:19 This was promised to all the disciples – Mt. 18:18. The Roman Catholics misuse this verse to claim that Peter and therefore the Pope has this power. But there's no reason to think that any authority was passed on from Peter, nor the other disciples, to any subsequent generation.

shall never happen to you! ²³ But he turned, and said to Peter: Get behind me, Satan. You are a hindrance to me, for you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man. ²⁴ Then said Jesus to his disciples: If anyone wants to be my follower, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? ²⁷ For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he repay every man according to his deeds. ²⁸ Truly I say to you: There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

CHAPTER 17 Jan. 15 Jul. 16

Jesus is Transfigured

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a

high mountain by themselves. ² And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone as the sun and his garments became white as the light. ³ And there appeared before them Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. ⁴ And Peter said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here. If it pleases you, I will make here three tabernacles— one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. ⁵ While he was yet speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him! ⁶ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face and were terrified. ⁷ And Jesus came and touched them, and said: Arise and be not afraid. ⁸ And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, save Jesus only. ⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying: Tell the vision to no one, until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. ¹⁰ And his disciples asked him: Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? ¹¹ And he answered and said: Elijah indeed comes and shall restore all things.

16:23 Peter is called ‘Satan’, ‘an adversary’, showing that ‘satan’ doesn’t mean a sinful Angel. The word simply means ‘an adversary’. Jesus turned to speak to Peter – Peter had been walking behind Jesus – and tells him to *really* ‘get behind me’. Hence He says in v. 24 that to follow behind Him means taking up a cross. Peter didn’t want Jesus to die on the cross because this meant that those who followed Jesus should also likewise die. But Jesus tells him to *really* get behind Him, to be a real follower of Him, not just externally but in the spirit of carrying His cross. Peter failed badly here, so soon after his spiritual peak of 16:17,18. Our spirituality – and that of our brethren – goes up and down dramatically.

16:28 This is a reference to the transfiguration which we now read of in chapter 17.

17:9 “The vision” [Gk.]. Moses and Elijah weren’t literally there, they were seen by the disciples in a vision.

17:11 An Elijah prophet will come to Israel in the last days to prepare them for the

¹² But I say unto you, that Elijah came already and they knew him not, but did to him whatever they would. Likewise shall the Son of Man suffer by their hands. ¹³ Then understood the disciples that he spoke to them of John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals an Epileptic

¹⁴ And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and knelt before him, saying: ¹⁵ Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is epileptic and suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶ So I brought him to your disciples but they could not cure him. ¹⁷ And Jesus answered and said: O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long must I tolerate you? Bring him here to me. ¹⁸ And Jesus rebuked him; and the demon went out of him and the boy was cured from that moment. ¹⁹ Then came the disciples to Jesus privately, and said:

Why could we not cast it out? ²⁰ And he said to them: Because of your little faith. For truly I say to you: If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move. Nothing shall be impossible for you. ²¹ But this kind will not go out except by prayer and fasting. ²² And while they stayed in Galilee, Jesus said to them: The Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men, ²³ and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up. And they were greatly distressed.

Jesus Teaches About the True Freedom of Sons of God

²⁴ And when they arrived in Capernaum, they that collected the tribute money came to Peter, and said: Does not your teacher pay the tribute money? ²⁵ He said: Yes. And when he came into the house, Jesus spoke to him first of all, saying: Simon. What

return of Christ, just as John the Baptist tried to prepare them for His first coming [see Malachi 4:5,6].

17:15 *Epileptic* – Or ‘lunatic’ [Gk.] – someone struck by the moon. The belief that the moon struck people at night causing them to go mad was a wrong understanding. But Jesus didn’t explicitly correct this. He showed by the magnitude of His miracle that such beliefs, whether or not they had any truth in them, were irrelevant compared to God’s power. Hence references to demon possession decrease throughout the Gospels and New Testament – it became apparent that they don’t exist, or if they do, they are irrelevant compared to God’s power.

17:17 Again Jesus shows His frustration with their lack of spiritual perception – see on 15:16; 16:11. To be frustrated isn’t sinful – for Jesus never sinned. If He so desires understanding from us – let’s give ourselves to trying to understand. And surely He will help us if we ask Him.

17:20 Just a small amount of real faith is very powerful. Faith is so powerful that you don’t need much of it – just a little of the real thing is quite enough.

17:25 Jesus paid tribute tax even when He didn’t have to and when the reasoning behind the demand for it was wrong. We should do the same. We cannot change geopolitics now; we must wait for His return and the coming of God’s Kingdom.

do you think? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? From their own children, or from strangers? ²⁶ And when he said ‘From strangers’, Jesus said to him: Therefore the children are free. ²⁷ However, not to give offence to them, go to the sea, cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a coin. Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.

CHAPTER 18 Jan. 16 Jul. 17

Jesus Teaches About Greatness and Humility

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ² And he called to himself a little child and set him in the midst of them, ³ and said: Truly I say to you, except you turn and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever shall receive one

such little child in my name receives me. ⁶ But whoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him that a great millstone should be hung about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. ⁷ Woe to the world because of temptations to stumble! For it is necessary that the temptations occur, but woe to that man through whom the temptation comes! ⁸ And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life maimed or lame, rather than having two hands or two feet to be thrown into the perpetual fire. ⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna. ¹⁰ See you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you, that in heaven their angels do always see the presence of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ For the Son of Man came to save those which were lost.

17:27 Jesus was very sensitive to not making people spiritually stumble. Even people whom we would consider as disinterested in His Gospel.

18:3 Conversion has various levels. The disciples had been converted, but there was a higher level of conversion – to become like children. Baptism isn’t the end of our conversion – it’s part of the process.

18:5 Jesus invites us to see Him as represented by the child. In the 1st Century world, children and women were considered as non-persons. But Jesus paid great attention to them and showed how He valued them as persons.

18:6 Such drowning in the sea as a millstone is Babylon’s judgment (Rev. 18:21). Those who make others sin or stumble will share in Babylon’s punishment at the last day – they will be “condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32). Those rejected by Jesus will be sent back into the world they so loved – and share its judgment.

18:8 Everlasting fire is symbolic of total destruction. Jerusalem was punished with this (Jer. 17:27) – but there is no eternal fire there today. Don’t read ‘eternal fire’ literally.

Jesus Teaches About Sin and Forgiveness

¹² What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? ¹³ And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. ¹⁴ So it is not the wish of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. ¹⁵ And if your brother sins against you, go show him his fault, between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two others, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church, and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax collec-

tors. ¹⁸ Truly I say to you: Whatever things you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever things you shall release on earth shall be released in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say to you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. ²¹ Then Peter came and said to him: Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times? ²² Jesus said to him: I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven. ²³ Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king who would make a reckoning with his servants. ²⁴ And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ And since he could not pay, his master ordered that

18:17 *To you* – you singular [Gk.]. This passage speaks about personal disagreements. If you follow this process, the end result is that you personally will treat the other person as a Gentile and tax collector – both of which groups Jesus especially sought to minister to and win for Him. It doesn't speak about a church disfellowshipping an individual.

18:20 Jesus is with us all the time individually, but He is especially with us when we gather together. Hence the importance of believers meeting together rather than believing in isolation.

18:21, 22 *Sin against* – Peter refers back to :15. Jesus seems to be saying that we can go through the process He outlines in :15-17. But the higher level is to forgive unconditionally. If somebody sins against us 490 times / day and claims each time to have repented, it's clear their repentance is insincere. Jesus is saying we should forgive people without trying to assess nor believe the sincerity of their repentance. For the nature of the forgiveness we show others is what we will be shown.

18:24 There's an element of unreality in this story. How could a person amass such a huge debt? Only because the King kept on and on lending to him, knowing the man could never repay. This speaks of God's forgiveness of us and the enormity of our debt to Him. Realizing our sinfulness will motivate us to forgive others.

he be sold with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶ The servant therefore fell on his knees, saying: Lord, have patience with me and I will pay you all that I owe. ²⁷ And the lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ But that servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants, who owed him a hundred denarii, and he laid hold on him and took him by the throat, saying: Pay what you owe. ²⁹ So his fellow-servant fell down and begged him, saying: Have patience with me and I will pay you. ³⁰ But he refused and had him cast into prison, until he should pay that which was due. ³¹ When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him: You wicked servant; because you pleaded with me I forgave you all that debt. ³³ Should not you also have had mercy on your fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on you? ³⁴ And his lord was angry and delivered him to the jailors, until he should pay all

that was due. ³⁵ So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.

CHAPTER 19 Jan. 17 Jul. 18

Divorce

And it came to pass when Jesus had finished these words, he departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. ² And great crowds followed him; and he healed them there. ³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him, by asking: Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause? ⁴ And he answered and said: Have you not read, that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said: For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? ⁶ So they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, do not let man separate. ⁷ They said to him: Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away? ⁸ He said to them: Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you

18:31 When we see unreasonable behaviour from our brethren, the response is to tell it to the Lord. He knows about it already, but it's good for us psychologically to tell the story to Him in prayer.

19:5, 6 Often partners don't psychologically 'leave' their parents, and only when this is done can they cleave to their partner. As they try to do this, so God will confirm them in 'joining' them. Partners are glued together [Gk.] by God in His own way – often through life circumstances overruled by Him. Adultery is therefore so wrong. It's a fighting against God's work in a couples' life.

19:8 God makes concessions to human weakness. He knows the mind of those He has created. He sets an ideal standard but is willing to accept a lower achievement from us in practice. But this is no reason to abuse this. If we love God we will try to live life on the higher levels rather than be minimalists.

to send away your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever shall send his wife away, except for “porneia” and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he that marries a divorced woman, commits adultery. ¹⁰ The disciples said to him: If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry. ¹¹ But he said to them: Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs that were born so from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Jesus Teaches the Cost of True Discipleship

¹³ Then little children were brought to him, so that he should lay his hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But Jesus

said: Let the little children come to me and do not prevent them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them and departed from there. ¹⁶ And someone came to him and said: Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? ¹⁷ And he said to him: Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments. ¹⁸ He said to him: Which? And Jesus said: You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹ honour your father and mother and, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. ²⁰ The young man said to him: All these things have I observed from my youth. What do I still lack? ²¹ Jesus said to him: If you would be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come follow me. ²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away

19:11 There are different levels. Some people can live on a higher level than others spiritually, especially in this area of marriage and human relationships. We must bear this in mind when forming opinions about those in the church who fail in these areas.

19:17 Jesus is at pains to show that He is not God Himself. The man wanted to know what he could *do* to be perfect. Jesus was perfect; but even then, His standing with God was only what it was by God’s grace.

19:20 The young man said he had kept the commandments from his youth. That’s youthful arrogance! But Jesus loved him (Mk. 10:21) rather than condemning his obvious arrogance and self-contradiction.

19:21 This was a specific command to the young man; it’s not a global command to all Christians to sell literally all they have. The example of converts in the later New Testament shows that they didn’t do this. “The poor” are often poor because of their own bad decisions. But Jesus says that we should still be generous to them with all that we have, rather than blaming them for having got themselves into the hole they have. If a person’s in a hole, however they got there, they still need our help out of it. Just as God does to us.

sorrowful, for he was one that had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus said to his disciples: Truly I say to you: It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you: 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. ²⁵ And when the disciples heard it, they were surprised, saying: Who then can be saved? ²⁶ And Jesus looking upon them said to them: With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. ²⁷ Then asked Peter, saying: We have left all and followed you. What then shall we receive as a reward? ²⁸ And Jesus said to them: Truly I say to you: You who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone that has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a

hundredfold and shall inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many shall be last that are first, and first that are last.

CHAPTER 20 Jan. 18 Jul. 19

Jesus' Parable of Labourers in the Vineyard

For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing in the marketplace idle. ⁴ And to them he said: You go also into the vineyard and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way. ⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing, and he said to them: Why do you stand here idle all the day? ⁷ They said to him: Because no one has hired us. He said to them: You go also into the vineyard. ⁸ And

19:24 The needle gate was the small gate in a city wall through which only people could walk. For a camel to pass through it, it had to kneel down and have all its baggage unloaded – and even then it could only just squeeze through. We must shed our wealth and humble ourselves if we are to enter the Kingdom.

19:25 The disciples held the common but wrong idea that wealthy people were wealthy because God had blessed them. Jesus here totally deconstructs the 'prosperity Gospel'.

20:2 The small coin represents salvation.

20:6 Those who don't serve Christ are standing around doing nothing – no matter their intellect and full diaries. It was only the old and weak who were not taken by anyone to work. But they wanted to work – so they stood there all day in the hope someone might be desperate enough for workers that he would take them. God is desperate for workers, and we who are called to Christ in these last days are those weak workers. Like those called at the last moment in Lk. 14:23 are the street people and desperate. That's us.

20:8 We are 'called' by the Angel appearing when Christ returns to gather us to judgment.

when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward: Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first. ⁹ And when they who were hired about the eleventh hour came, they each received a denarius. ¹⁰ And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more, but likewise each received a denarius. ¹¹ And when they received it, they grumbled at the master of the house, saying: ¹² These last have spent only one hour but you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. ¹³ And he answered and said to one of them: Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴ Take that which is yours and go your way. It is my wish to give to this last even as I gave to you. ¹⁵ Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own money? Or is your eye evil, because I am good? ¹⁶ So the last shall be first and the first last.

The Importance Of Being A Servant

¹⁷ And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them: ¹⁸ Listen, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests and scribes; and they

shall condemn him to death, ¹⁹ and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify; and the third day he shall be raised up. ²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, kneeling before him and asking a certain thing of him. ²¹ And he said to her: What do you desire? She said to him: Command that in your kingdom these my two sons may sit, one on your right hand, and one on your left hand. ²² But Jesus answered and said: You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They said to him: We are able. ²³ He said to them: You shall drink my cup indeed - but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand, is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father. ²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to himself, and said: You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you- must be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever would be first among you shall be your slave. ²⁸ Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

20:14 The implication could be that this man is ‘fired’ – he must go his way, away from Jesus, because he thought that he was more worthy than the weak, sick, old or lazy workers who had also been hired. Such spiritual snobbism is *so* repellent to Jesus.

20:28 A radical inversion of human values. We are here to serve, to give; not to be served, get wealthy or receive some benefit for ourselves. The very opposite of the ‘prosperity Gospel’.

Jesus Heals Two Determined Blind Men

²⁹ And as they went out from Jericho, a great crowd followed him. ³⁰ And two blind men who were sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying: Lord, have mercy on us, you Son of David. ³¹ And the crowd rebuked them, that they should hold their peace; but they cried out the more, saying, Lord, have mercy on us, you Son of David! ³² And Jesus stood still and called them, and said: What do you desire I do for you? ³³ They said to him: Lord, that our eyes may be opened. ³⁴ And Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes; and immediately they received their sight and followed him.

CHAPTER 21 Jan. 19 Jul. 20

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them: Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ And if anyone says something to you, you shall say: The Lord has need of

20:32 Why ask this, when the answer was obvious? To focus those men upon their own need. Jesus does the same with us; through His word and hand in our lives, He brings us to perceive how much we want what we say we want.

21:5 A humble King was a contradiction in terms. A King was supposed to ride upon a battle horse, not a donkey. It's like a President arriving in a battered 20 year old small car, rather than a cavalcade of Mercedes.

21:9 The crowd were so fickle. A few days later they would cry "Crucify him!"; and 6 weeks later claim to have accepted the preaching of Peter. Fickleness is part of our nature; what God and Jesus desire, as we do in any relationship, is stability, loyalty to the end, faithfulness.

them. And immediately he will send them. ⁴ Now this happened so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying: ⁵ Tell the daughter of Zion: Look, your King comes to you, meek and riding upon an ass and upon a colt the foal of an ass. ⁶ And the disciples went and did as Jesus directed them, ⁷ and brought the ass and the colt and put on them their garments; and he sat thereon. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹ And the crowds that went before him and that followed shouted: Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! ¹⁰ And when he had arrived in Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying: Who is this? ¹¹ And the crowds said: This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee.

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹² And Jesus entered into the temple of God and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple. and overthrew the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold the doves. ¹³ And he said to them: It is written, my house shall be called a

house of prayer; but you make it a den of robbers. ¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did and the children that were crying in the temple and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David!, they were moved with indignation, and said to him: ¹⁶ Do you hear what these are saying? And Jesus said to them: Yes. Did you never read: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise? ¹⁷ And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

Jesus Condemns a Fig Tree

¹⁸ Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he became hungry. ¹⁹ And seeing a fig tree by the roadside, he went to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only; and he said to it: Let there be no fruit from you again. And immediately the fig tree withered away. ²⁰ And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying: How did the fig tree immediately wither away? ²¹ And Jesus answered and said to them: Truly I say to you, If you have faith and doubt not, you

shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if you shall say to this mountain: Be taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. ²² And all things, whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.

Jesus is Challenged In The Temple

²³ And when he had entered into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said: By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority? ²⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: I also will ask you one question, which if you tell me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, where was it from? From heaven or from men? And they discussed it among themselves, saying: If we shall say, from heaven, he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? ²⁶ But if we shall say, from men, we fear the crowd, for all hold John as a prophet. ²⁷ And they answered Jesus and said: We do not know. He replied to them: Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

21:14 The blind and lame had been banned from the temple due to a Jewish misapplication of 2 Sam. 5:8. But Jesus welcomed into God's house those whom man had banned from it.

21:18 He hungered for spiritual fruit on Israel, the fig tree. He was prepared to eat even the unripe fruit which the leaves promised to be there. He cursed it because there was an appearance of fruit, i.e. it had leaves, but in reality there wasn't even the beginnings of spiritual fruit. He is satisfied with even our immature spirituality – if we do at least something (Mt. 25:27).

21:22 We should visualize the answer to our prayers and act and feel as if they have been answered. But this verse is only part of the overall Bible teaching about prayer – we can only pray with such confidence if we know it is according to God's will (1 Jn. 5:14).

Jesus' Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸ But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said: Son, today go and work in the vineyard. ²⁹ And he answered and said: I will not; but afterward he repented and went. ³⁰ And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said: I go sir; but did not go. ³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father? They replied: The first. Jesus said to them: Truly I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and afterwards when you saw it, you still did not repent and believe him.

Jesus' Parable of the Vineyard and the Husbandmen

³³ Hear another parable. There was a man that was master of a house, who planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen; and went into another

country. ³⁴ And when the harvest season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the husbandmen took his servants and beat one and killed another and stoned another. ³⁶ Again, he sent other servants more than the first, and they did the same to them. ³⁷ And last of all he sent his son to them, saying: They will respect my son. ³⁸ But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves: This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take his inheritance. ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? ⁴¹ They said to him: He will miserably destroy those miserable men and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall pay him the fruits in their seasons. ⁴² Jesus said to them: Did you never read in the scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. ⁴³ Therefore say I to you: The kingdom of

21:30 Often parables present two kinds of people – those who appear to be righteous and aren't; and those who are openly disobedient but repent. Churches seem full of the first category, but these aren't those whom God accepts. We have to accept that we are serious sinners, and repent.

21:35 These servants represent God's prophets whom He sent to Israel in the Old Testament.

21:37 Here is the hopefulness of God. On one hand, He knew from the beginning that Israel would reject and kill His Son. But He had such hope that they would not. The God who is omnipotent sometimes and in some ways limits His power; and He does the same with His knowledge, His omniscience. He has entered into relationship with us and therefore He has in a way limited Himself in order to conduct that relationship with us on a legitimate, meaningful level. Hence we read of God's shock, hurt and surprise at human actions.

God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And he that falls on this stone shall be broken to pieces, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust. ⁴⁵ And when the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke of them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

CHAPTER 22 Jan. 20 Jul. 21

Jesus' Parable About the Wedding Feast

And Jesus answered and spoke again in parables to them, saying: ² The kingdom of heaven is likened to a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son, ³ and sent out his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage feast,

but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited: Look, I have made ready my dinner. My oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready. Come to the marriage feast! ⁵ But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. ⁷ The king was angry, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burnt their city. ⁸ Then he said to his servants: The wedding is ready, but they that were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore, go to the main roads and as many as you shall find, invite them to the marriage feast. ¹⁰ And those servants went out into the highways and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was filled with guests. ¹¹ But when the king

21:44 This refers to how the image of Daniel 2, representing the kingdoms of men, is to be ground to powder by the return of Christ to the earth. He will judge those who reject Him along with the world whose ways they so loved (1 Cor. 11:32). We either fall upon Christ and are broken, through recognizing our sins (1 Pet. 2:8); or He will fall upon us and break us at the last day. So there is a logic to all this – we must be broken people now, or we will be broken then. The true community of believers is one of broken men and women.

22:4 Everything was 'ready' for God's Kingdom in the first century, but the Jews rejected it.

22:5 Just as people today allow the busyness of their lives to stop them from responding to the Gospel.

22:7 Jerusalem was burnt by the Roman armies in AD70. They were *God's* armies in the sense that He controlled and used them. Those who persecute us are also in a sense directly under God's control.

22:10 There will be both bad and good people who accept the invitation; just as the weeds grow together with the wheat in the field of the church (Mt. 13:29). We shouldn't be surprised at the sense that this is the case; but it's not a reason to leave the church. We will not find any pure church.

22:11 The wedding garment represents the righteousness of God which is given to us when we are clothed with Christ in baptism. In weddings of those days, the white

entered to see the guests, he saw there a man who was not wearing a wedding-garment. ¹² And he said to him: Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants: Bind him hand and foot and throw him outside into the darkness, where there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴ For many are called but few chosen.

The Pharisees Try to Trap Jesus – Tribute Money to Caesar

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might trap him in his talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to him their disciples, along with the Herodians, saying: Teacher. We know that you are true and teach the way of God in truth and care not for anyone, for you regard not the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us therefore, what you think. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? ¹⁸ But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said: Why do you test me? You hypocrites! ¹⁹ Show me the tribute money. And they brought to him a denarius. ²⁰ And he said to them: Whose is this image and superscription? ²¹ They said to him: Caesar's. He then said to them: Therefore give to Caesar the things that are

Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. ²² And when they heard it, they marvelled and left him and went away.

The Sadducees Try to Trap Jesus – Resurrection

²³ The same day Sadducees, that say that there is no resurrection, came to him; and they asked him: ²⁴ Teacher. Moses said that if a man dies having had no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up seed to his brother. ²⁵ Now there were with us seven brothers; and the first married and died having no seed, and thus left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ In like manner the second also and the third, to the seventh. ²⁷ And after them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection therefore, whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her. ²⁹ But Jesus answered and said to them: You are mistaken, as you neither know the scriptures, nor the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying: ³² I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not God of

wedding garment was given to the guests as they entered the feast. To refuse it was arrogant – presumably the person thought that his own clothes were better than the wedding garment offered by the host.

22:21 The coin had Caesar's image on it and therefore should be given to him. Our bodies are what has God's image on it, and we should give them to God.

22:30 We are to be made as the Angels; we will be eternal and unable to sin, therefore the Angels are like that today. There are no sinful Angels in Heaven.

22:32 Those men are dead and unconscious, but their memory lives on with God, to the extent that when He says "I am [still, now, today] the God of... Jacob", He means

the dead, but of the living. ³³ And when the crowds heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

A Pharisee Lawyer Tries to Trap Jesus – The Greatest Commandment

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him: ³⁶ Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? ³⁷ And he said to him: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.

Jesus Tests the Pharisees – Who is the Son of David?

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying: ⁴² What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he? They said to him: The son of David. ⁴³ He said to them: How then does David in the Spirit call him Lord,

saying: ⁴⁴ The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies underneath your feet. ⁴⁵ If David then calls him Lord, how is he his son? ⁴⁶ And no one could say a word in reply. From that day nobody dared to ask him any other questions.

CHAPTER 23 Jan. 21 Jul. 22

Jesus Warns About Hypocrisy

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying: ² The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses seat. ³ Therefore all things whatever they tell you, do and observe; but do not you copy their works, for they say and do not. ⁴ Yes, they bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders; but they will not move them with their finger. ⁵ But they do all their works to be seen by men. For they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long, ⁶ and they love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi. ⁸ But you are not to be called Rabbi- for one is your teacher, and all you are brothers. ⁹ And call no one on the earth your father- for one

that He visualizes Jacob as actually alive. Jacob will be resurrected and given eternal life when Jesus returns; but God speaks about those things which are not yet as if they are, because the future is totally assured from His perspective (Rom. 4:17).

22:39 The Jews were always arguing about which commandment was most important. Jesus answers by saying that there are two commandments which are in fact one – to love God and to love our neighbour. His point is that these two can't be separated. We can't be Christians in isolation from people; we can't love God and be indifferent to our neighbour.

22:45 The Jews thought that David was greater than Messiah; Jesus is saying that it's the other way around.

23:9 The practice of calling a priest 'Father' is therefore totally wrong.

is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called masters - for one is your master, the Christ. ¹¹ But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whoever shall humble himself shall be exalted. ¹³ But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ¹⁴ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, while for a pretence you make long prayers. Therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. ¹⁵ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he has become so, you make him two-fold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves. ¹⁶ Woe to you, you blind guides, who say: Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. ¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold, or the temple that has made the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And, Whoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing! But whoever shall swear by the gift that is upon it, he is bound by his oath. ¹⁹ You blind men! For which is greater: the

gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ He therefore that swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. ²¹ And he that swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him that dwells in it. ²² And he that swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him that sits on it. ²³ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you tithe mint and anise and cumin, yet have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. ²⁴ You blind guides, that strain out the gnat and swallow the camel! ²⁵ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! Cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside of it may become clean also. ²⁷ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ²⁹ Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the

23:13 We can both enable and hinder others from entering God's Kingdom. Causing others not to enter the Kingdom by our words, actions or example is one of the most serious sins. The Pharisees were a very small group, but the Gospel records give much time to describing Christ's interaction with them – for legalism and discouraging others from entering the Kingdom is such a serious sin, which we can so easily commit.

23:22 God is a personal being, located in Heaven – not a whisp of 'spirit' nor an abstraction.

prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous,³⁰ and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.³¹ Therefore you witness to yourselves, you are the sons of them that slew the prophets.³² Fill up then the measure of your fathers' iniquity.³³ You serpents, you offspring of vipers, how shall you escape the judgment of Gehenna?³⁴ Therefore, look, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes. Some of them you shall kill and crucify, and some of them you shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.³⁵ That upon you may fall the guilt for all the righteous blood shed on the land, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom you slew between the sanctuary and the altar.³⁶ Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

Jesus Laments Over Jerusalem

³⁷ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often would I have

gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings- but you were not willing!³⁸ Behold, your house is left to you desolate.³⁹ For I say to you, you shall not see me from this time forward, until you shall say: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 24 Jan. 22 Jul. 23

Jesus Predicts the Temple Destruction, His Return and the End of the Age

And Jesus came out of the temple and was going on his way when his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.² But he answered and said to them: Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you. There shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down.³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying: Tell us, when shall these things be? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: Take heed that no one lead you astray.⁵ For many shall come

23:33 An allusion to the promise in Eden of Gen. 3:15. All who oppose Jesus are the descendants of the serpent, and those in Christ, as the descendants of the woman, will overcome them in the end after suffering from them in the short term.

23:37 Did Jesus think up this idea from watching the hens in his mothers' yard in Nazareth?

23:39 This may mean that when Jesus returns, those who rejected Him will be resurrected and then will recognize Him. But it will be too late. At the day of judgment, nobody will be indifferent. People may shrug their shoulders now or even reject Jesus, but in that day they will desperately want one thing – to be with Him. But for those who rejected Him in this life it will be too late. Hence the rejected will bang their teeth in self-hatred.

24:2 This was fulfilled by the gold of the temple melting and running down between the stones, so that the Romans literally threw down every stone to extract the gold.

in my name, saying: I am the Christ, and shall lead many astray. ⁶ And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars. Ensure you are not alarmed, for this must happen- but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ But all these things are the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you; and you shall be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then shall many stumble and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets shall arise and shall lead many astray. ¹² And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the majority shall grow cold. ¹³ But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations- and then shall the end come. ¹⁵ Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him that

is on the housetop not go down to take out things that are in his house. ¹⁸ And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. ¹⁹ But woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight is not in the winter, nor on a Sabbath. ²¹ For then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved- but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. ²³ Then if anyone shall say to you, Here is the Christ, or another, Here is the Christ- do not believe them! ²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, which shall show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray- if possible- even the elect. ²⁵ Listen, I have told you beforehand. ²⁶ Therefore, if they shall say to you: Look, he is in the wilderness! Do not go. Look, he is in the inner chambers! Do not believe it. ²⁷ For as the lightning comes from the east and is seen even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ²⁸ Wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles gather together. ²⁹ But immediately after the tribulation of

24:14 This implies that the return of Christ to some extent depends upon our taking the Gospel to all the world. It must be preached for a witness to the world – not all will respond, but all nations will hear. The advent of the internet has enabled this.

24:22 Although there are some stated conditions for the return of Christ to return (see :14), God will shorten the days. 2 Peter 3 says that there is also a delay, so that more may believe. So there are various apparently conflicting factors at work in determining the actual date for Christ to return. The shortening of the days will be because of the prayers of the faithful for Christ to return soon; or in order to save the faithful from falling away, so great will be the temptations and pressure of the last days.

those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. ³⁰ And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven. Then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. ³² Now from the fig tree learn her parable. When her branch has become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. ³³ Even so you also, when you see all these things, know that he is near- at the doors. ³⁴ Truly I say to you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things are accomplished. ³⁵ Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Jesus Warns that the Time of the End is Only Known to God

³⁶ But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the Angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ And as were the days of Noah, so

shall be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, ³⁹ and they did not realize until the flood came and took them all away. So shall the coming of the Son of Man be. ⁴⁰ Then two men shall be in the field. One shall be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women shall be grinding at the mill. One shall be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on what day your Lord comes. ⁴³ But know this! That if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Jesus Describes the Wise Servant

⁴⁵ Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household to give them their food in due time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you, that he will set him over all that he has. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant

24:31 The Angels will gather us from all over the world – there will be true believers world-wide, as a result of the witness of v. 14.

24:32 The fig tree represents Israel; fruit on the fig tree speaks of the spiritual fruit of repentance. When at least some Jews repent and accept Christ – which is already happening – this will be a sign that we are in the last generation.

24:40, 41 As often in His teaching, Jesus balances examples from the worlds of both men and women. Such was His valuing of all people.

24:48 The Lord *does* delay His coming – the same Greek word is found in 25:5 describing how the bridegroom [Jesus] delays His coming. See on 24:14.

shall say in his heart: My lord's coming is delayed, ⁴⁹ and shall begin to beat his fellow-servants and shall eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he does not expect him and in an hour when he does not know, ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

CHAPTER 25 Jan. 23 Jul. 24

Jesus' Parable of Ten Virgins

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² And five of them were foolish and five were wise; ³ for the foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took flasks of oil along with their lamps. ⁵ Now while the bridegroom was delayed they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶ But at midnight there was a cry: Look! The bridegroom! Come out to meet him. ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise: Give us

some of your oil, for our lamps are going out. ⁹ But the wise answered: Perhaps there will not be enough for us and you. Instead, you should go to them that sell oil and buy some for yourselves. ¹⁰ And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. ¹² But he answered and said: Truly I say to you, I do not know you. ¹³ Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know the day nor the hour.

Jesus' Parable About the Servants and the Talents

¹⁴ For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants and delivered to them his goods. ¹⁵ And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one- to each according to his abilities; and he went on his journey. ¹⁶ Immediately he that received the five talents went and traded with them and made another five talents. ¹⁷ In like manner

25:4 Again there are two groups in the parable – the weak, who knew their weakness and took extra oil with them, knowing they'd likely not stay awake; and the arrogant self-assured, who didn't think they would fail.

25:5 There is a delay in Christ's return – see on 24:14. They all fell asleep – but we should be awake and watching when Christ returns (1 Thess. 5:6-8). The last generation before Christ returns will be spiritually weak and sleepy saved only by their recognition of their weakness and lack of oil [a symbol of spirituality?].

25:6 Midnight – an element of unreality in the parable. The bridegroom comes at a most unlikely time – as Christ will.

25:11 Some who call Jesus "Lord" will be rejected. Nobody will be passive in that day – all will wish to be accepted by Jesus.

25:15 Each of us have different abilities given us to use in His service. We all have something. Pray that God shows you what abilities He has given you, what is His hope and expectation for you.

he also that received the two gained other two. ¹⁸ But he that received the one went away and dug in the earth and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the lord of those servants came and made a reckoning with them. ²⁰ And he that received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying: Lord, you gave me five talents. Look, I have gained another five talents. ²¹ His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, so I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord! ²² And also he that had received the two talents came and said: Lord, you gave me two talents. Look, I have gained another two talents. ²³ His lord said to him: Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, so I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord! ²⁴ And also he that had received the one talent came and said: Lord, I knew you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed. ²⁵ And I was afraid and went away and hid your talent in the earth. Here, have what is yours. ²⁶ But his lord answered and said to him: You

wicked and slothful servant, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter seed. ²⁷ You should have deposited my money with the bankers, so that on my return I would have collected my own money with interest. ²⁸ So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For to everyone that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that has not, even what he has shall be taken away. ³⁰ And cast out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There, shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Jesus' Parable About Sheep and Goats

³¹ But when the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the Angels with him, then he shall sit on the throne of his glory. ³² And before him shall be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King shall say to those on his right hand: Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

25:22 The Greek word translated “gained” is elsewhere used about gaining people for Christ.

25:27 Under the Law of Moses, Jews weren't supposed to lend their money for interest. But Jesus is saying that the man should've done at least something, even if it wasn't the best. He will explain to the rejected how they could've entered His Kingdom – but it will be too late. Hence the gnashing of teeth.

25:31 The throne of Jesus is the throne which God promised to give David's great descendant, i.e. Jesus. This throne or place of rulership was literally in Jerusalem, on this earth (Lk. 1:32).

35 For I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me. 36 Naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me. 37 Then the righteous shall answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you? Or thirsty and gave you drink? 38 And when did we see you as a stranger and welcome you? Or naked and clothed you? 39 And when did we see you sick, or in prison and came to you? 40 And the King shall answer and say to them: Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these my brothers, even the least, you did it to me. 41 Then he shall also say to them on the left hand: You who are cursed, depart from me, to the perpetual fire which is prepared for the Devil and his messengers. 42 For I was hungry and you did not give me anything to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. Naked and you did not clothe me. Sick and in prison and you did not visit me. 44 Then they shall also answer, saying: Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to you? 45 Then he shall

answer them, saying: Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of these least, you did not do it to me. 46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life.

CHAPTER 26 Jan. 24 Jul. 25

Jesus Predicts Two Days to His Death

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples: 2 You know that after two days the Passover comes, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. 3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered at the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. 4 And they plotted together how they might seize Jesus using trickery and kill him. 5 But they said: Not during the feast, lest a riot arise among the people.

Jesus is Anointed

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. 8 But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying: To what purpose

25:37 The righteous did their good works unconsciously, and so totally can't remember them that they disagree with Jesus about these things – they really will be genuinely persuaded they hadn't done them!

25:40 The least of Christ's brethren may refer to the spiritually weakest. Our attitude to them is our attitude to Christ – see too 1 Cor. 12:23.

26:5 The crowds were very pro Jesus, but soon shouted "Crucify Him!". We must try not to be so fickle, even though it's how we tend to be by nature.

26:8 *Disciples* – the other records say that Judas said this. One person can so easily negatively influence a whole group of believers.

is this waste? ⁹ For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor. ¹⁰ But Jesus perceiving it, said to them: Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work upon me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me with you. ¹² For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I say to you: Wherever in the whole world this gospel is preached, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of as a memorial to her. ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, ¹⁵ and said: What are you willing to give me if I will deliver him to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that time onward he sought opportunity to betray him.

Jesus' Last Supper

¹⁷ Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Where do you want us to prepare the Passover for you to eat? ¹⁸ And he said: Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him: The Teacher said, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house

with my disciples. ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus directed them, and they prepared the Passover. ²⁰ Now when evening had come, he was dining with the twelve disciples. ²¹ And as they were eating, he said: Truly I say to you: One of you shall betray me. ²² And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and all began to say to him: Is it I, Lord? ²³ And he answered and said: He that dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man goes, even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better if that man had not been born. ²⁵ And Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said: Is it I, Rabbi? He said to him: You have said it. ²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed and broke it, and he gave it to the disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body. ²⁷ And he took a cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying: All of you, drink it. ²⁸ For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I shall not drink of this fruit of the vine from this time forward, until that day when I drink it

26:13 This incident is mentioned in all the Gospel records, confirming our thesis that the Gospels are transcripts of the actual Gospel message which the authors usually preached.

26:15 This suggests that Judas' motivation was largely financial. Hence his throwing down of the pieces of silver in disgust at himself. So many have betrayed Christ for the passing wealth of this world.

26:26 The original breaking of bread was part of a meal.

26:29 Alluding to how the priest on duty wasn't allowed to drink alcohol. Jesus intended us to understand that He will literally drink wine again with us when He returns, at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

anew with you in my Father's kingdom. ³⁰ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them: You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written: I will smite the shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. ³² But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. ³³ But Peter answered and said to him: If they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. ³⁴ Jesus said to him: Truly I say to you, that this night, before the cock crows, you shall deny me three times. ³⁵ Peter said to him: Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. Likewise said all the disciples.

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples: Sit here, while I go yonder and pray. ³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with me. ³⁹ And he went forward a little and fell on his face and prayed, saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me. Nevertheless, not as I will

but as You will. ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: What! Could you not watch with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. ⁴² Again a second time he went away and prayed, saying: My Father, if this cup cannot pass, except I drink it, Your will be done. ⁴³ And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And he left them again and went away and prayed a third time, saying again the same words. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them: Sleep on now and take your rest.

Jesus is Arrested

The hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Arise! Let us be going. He that betrays me is nearby. ⁴⁷ And while he yet spoke, Judas, one of the twelve, came; and with him a great crowd with swords and staves, from the chief priest and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he. Take him. ⁴⁹ And immediately he came to Jesus, and said, Greetings, Rabbi; and kissed him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus said to him: Friend, do what you came to

26:38 Jesus almost died from sorrow, sorrow that Israel had rejected God's salvation. His heart so bled for others' response to the Gospel, as should ours.

26:39 How long did it take Jesus to pray these words? Were there minutes between each word or clause? Our salvation hung in the balance as He struggled. The will of God was clearly not the same as the will of Jesus in all things – Jesus was certainly not God in person.

26:45 Jesus said this to them as they slept, as if talking to His own sleeping children.

do. Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took him. ⁵¹ And one of those with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then said Jesus to him: Put away your sword into its place, for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot ask my Father and He shall, even now, send me more than twelve legions of Angels? But how then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way? ⁵⁵ In that hour Jesus said to the mob: Have you come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching and you did not take me. ⁵⁶ But all this is happening so that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him and fled. ⁵⁷ And they that had taken Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed him afar off, to the court of the high priest; and entered in and sat with the officers, to see the end. ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to death. ⁶⁰ And they did not find any, though many false witnesses came. But afterwards came two, ⁶¹ and said: This man said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days. ⁶² And the

high priest stood up and said to him: Do you answer nothing? What is it that these testify against you? ⁶³ But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said to him: I bind you under oath to the living God, tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him: You have said it; nevertheless I say to you, from this time forward you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven. ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his garments, saying: He has spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witnesses? You have now heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶ What is your judgement? They answered and said: He is worthy of death. ⁶⁷ Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists, and some slapped him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying: Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is he that struck you?

Peter Denies he Knows Jesus

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a maid came to him, saying: You also were with Jesus the Galilean. ⁷⁰ But he denied before them all, saying: I do not know what you say. ⁷¹ And when he went out to the entrance, another maid saw him and said to the bystanders: This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. ⁷² And again he denied with an oath: I do not know the man. ⁷³ And after a little while they that stood by came

26:52 A solid argument against Christians taking weapons.

26:60 The Jews had a strange desire to still keep the Law and to be legally correct – whilst destroying the innocent Son of God. This kind of paradox and gross internal contradiction is so often seen in religious people.

and said to Peter: Of a truth you also are one of them, for your dialect makes you known. ⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and to swear: I do not know the man! And immediately the cock crowed. ⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said: Before the cock crows, you shall deny me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER 27 Jan. 25 Jul. 26

Jesus is Brought to Pilate

Now when morning had arrived, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. ² And they bound him and led him away, and delivered him up to Pilate the governor. ³ Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, ⁴ saying: I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said: What is that to us? See to it yourself. ⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver

into the sanctuary and departed, and he went away and hanged himself. ⁶ And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said: It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is the price of blood. ⁷ And they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. ⁸ Therefore that field is called to this day, The field of blood. ⁹ Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying: And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel. ¹⁰ And they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me. ¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? And Jesus said to him: You say it. ¹² And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he said nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to him: Do you not hear how many things they testify against you? ¹⁴ And he gave him no answer, not even one word, so much so that the governor was astonished. ¹⁵ Now

26:73 Jesus and His followers were distinguished by their Galilean accents. Another window into the humanity of Jesus.

26:74 These oaths weren't expletives. They were calling down various types of Divine condemnation upon himself if he had ever known Jesus. Peter's bitter weeping in v. 75 is similar to the weeping which Jesus often predicted would be experienced by those whom He rejects at the last day. Peter condemned himself in this life – but repented and was saved. We either go through that process now, in contrition for our sins – or then at the day of judgment when it's too late to change the verdict.

27:3 Judas realized his condemnation and had a change of mind; parallel with Peter (see on 26:74). The difference was that Peter believed in God's grace but Judas wouldn't.

27:5 The way Judas threw down the money suggests he now despised those few coins, for which he had betrayed Jesus and lost his eternal salvation.

27:14 The self controlled silence of Jesus was amazing. May it be our inspiration in times of provocation.

at the feast the governor was accused to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ And they had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they were gathered together, Pilate said to them: Who do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? ¹⁸ For he knew that they had delivered him up out of envy. ¹⁹ And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent a message to him, saying: Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Jesus is Condemned

²⁰ Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. ²¹ But the governor answered and said to them: Which of the two do you want me to release to you? And they said: Barabbas! ²² Pilate said to them: What then shall I do to Jesus who is called Christ? They all said: Let him be crucified! ²³ And he said: Why, what evil has he done?

But they cried out exceedingly, saying: Let him be crucified! ²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying: I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. ²⁵ And all the people answered and said: His blood is on us and on our children. ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them, but Jesus he scourged and delivered to be crucified. ²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium, and the whole battalion gathered around him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put on him a scarlet robe. ²⁹ And they plaited a crown of thorns and put it upon his head and a reed in his right hand, and they knelt down before him and mocked him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews! ³⁰ And they spat upon him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they took the robe from him and dressed him in his own garments, and led him away to crucify him. ³² And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Si-

27:17 Pilate appears to genuinely want to save Jesus, and to be the victim of manipulation. Yet history records that he was a conscienceless man who murdered people at will, having no respect at all for justice nor the value of life. The 'contradiction' is only explicable by the strange effect which Jesus' righteousness, love and perfection can have on even the hardest character and most damaged conscience. For the example of Pilate shows that everyone has a conscience.

27:23 This is the same crowd that just recently had been crying "Hosanna!", and whom the Jews feared as supportive of Jesus. We tend to be so fickle in our loyalty to Jesus.

27:25 The fact the Jews said this doesn't mean it happened; for God doesn't punish the children for the sins of their fathers (Ez. 18:1-10).

27:29 There is a set of nerves just beneath the scalp which the thorns would've intentionally pierced as they hit Him on the head with the crown on (:30). Jesus would've been bleeding profusely down His back as a result.

mon by name, whom they forced to carry the cross.

Jesus is Crucified

³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, the place of a skull, ³⁴ they gave him wine to drink mingled with gall. And when he had tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶ And they sat there and watched him. ³⁷ And over his head they put the written accusation against him, which read: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. ³⁸ Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right hand and one on his left. ³⁹ And they that passed by derided him, wagging their heads, ⁴⁰ and saying: You that would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross. ⁴¹ In like manner also the chief priests with the Scribes and elders mocked him, saying: ⁴² He

saved others; he cannot save himself. If he is the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God, let Him deliver him now- if He desires him. For he said: I am the Son of God. ⁴⁴ And the robbers also that were crucified with him cast upon him the same reproach. ⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice: Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? ⁴⁷ And some of them standing there, when they heard it, said: This man calls Elijah. ⁴⁸ And immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ And the rest said: Let him be. Let us see whether Elijah comes to save him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bot-

27:34 Because He wanted to share completely in our feelings; nobody, therefore, can say that Jesus doesn't know how they feel. Maybe nobody on earth does; but He knows.

27:44 The one thief's repentance was therefore literally a last minute repentance just before he died.

27:46 The Old Testament is clear that God will not forsake those faithful to Him, but will forsake those who sin. Jesus felt forsaken by God. He felt as if He had sinned, even though He hadn't. This was because of the intensity of His association with us who have sinned, just as men like Daniel and Nehemiah spoke and felt to God as if they had sinned Israel's sin. So even when we fail, Jesus still knows how we feel in the separation from God which sin brings. He never sinned, but in His final horror of aloneness He felt as if He had.

27:48 The reeds in that area aren't very long. Therefore Jesus' cross was not that large. The Catholic impressions of a cross towering far above us is wrong. His feet would've been only a metre above the ground; remember how He communicated with Mary and John.

tom; and the earth quaked and the rocks were split. ⁵² And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ Now the centurion and those that were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that happened, were terrified, saying: Truly this was the Son of God. ⁵⁵ And many women were there watching from afar, those who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. ⁵⁶ Among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Jesus is Buried

⁵⁷ And when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded it to be given him. ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the

rock; and he rolled a great stone as the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. ⁶² Now the next day, which is the day after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together before Pilate, ⁶³ saying: Sir, we remember that that deceiver said when he was still alive, After three days I will rise again. ⁶⁴ Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him away and say to the people, He is risen from the dead; and so the last error will be worse than the first. ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them: You have a guard. Go make it as secure as you can. ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

CHAPTER 28 Jan. 26 Jul. 27

Jesus is Resurrected

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And there was a great earthquake, for an Angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ His appear-

27:55 *From Galilee* – The idea is that they didn't just follow Him when the going was good, amidst the crowds of Galilean peasants who thronged Him; but also followed to the cross. We too are to follow the Lamb wherever He leads.

27:56 *Mary the mother of James* – A reference to Mary the mother of Jesus; for He had two half brothers called James and Joses (Mt. 13:55).

27:58 Only close relatives could beg the body of the crucified. But this was how Joseph felt. He wanted to associate the dead body of Jesus with his own dead body, laying Jesus where his body should lay. This was the essence of baptism, whereby we identify ourselves with the death of the body of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5).

28:1 The other Mary is surely a reference to Mary the mother of Jesus – see on 27:56.

ance was as lightning and his garment white as snow, ⁴ and for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ And the angel said to the women: Do not be fearful, for I know you seek Jesus, who has been crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he is risen, even as he said. Come see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and that he goes ahead of you into Galilee. There you shall see him. Look, I have told you. ⁸ And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring this message to his disciples. ⁹ And Jesus met them, saying: Greetings! And they came and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them: Fear not. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee and there shall they see me. ¹¹ Now while they were going, some of the guard came into the city and told the chief priests all the things that had happened. ¹² And when they were assembled with the elders and

had taken counsel, they gave much money to the soldiers, ¹³ saying: You are to say that his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept. ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and keep you out of trouble. ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were told; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

Jesus Commissions His Disciples

¹⁶ But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things whatever I commanded you; and I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

28:7 The Lord's original intention to meet His followers in Galilee (as in 28:10) seems to have been changed. Presumably because even in Divine nature, He was simply so excited and eager to get together with His brethren.

28:8 Women weren't valid witnesses in first century legal circles. But Jesus chose women to be the primary and initial witnesses of His resurrection.

28:17 The doubt and unbelief of the disciples is a strong theme in all the resurrection accounts. Yet these are transcripts of the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles. They were emphasizing how *they* had had difficulty believing these things, and had been incredibly slow and dumb to grasp what had happened. And on this basis their appeal for others to believe had more power to it.

28:19 As the good news of the Lord's resurrection had been spread from the women to the disciples, now it was to be spread by all the disciples worldwide. The Gospel preaching of Matthew concludes with an appeal for baptism. Acts records how people were baptized into the name of Jesus – for the Name of the Father has been given to Him.

28:20 After baptism there was to be a teaching of the baptized person.

MARK

CHAPTER 1 Feb. 5 Aug. 6

John the Baptist

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ² Just as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Look, I send My messenger before your face, he will prepare your way. ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴ John came and baptized in the wilderness, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵ And there went out to him all the country of Judea and all they of Jerusalem: and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁶ And John was clothed with camel's hair and had a leather girdle about his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He preached, saying: There comes after me he that is mightier than I, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptized you in water, but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit. ⁹ And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee

and was baptized by John in the river Jordan. ¹⁰ And immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens open and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him. ¹¹ And a voice came out of the heavens: You are my beloved Son; in you I am well pleased. ¹² And the Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels took care of him.

Calling the Disciples

¹⁴ Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying: The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. ¹⁶ And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. ¹⁸ And immediately they left the nets and fol-

1:3 The way of Jesus was prepared in the wilderness by John baptizing people in the wilderness (:4).

1:5 John baptized in a river – by immersion, not sprinkling of water.

1:7 Truly preaching Christ involves telling others of our own unworthiness.

1:10 *Up out of* – Baptism is by immersion, not sprinkling. Jesus was baptized as an adult to set us an example – that we also should be.

1:12 *Immediately* – Many such words occur in the early chapters of Mark (1:10,18,20,21,28,29,42). The impression is created of a hectic, exhausting time for Jesus with everything moving at high speed. When we're in those situations, remember that He knows how it feels.

1:16 Jesus called them at the most inconvenient time – just as they were casting their nets. But they let the nets sink, v. 18, and followed Him. Jesus too calls us to uphold His principles and do His work often at the most humanly inconvenient moments.

lowed him. ¹⁹ And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went after him. ²¹ And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught. ²² And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³ And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴ saying: What have we to do with you, Jesus, you Nazarene? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are- the Holy One of God. ²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying: Hold your peace and come out of him. ²⁶ And the unclean spirit, tearing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷ And they were all amazed, so much so they questioned each other, saying: What is this? What a new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him! ²⁸ And the report of him went out immediately everywhere into all the region of Galilee and thereabout.

At Simon's Home

²⁹ And immediately, when they had come out of the synagogue,

they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰ Now Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹ And he came and took her by the hand and raised her up; and the fever left her, and she served them. ³² When evening came, and when the sun had set, they brought to him all that were sick and those possessed with demons. ³³ And all the city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴ And he healed many that were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he did not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. ³⁵ And in the morning, a great while before day-break, he rose up and went out, and departed into a deserted place; and there prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. ³⁷ And they found him, and said to him: All are seeking you. ³⁸ And he said to them: Let us go elsewhere, into the next towns, so that I may preach there also; for this is why I came. ³⁹ And throughout all Galilee he went into their synagogues, preaching and casting out demons.

Healing a Leper

⁴⁰ And a leper came to him, begging him as he knelt down before him, saying to him: If you will, you can make me clean. ⁴¹ And being moved with compassion, he stretched out

1:27 The authority and credibility of Jesus' teaching was given by His works. And so with us. Teaching people ideas about God will have little power nor conviction until they see them lived out in our lives.

1:35 This regular quiet time with God at the start of busy days was the key to the Lord's spiritual success, as it can be for ours.

his hand and touched him, and said to him: I will. Be cleansed. ⁴² And immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was made clean; and ⁴³ he immediately sent him away with a stern warning, ⁴⁴ saying to him: See you say nothing to anyone, but go show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news, so much so that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but stayed in deserted places. But still they came to him from every quarter.

CHAPTER 2 Feb. 6 Aug. 7

Healing a Paralyzed Man

And after some days, when he entered again into Capernaum, it became known that he was in the house. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even about the door; and he spoke the word to them. ³ And they

came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ And when they could not come near to him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was; and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the paralyzed man lay. ⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the paralyzed man: Son, your sins are forgiven. ⁶ But some of the scribes sitting there questioned in their hearts: ⁷ Why does this man speak so? He blasphemeth. Who can forgive sins but one- God! ⁸ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit what they questioned within themselves, said to them: Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which one is easier to say to the paralyzed man? Your sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, pick up your bed and walk- ? ¹⁰ But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to the paralyzed man): ¹¹ I say to you! Arise, pick up your bed and go to your house. ¹² And he arose and immediately picked up

1:41 Touching the leper would've been a very radical thing to do. The man had probably not been touched by a human being for many years. We too should be unafraid to be associated with those whom others are scared of and have rejected.

1:44 Nobody was cleansed of leprosy and so the priests would've been amazed that someone was bringing them the offering proscribed in the Law for a cleansed leper. Jesus would've appeared unrealistically hopeful in thinking that the priests might respond; as they were the very class who were opposed to Him and later killed Him. But His hopefulness for people worked – many of the priests did later repent and accept Him (Acts 6:7).

2:5 The man was healed because of the faith of his friends. To some extent we can save others, obtain their forgiveness or bring about their betterment in this life. As this is the case, we should give ourselves to prayer and caring practical effort for others; for we really can make a difference to the salvation of others.

2:8 Was this ability to read others' minds given to Jesus as a blast of insight from the Holy Spirit? Or was there a process of perception going on, whereby His intense sensitivity to others, even His enemies, enabled Him to know their minds?

the bed, and went out in full view of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying: We have never seen anything like this before!

The Call of Levi

¹³ And he went out again by the sea side; and all the crowd went to him and he taught them. ¹⁴ And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office; and he said to him: Follow me. And he arose and followed him. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, that as he was dining in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples. For there were many, and they followed him. ¹⁶ And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples: How is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? ¹⁷ And when Jesus heard it, he said to them: They that are whole have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Old and New Wine

¹⁸ And John's disciples and the

Pharisees were fasting; and they came, and said to him: Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? ¹⁹ And Jesus said to them: Can the sons of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them. In that day, they will fast. ²¹ Nobody sews a piece of unshrunk cloth onto an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. ²² And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins. ²³ And it came to pass, that he was going on the Sabbath day through the grain fields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees said to him: Look, why do they do on the Sabbath day what is not lawful? ²⁵ And he said to them: Have you never read what David did when he had need and was hungry- he and

2:14 Tax collectors were seen as collaborators with the Romans and were hated. Jesus also called a Zealot, a hard line nationalist terrorist, to His group of followers (Lk. 6:15). The body of Christ is comprised of people very different from each other. Yet our tendency is to attend a church or group comprised of those from our own class, background and personality type. But the body of Christ is so different.

2:16 In 1st century Palestine, to eat with someone was a sign that you fellowshiped them. Jesus ate / fellowshiped with sinners in order to bring them to Him; rather than only fellowshiping those whom He considered fit for His table. His 'table manners' were deeply controversial and offensive to traditional Jews and were a factor in their mad hatred of Him.

2:25 What David did when he was needy and hungry justified what Jesus did; we have an insight here into His poverty.

they that were with him? ²⁶ How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave also to those that were with him? ²⁷ And he said to them: The Sabbath was designed for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ Therefore the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

CHAPTER 3 Feb. 7 Aug. 8

Healing a Withered Hand

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there who had a withered hand. ² And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day- so that they would have an excuse to accuse him. ³ And he said to the man that had the withered hand: Come here. ⁴ And he said to them: Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? To save a life, or to kill? But they remained quiet. ⁵ And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man: Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and his hand was

restored. ⁶ And the Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel against him with the Herodians, how they might destroy him.

Establishing a Core Group of Disciples

⁷ And Jesus with his disciples withdrew to the sea; and a great crowd from Galilee and from Judea followed, ⁸ and from Jerusalem and from Idumaea and on the other side of the Jordan and about Tyre and Sidon, a great crowd, hearing what great things he did, came to him. ⁹ And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, in case they crushed him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many; so much so that as many as had illnesses pressed upon him that they might touch him. ¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried, saying: You are the Son of God! ¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. ¹³ And he went up into the mountain and called to himself whomever he would; and they came

2:28 Jesus is greater than the Sabbath; we don't need to keep the Sabbath today (Col. 2:14-17) because Jesus has fulfilled all the Jewish regulations.

3:2 Jesus appears to have intentionally sought controversy over the Sabbath issue. On some things (e.g. the popular belief in demons) He didn't challenge His audience; but on issues of legalism, He did.

3:10 The desire to touch Jesus and His desire to touch people comes out frequently in the Gospels. People believed that through touching a holy man, they would receive blessing; rather like Catholics and Orthodox travel far to touch relics. Jesus went along with this, but always emphasized that it was faith in Him, and His Father's power, which were responsible for the miracle, and not the touching in itself.

3:13 He alone went up into the mountain and then sent word to His followers to come to Him. They had to make quite some effort to come to Him. He thus filtered out those who really wanted to come to Him from those who were merely inquisitive. He does the same with people today.

to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ And Simon he surnamed Peter. ¹⁷ And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James he surnamed Boanerges, which means, sons of thunder. ¹⁸ And Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus and Simon the Cananaean, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. And then he went home. ²⁰ And the crowd gathered again, so many people that they could not so much as eat bread. ²¹ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying: He is out of his mind.

False Allegations from the Scribes

²² And the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said: He has Beelzebub, and by the prince of the demons he casts out the demons. ²³ And he called them to him, and said to them in parables: How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a family be divided against itself, that family will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but has

an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter into the home of a strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his home. ²⁸ Truly I say to you: All the sins of the sons of men shall be forgiven and their blasphemies with which they shall blaspheme. ²⁹ But whoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is never forgiven but is guilty of an eternal sin. ³⁰ He said this because they had said: He has an unclean spirit. ³¹ And then came his mother and his brothers and standing outside, they sent a message to him, calling him. ³² And a crowd was sitting about him, and they said to him: Look, your mother and your brothers are outside looking for you. ³³ And he answered them, saying: Who is my mother and my brothers? ³⁴ And looking round on them that sat round about him, he said: Behold my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.

CHAPTER 4 Feb. 8 Aug. 9

The Parable of the Sower

And again he began to teach by the sea side. There gathered to him a very great crowd, so he entered into a boat and sat in the sea, and all the crowd were gathered along the shore. ² And he taught them many

3:26 *If Satan...* Satan as a personal sinful being doesn't exist [see notes at the end], but Jesus reasoned with them within the frames of their beliefs, even if those beliefs were wrong. He met people where they were, as He does today.

3:33 This must've been *so* painful for Mary to hear. This is one of a number of conflict points between Jesus and Mary during His ministry. It seems she had a mid-life crisis of faith, but returned to full belief after His resurrection. Mary wasn't the sinless superhuman which some believe she was.

things in parables, and said to them in his teaching: ³ Listen! Behold, the sower went forth to sow. ⁴ And it came to pass, as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and devoured it. ⁵ And other fell on the rocky ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil. ⁶ And when the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. ⁷ And other fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. ⁸ And others fell into the good ground and yielded fruit, growing up and increasing; and brought forth, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold. ⁹ And he said: Who has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁰ And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked him about the parables. ¹¹ And he said to them: To you is given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those that are without, all things are done in parables- ¹² that seeing, they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest they should turn again and it should be forgiven them. ¹³ And he said to them: Do you not understand this parable? And how will you

understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower, sows the word. ¹⁵ And these by the way side, where the word is sown, represent those who, when they have heard, have Satan immediately come and take away the word which has been sown in them. ¹⁶ And these in like manner are they that are sown upon the rocky places, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But they have no root in themselves and only endure for a while. Then, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they stumble. ¹⁸ Others are represented by those that are sown among the thorns. These are they that have heard the word, ¹⁹ and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰ And these are they that were sown upon the good ground: such as hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

The Purpose of the Parables

²¹ And he said to them: Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a lamp stand? ²² For there is nothing hid,

4:10 Jesus revealed Himself to those who bothered to come to Him and enquire further (as in v. 34) – see on 3:13. Those with a merely passing interest in Him will not find Him.

4:14 The word of God is a seed – we are born again by it, it has the power of life within it (1 Pet. 1:23). The Bible is on one level black print on white paper; but it is so very much more, unique amongst literature to the point that it shouldn't really be classified as 'literature' in the secular sense. God's word gives life to people. It should be our meditation all the day as it was for David (Ps. 119:97).

4:19 Wealth is deceitful in that we think that money can buy all things; it can't.

save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret but that it should come to light. ²³ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. ²⁴ And he said to them: Pay attention to what you hear. What measure you use shall be applied to you, and more shall be given to you. ²⁵ For he that has, to him shall be given. And he that has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has. ²⁶ And he said: So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth. ²⁷ He sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, immediately he puts forth the sickle, because the harvest comes. ³⁰ And he said: To what shall we compare the kingdom of God? Or in what parable shall we set it forth? ³¹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the earth, ³² yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes greater than all the herbs, and puts out great branches so that the birds of the sky

can lodge under the shadow of it. ³³ And with many such parables he spoke the word to them, according as they were able to understand it. ³⁴ Without a parable he did not speak to them, but in private he explained all things to his own disciples.

Jesus Calms the Storm

³⁵ And on that day, when evening had come, he said to them: Let us go over to the other side of the lake. ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And there arose a great wind storm and the waves slammed into the boat, so much so that the boat was now filling. ³⁸ And he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke him, and said to him: Teacher, do you not care that we perish? ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea: Peace! Be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ And he said to them: Why are you fearful? Do you still not have faith? ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to each other: Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!

4:22 If throughout eternity we will be shown to be who we really are, it's senseless to be hypocritical now.

4:24 The measure we apply to God's word will have a recompense. If we pay little attention to it, we will be given little; if we give our mind and life to it, then we will receive an appropriately large recompense.

4:29 As soon as the harvest is ripe, it's harvested. This could mean that once the body of Christ has matured to the level God expects, Jesus will return, and the harvest of judgment will begin.

4:33 Jesus spoke to people as they were able to hear it, not as He was able to expound to them. The fact we know more than some other people doesn't mean we must tell them all we know. We should be sensitive to them and at times restrain our superior knowledge, because our end aim is their spiritual growth to the glory of God.

CHAPTER 5 Feb. 9 Aug. 10***Jesus Heals a Mad Man***

And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when he got out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³ who had his dwelling in the tombs; no one could any more bind him, even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him, ⁷ and crying out with a loud voice, he said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I solemnly implore you by God, do not torment me. ⁸ For Jesus had said to him: Unclean spirit, come out of the man! ⁹ And he asked the spirit: What is your name? And the spirit replied: My name is Legion. For we are many. ¹⁰ And he pleaded earnestly with him not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now there was

there on the mountain side a great herd of pigs feeding. ¹² And they pleaded with him, saying: Send us into the pigs, let us enter into them. ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the hill into the sea and were drowned in the sea. ¹⁴ And they that fed them fled and told it in the city and in the country. And they came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw him who had been possessed with demons, that previously had the legion, sitting, clothed and in his right mind- and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And they that saw it described to them what had happened to him that was previously possessed with demons, and about what had happened to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg him to depart from their borders. ¹⁸ And as he was entering into the boat, he that had been possessed with demons pleaded with him that he might go with him. ¹⁹ But Jesus did not permit him. Instead he said to him: Go to your home, to your family, and tell them how great things the Lord has

5:4 The man's illness had bad episodes, it was intermittent. He had thought many times that he was cured of it, that he could be restrained – but then it broke out again. So the herd of pigs were sent over the cliff as a dramatic *aide memoire* which he would never forget, showing how permanent and total was his cure.

5:6 The sick man worshipped Jesus by recognizing Him as Son of God (v.7). And yet, in his illness, he also spoke aggressively to Jesus. But God understands mental illness and focused on the positive, accepting the correct parts of his understanding as “worship”. Men other than Jesus are described as being ‘worshipped’; the fact Jesus also was worshipped doesn't mean He was God Himself.

5:9 *My name... We are many* – The man was schizophrenic, thinking he was possessed by multiple personalities. The language of demon possession is used to describe mental illness; demons don't ultimately exist.

done for you and how he had mercy on you. ²⁰ And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis the great things Jesus had done for him, and all men marvelled.

Jesus Heals Jairus' Daughter

²¹ And when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great crowd was gathered to him; and he was by the sea. ²² And there came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet, ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying: My little daughter is at the point of death. I beg you to come and lay your hands on her, that she may be made whole and live. ²⁴ And Jesus went with him; and a great crowd followed him, and they pressed upon him. ²⁵ And a woman, who for twelve years had an issue of blood, ²⁶ and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse, ²⁷ having heard the things about Jesus, came from the crowd behind

him, and touched his garment. ²⁸ For she said: If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole. ²⁹ And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her illness. ³⁰ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in himself that the power proceeding from him had gone forth, turned towards the crowd and said: Who touched my garments? ³¹ And his disciples said to him: You saw the crowd pressing upon you and you ask, Who touched me? ³² And he looked around to see who had done this thing. ³³ But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done to her, came and fell down before him and told him all the truth. ³⁴ And he said to her: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace and be free of your illness. ³⁵ While he was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying: Your daughter is dead. Why do you trouble the Teacher any further? ³⁶ But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, said

5:20 The man was told to go and witness to his family, but instead he went around the 10 cities of the Decapolis preaching. Often when a command is given to preach, God's people don't obey it fully. The command to go and teach the Gentiles wasn't obeyed by the apostles initially – they only went to the Jews. Those told not to tell others of their healing often did. And do we obey the call we have received to share the good news as God wishes?

5:28 The woman had the common idea that merely touching a holy man would give her healing. Jesus didn't refuse her because she understood wrongly; but He explained that it was her faith and not the touch in itself which had cured her (v. 34). See on 7:33.

5:31 The disciples are almost ridiculing Jesus. Yet Mark's account of the Gospel includes this, as if to say to his audience: 'Look how badly we treated the Lord Jesus, how we misunderstood Him, what a low level we were on compared to Him!'. And this integrity, humility and human honesty was what made their message so attractive and credible to their hearers.

to the ruler of the synagogue: Fear not, only believe. ³⁷ And he permitted no one to follow him, save Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ And they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue; and he saw a tumult, and many weeping and wailing greatly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them: Why make you a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeps. ⁴⁰ And they laughed him to scorn. But he, having put them outside, took the father of the child and her mother and those that were with him, and went to where the child was. ⁴¹ And taking the child by the hand, he said to her: Talitha cumi, which means, little girl, I say to you, rise! ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly ordered them that no one should know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

CHAPTER 6 Feb. 10 Aug. 11

Jesus in Nazareth

And he left there and went to his own country; and his disciples followed him. ² And on the Sabbath

he began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astonished, saying: Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom given to him? What mighty works are done by his hands! ³ Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended by him. ⁴ And Jesus said to them: A prophet is not without honour, save in his hometown, and among his own kin, and in his own family. ⁵ And there he could not do his mighty work, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages teaching.

Jesus Sends Out the Disciples

⁷ And he called the twelve and began to send them out in pairs; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸ And he instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a staff. No bread, no wallet, no money in their purse; ⁹ but to go wearing sandals, and not to wear two coats. ¹⁰ And he said to them: Whenever you enter into a

5:40 Jesus was ‘laughed to scorn’ – implying He had the usual human reactions of embarrassment and awkwardness. He really had our nature.

5:43 Note His thoughtfulness in reminding them to give her something to eat. She’d been dead, so she’d not eaten for some time. This same thoughtful, sensitive Jesus is the same today and forever (Heb. 13:8).

6:1 *His own country* is another indication of Christ’s humanity (also in v. 4). He “came to His own” (Jn. 1:11). He had a home area, and spoke with a Galilean accent.

6:3 The translation “carpenter” is unfortunate. The Greek *tekton* can mean any manual worker. He could’ve been a stonemason or a casual building labourer.

6:10 Jesus loves families and homes, and wanted them to be the nucleus for the new community He was developing.

house as a guest, remain there until you leave town. ¹¹ And whatever place shall not receive you and they will not hear you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony against them. ¹² And they went out and preached that all should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Herod and John the Baptist

¹⁴ And king Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become well known; and he said: John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these powers work in him. ¹⁵ But others said: It is Elijah; and others said: It is a prophet, even as one of the prophets. ¹⁶ But Herod, when he heard of it, said: It is John, whom I beheaded; he is risen. ¹⁷ For Herod himself had had John arrested and thrown into prison to please Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John said to Herod: It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. ¹⁹ And Herodias set herself against him, and desired to kill him; but she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was much perplexed; and he heard him gladly. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles,

military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²² And when the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests, and so the king said to the girl: Ask of me whatever you will, and I will give it to you. ²³ And he made an oath to her: Whatever you shall ask of me, I will give it to you, to the half of my kingdom. ²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother: What shall I ask? And she said: The head of John the Baptist. ²⁵ And she rushed to the king and asked, saying: Here and now, I want you to give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist. ²⁶ And the king was exceeding sorry; but for the sake of his oaths and his dinner guests, he could not reject her request. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent a soldier of his guard and commanded that he bring John's head. And the soldier went to the prison and beheaded John, ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ And when his disciples heard of it, they went and took his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them: Come, we shall depart for a deserted place and rest for a while. For there were many coming and going, and

6:12 Repentance means 'a change of mind'. It doesn't as a word necessarily refer to stopping sinning – God is described as 'repenting'. We may be simply too weak to stop sinning; but we can repent in that we change our mind, we strongly repudiate our sins, we try not to do them, our deepest heart is with the Lord and not with the flesh.

they had no leisure time, even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a deserted place. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognised them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ And when Jesus came ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when the day was far spent, his disciples came to him and said: The place is deserted and the day is now far spent. ³⁶ Send them away, that they may go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat. ³⁷ But he answered and said to them: You give them something to eat. And they said to him: Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? ³⁸ And he said to them: How many loaves have you? Go and see. And when they knew, they reported: Five loaves and two fishes. ³⁹ And he commanded that all should sit down in groups upon the green grass. ⁴⁰ And they sat down in groups of hundreds or of fif-

ties. ⁴¹ And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke the loaves; and he gave them to the disciples to set before them; and the two fish he divided among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were filled. ⁴³ And they collected twelve basketfuls of leftovers, and also of the fish. ⁴⁴ There were five thousand men that ate the loaves.

Jesus Stills a Storm

⁴⁵ And immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and to go without him to the other side to Bethsaida, while he sent the crowd away. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he departed into the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening had come, the boat was in the midst of the sea and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And seeing they were having difficulty rowing, for the wind was against them, about the fourth watch of the night he went to them, walking on the sea; and he would have passed by them. ⁴⁹ But they, when they saw him walking on the sea, supposed that it was a ghost and cried out.

6:37 Jesus asks the question to try to elicit faith and spiritual ambition from the disciples. But they couldn't see beyond the immediate problems. The possibility that Jesus could do a miracle and multiply what little bread they had... just didn't occur to them. All they could think of was the cost of buying the bread.

6:41 Blessing and breaking bread, then giving it to the disciples, is so similar to the last supper. Through the breaking of bread, we show our faith in the fact that Jesus provides for our needs.

6:48 Jesus made as if He would walk past them in order to make them cry out to Him for help. Because so far they'd not thought of praying to Jesus for help, because He wasn't with them. He works like that with us today, bringing us into situations which have no human way out, and appears to ignore us – only so that we will pray and call out to Him the more fervently. This is one reason for the apparent silence of God which we find so difficult to accept.

⁵⁰ For they all saw him and were disturbed. But he immediately spoke to them and said to them: Be of good courage! It is I! Be not afraid. ⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly amazed, ⁵² because they did not understand the miracle of the loaves; their heart was hardened. ⁵³ And when they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognised him, ⁵⁵ ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went, into villages, or into cities, or into the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and pleaded with him that they be allowed to touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched him were cured.

CHAPTER 7 Feb. 11 Aug. 12

Controversy with the Pharisees

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had

come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus; ² and they saw that some of his disciples ate with unclean hands, that is, unwashed. ³ The Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they first wash their hands, observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they first purify themselves; and there are many other traditions which they observe, the washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze. ⁵ And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him: Why don't your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with unclean hands? ⁶ And he said to them: Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honour me with their lips but their heart is far from me. ⁷ But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men. ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men. ⁹ And he said to them: You are good at rejecting the commandment of God so that you can establish your

6:52 They didn't reflect upon the miracle, and so they lacked faith to face the next trial which came along in their lives. The incidents in our lives are arranged by God in a certain order. We are intended to reflect upon the great things He has done in our experience, not just benefit from them and go onwards in life without remembering them or thinking about them. Ingratitude and lack of reflection on life's events are typical of human beings; and we must try to do better.

6:56 They thought that by touching a holy man they would be cured. This is a wrong idea, but Jesus went along with it. See on 5:28.

7:6 Isaiah spoke to the people of his generation, but Jesus says he spoke about those of the first century. God's word is living and relevant and speaks to each of us. Thus the Old Testament ceases to be mere history – it is speaking to us today.

7:7 The fact people worship God doesn't mean they are therefore with God – there's such a thing as worshipping Him in vain, if we have the wrong understanding of Him.

7:9 The Jews would've been shocked to hear that they rejected God's commandments.

tradition! ¹⁰ For Moses said: Honour your father and your mother, and, He that speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death. ¹¹ But you say: If a man tells his father or his mother: Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban (that is to say, an offering to God), ¹² you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother- thus ¹³ making void the word of God by your tradition which you have delivered; and you do many similar things.

The Source of Sin

¹⁴ And again he called to him the crowd, and said to them: Hear me all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. ¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear. ¹⁷ When he had entered a house away from the crowd, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸ And he said to them: Are you without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever from without goes into the man, it cannot defile him; ¹⁹ because it does not go into his heart but into his belly and is eliminated [this he said, thus making all foods clean].

²⁰ And he said: That which proceeds out of the man is what defiles the man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

Jesus Responds to Requests for Healing

²⁴ From there he arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and wanted no one to know it; but he could not be hidden. ²⁵ But immediately a woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. ²⁶ Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. And she pleaded with him to cast out the demon from her daughter. ²⁷ And he said to her: Let the children first be filled, for it is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. ²⁸ But she answered and said to him: Indeed, Lord. But even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. ²⁹ And he said to her: For this saying go your way. The demon is gone out of your

Jesus' generation were one of the most Torah observant there has been in Israel's history. But to follow human tradition as well as God's commandments is to effectively reject them. The Bible presents human failure in very stark terms.

7:11 We shouldn't try to get around God's intentions by legalistic interpretations.

7:18 It's good to try to imagine the tone of voice with which Jesus said these written words. Was it with frustration, anger, sadness or disappointment?

7:19-21 Sin comes from within. The human mind is a constant source of temptation. This is the real 'Satan' or adversary which we face.

7:29 Jesus is so thrilled when people understand correctly.

daughter. ³⁰ And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed. ³¹ And again he left from the borders of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the midst of the borders of Decapolis. ³² And they brought to him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand upon him. ³³ And he took him aside from the crowd, and in private put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue; ³⁴ and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him: Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. ³⁵ And his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ And he ordered them that they should tell no one. But the more he ordered them, the more widely they proclaimed it. ³⁷ And they were astonished beyond measure, saying: He has done all things well. He even

makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.

CHAPTER 8 Feb. 12 Aug. 13

The Feeding of the 4000

In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him, and said to them: ² I pity the crowd, because they have continued with me for three days and have nothing to eat. ³ And if I send them away to their homes without food, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from far away. ⁴ And his disciples answered him: Where shall one be able to find bread for these men here in such a desolate place? ⁵ And he asked them: How many loaves have you? And they said: Seven. ⁶ And he commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disci-

7:33 The saliva of Jesus represents His words. The people thought that merely touching a holy man would effect a cure (v. 32). So Jesus shows that actually far more intimate contact with Him is required than mere touch of itself. He puts His fingers in the man's ears and spits onto his tongue. See on 5:28.

7:34 Jesus could pray with eyes open looking up at the sky. Can we do this? He sighed, as He groaned whilst healing Lazarus (Jn. 11:38). This may have been the intensity of His prayer – and even now He prays for us in Heaven with such groaning (Rom. 8:26). In this sense Jesus is the same today as He was then (Heb. 13:8). Or His sighing and groaning may have been the result of how deeply He entered into others' situations, and so longed for the pain of humanity to end.

7:37 *He has done all things well* – Echoes the comment on creation, that it was “very good”. Jesus was and is making a new creation, of people.

8:3 This situation is similar to that of 6:37. Jesus was hoping the disciples would have learnt from the experience they had then of Him multiplying their bread. This is why life situations repeat, in essence; because God plans them all for our spiritual education. We are intended to learn from one experience in order to spiritually succeed the next time that situation occurs. Sadly it seems the disciples didn't learn, just as we often don't.

ples to set before them; and they set them before the crowd. ⁷ And they had a few small fishes; and having blessed them, he commanded to set these also before them. ⁸ And they ate and were filled, and they gathered seven baskets of broken pieces that remained over. ⁹ And they were about four thousand; and he sent them away. ¹⁰ And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went into the region of Dalmanutha. ¹¹ And the Pharisees came and began to question him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, testing him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said: Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I say to you, No sign shall be given to this generation. ¹³ And he left them, and again got into the boat and departed for the other side of the lake. ¹⁴ And they forgot to take bread; and they did not have more than one loaf in the boat with them. ¹⁵ And he ordered them, saying: Take heed! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod. ¹⁶ And they reasoned one with another, saying: It is because we have no bread. ¹⁷ And Jesus perceiving it said to them: Why do you so

reason, because you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart so hardened? ¹⁸ Having eyes, can't you see? And having ears, can't you hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you gather? They said to him: Twelve. ²⁰ And when the seven among the four thousand, how many basketfuls of broken pieces did you gather? And they said to him: Seven. ²¹ And he said to them: How is it that you do not yet understand?

The Identity of Jesus

²² And they went to Bethsaida. And they brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. ²³ And he took hold of the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village; and when he had spat on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴ And he looked up, and said: I see men. But I see them as trees, walking. ²⁵ Then Jesus put his hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And his sight was restored, and he saw everyone clearly. ²⁶ And he

8:12 *No sign* – The four Gospels are parallel accounts of the same incidents. In Matthew's record, we read that Jesus said they would be given no sign *except* the sign of Jonah (Mt. 12:39; 16:4). This shows that we have to read the whole Bible to get the complete message. We have to make some effort to understand. God wants us to read His word carefully, just as we appreciate it when someone listens to us carefully rather than assumes they understand what we're saying when they don't.

8:17 Jesus had twice taught them in the feeding miracles that physical bread is no issue to Him. He was disappointed they hadn't reflected further about this – for they were still thinking about bread on the literal, physical level.

8:23, 25 The two stage healing process was for the man's benefit, not because Jesus was limited in power. The man was given sight, but he had never seen trees nor people before – and so he confused them. He needed to have the gift of understanding / inter-

sent him away to his home, saying: Do not even enter into the village. ²⁷ And Jesus went with his disciples into the villages of Caesarea Philippi, and on the way he questioned his disciples, saying to them: Who do men say that I am? ²⁸ And they told him, saying: John the Baptist, and others, Elijah; but others, one of the prophets. ²⁹ And he asked them: But who do you say that I am? Peter answered and said to him: You are the Christ! ³⁰ And he ordered them that they should tell no one about him. ³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² And he spoke these things openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But he, turning about and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said to him: Get behind me, Satan! For you are mindful of the things of men instead of the things of God. ³⁴ And he called to him the crowd with his disciples, and said to them: If any of you wants to be my follower, let him deny himself and take up his

cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, he shall save it! ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? ³⁷ For what should a man give in exchange for his life? ³⁸ For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also shall be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

CHAPTER 9 Feb. 13 Aug. 14

The Transfiguration

And he said to them: Truly I say to you: There are some standing here, who shall in no way taste death, before they see the kingdom of God come with power. ² And after six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John and brought them to a high mountain where they could be alone; and he was transfigured before them. ³ And his garments became radiant, exceedingly white, whiter than any launderer could whiten them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they

pretation also. The man was taught by this that even if we are given the one thing we so desire, this isn't enough. We need Jesus to give us understanding.

8:31 This is one of the clearest predictions of Christ's sufferings. Why then did He ask for the cup of suffering to be removed from Him in Gethsemane? He understood from Old Testament examples that God's intended program for a person can be changed by their prayers, and it seems that He tried this. But it also shows that even if we know something in theory, in the heat of the moment our understanding becomes clouded. Jesus was human, but never sinned. Therefore this kind of intellectual failure, even panic, isn't always sinful. It's just part of being human.

8:35 The sake of the Gospel – i.e. preaching the Gospel?

8:38 Jesus even after His resurrection still has the capacity to feel ashamed. We are made in God's image, and so shame on behalf of another is an emotion He also has.

were talking with Jesus. ⁵ And Peter said to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. ⁶ For he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. ⁷ And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out of the cloud: This is My beloved Son. Hear him. ⁸ And suddenly, looking round about, they no longer saw anyone with them, except Jesus. ⁹ And as they came down from the mountain, he ordered them that they should tell no one about the things they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead. ¹⁰ So they kept these words to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. ¹¹ And they asked him: Why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come? ¹² And he said to them: Elijah indeed comes first and restores all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nothing? ¹³ But I say to you, that Elijah came, and they have also done to him whatever they wanted, even as it is written of him. ¹⁴ And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and

scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵ And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed; and running to him saluted him. ¹⁶ And he asked them: What are you arguing about with them? ¹⁷ And one of the crowd answered him: Teacher, I brought to you my son, who has a dumb spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it takes him, it dashes him down and he foams and grinds his teeth and pines away: and I spoke to your disciples that they should cast it out, and they were not able. ¹⁹ And he answered them saying: O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I tolerate you? Bring him to me. ²⁰ And they brought him to him, and when he saw him, immediately the spirit tore at him grievously and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ And he asked his father: How long has this been happening to him? And he said: From a child. ²² And often it has cast him both into the fire and into the waters to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us. ²³ And Jesus said to him: Rather, if you can! All things are possible to him that believes. ²⁴ Immediately the father of the child

9:7 Hear Him – Judaism so venerates Moses [symbol of the law] and Elijah [symbol of the prophets]. Peter wanted to build booths so that Moses and Elijah would stay; but God tells him of the need to listen to His Son. The cloud and the voice out of the cloud is similar to what happened to Moses in Ex. 34. The Divine voice in the cloud proclaimed the Name and characteristics of Yahweh; now God proclaims His Son. Because Jesus had a perfect character, He manifested the Name of God completely.

9:22 If you can – The man was unsure about the total abilities of Jesus. ‘Do what’s in your power to do’ was his idea. Jesus replies by saying that God’s action in our lives doesn’t depend upon Him, it depends upon us. If *we* can believe, then everything’s possible. It is us and not God who have our finger as it were on the volume control.

9:24 We both believe and disbelieve at the same time. We don’t have complete faith.

cried out, and said: I believe! Help my disbelief! ²⁵ And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter no more into him. ²⁶ And having cried out and torn him much, it came out; and the boy became as one dead. So much so that the many said: He is dead. ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up, and he arose. ²⁸ And when he had come into the house, his disciples privately asked him: Why could we not cast it out? ²⁹ And he said to them: This kind can come out by nothing except by prayer and fasting.

The Importance of Humility

³⁰ And they went from there and passed through Galilee; and he did not want anyone to know it. ³¹ For he taught his disciples, and said to them: The Son of Man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again. ³² But they did not understand the

saying and were afraid to ask him. ³³ And they went to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them: What were you reasoning about on the way here? ³⁴ But they kept quiet. For they had disputed one with another on the way about who was the greatest. ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them: If anyone would be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all. ³⁶ And he took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them: ³⁷ Whoever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me, receives not me but Him that sent me. ³⁸ John said to him: Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us. ³⁹ But Jesus said: Do not forbid him. For there is no one who shall do a mighty work in my name and then be able straight afterwards to immediately speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ For he that is not against us, is for us. ⁴¹ For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because

The man's humility and honesty are impressive. There is no personal Satan figure out in the cosmos; God is in control 100%. But within the human mind, there are desires to do both good and evil. Paul speaks of this in Romans 7. The man here realized this too, by recognizing his belief and disbelief within him. We should recognize it within us, too; and not be phased when we perceive it within others too.

9:34 They argued about who should be the greatest immediately after Jesus had told them of His upcoming death (v. 31). Whenever Jesus told the disciples about His death, they started arguing amongst themselves. They had a psychological barrier to the message of the cross. We tend to also; we would rather become inward looking, compare ourselves against ourselves, rather than against the standard set in the crucifixion of Jesus.

9:38 *In your name* – A disciple of John the Baptist who for some reason didn't want to associate with the Jesus' disciples.

9:40 Here Jesus makes it clear for all time that we should not be exclusive against

you are Christ's- truly I say to you, he shall in no way lose his reward.

Teaching About Offences

⁴² And whoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is good for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having your two hands and to go into Gehenna- into the unquenched fire, ⁴⁴ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is good for you to enter into life lame, rather than having your two feet and to be cast into Gehenna, ⁴⁶ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out. It is good for you to enter into

the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes and to be cast into Gehenna, ⁴⁸ where their worm does not die and the fire is not put out. ⁴⁹ For everyone shall be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 14 Aug. 15

Teaching About Divorce

And he left there and went into the regions of Judea on the other side of the Jordan. Crowds gathered around him again, and as was his custom he taught them. ² And there came to him Pharisees, who asked him: Is it lawful for a man to send away his wife? They asked this to test him. ³ And he answered and said to them: What did Moses command you? ⁴ And they said: Moses permit-

those who in truth bear His Name (v. 39). If they exclude us, they have made the decision. But we shouldn't exclude them.

9:43 Whatever causes us to stumble on our path to God's Kingdom we must cut out of our lives, although this will be very painful and demands an unusual self-possession and strong will.

9:45 Gehenna was the rubbish dump outside Jerusalem, where the fires were always burning because fresh garbage was always being put onto it. But the individual items thrown onto it were destroyed and turned into dust. Likewise Jerusalem was threatened with the eternal fire of God's anger, due to the sins of Israel: "Then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jer. 17:27). Jerusalem being the prophesied capital of the future Kingdom (Is. 2:2-4; Ps. 48:2), God did not mean us to read this literally. The houses of the great men in Jerusalem were burnt down with fire (2 Kings 25:9), but that fire did not continue eternally. Fire represents the anger/punishment of God against sin, but His anger is not eternal (Jer. 3:12). Fire turns what it burns to dust; and we know that the ultimate wages of sin is death, a turning back to dust. This perhaps is why fire is used as a figure for punishment for sin.

9:47 Who we will eternally be in God's Kingdom is a function of the efforts we have made in this life to cut off our sources of temptation and stumbling.

ted a man to write a bill of divorce-ment and to send her away. ⁵ But Jesus said to them: For your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation: Male and female made He them. ⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cling to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh; so that they are no more two but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, do not let man divide. ¹⁰ And in the house the disciples asked him about this matter. ¹¹ And he said to them: Whoever shall send away his wife and marry another, commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she herself shall send away her husband and marry another, she commits adultery. ¹³ And they were bringing to him little children, that he should touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was moved with indignation, and said to them: Permit the little children to come to me; forbid them not. For to such belongs the kingdom of

God. ¹⁵ Truly I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no way enter into it. ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

The Rich Young Man

¹⁷ And as he was proceeding along the road, a man ran to him and kneeled before him, and asked him: Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him: Why do you call me good? None is good save one- God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: Do not kill. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honour your father and mother. ²⁰ And he said to him: Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. ²¹ And Jesus observing him, loved him; and said to him: One thing you lack. Go, sell whatever you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. ²² But this teaching saddened him,

10:9 Husbands and wives can divide what God has joined together in their marriage by arguing, insisting upon their way, criticizing, attachment to other things or partners. But other people can also divide them by things like manipulating one partner against another, poisoning the mind of one against the other etc.

10:14 Those who enter God's Kingdom will have the characteristics of children – trust, hope, willingness to learn.

10:19 The commandments which Jesus chose to list are all those which can be ticked off as done or not done. The man thought he was legally righteous. But Jesus taught that perfection isn't a matter of legalistic obedience. It's about taking up His cross and following Him.

10:21 By giving our wealth to the poor we are as it were transferring that wealth from earth to Heaven. The invitation to take up a cross was shocking to first century people – for death by crucifixion was the death of criminals, and the cross was despised as a symbol of shame. Jesus is asking us to join Him in a condemned man's last walk to the place of death. Following Him means following Him to death.

and he went away sorrowful. For he was one that had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus looked around, and said to his disciples: How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus continued and said to them: Children! How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ And they were astonished exceedingly, saying to him: Then who can be saved? ²⁷ Jesus, observing them, said: With men it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God. ²⁸ Peter began to say to him: We have left all, and have followed you. ²⁹ Jesus said: Truly I say to you. Whoever leaves house, or brothers, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands for my sake and for the gospel's sake, ³⁰ will receive in return, in this present season, a hundredfold houses and brothers and

sisters and mothers and children and lands, and with them persecutions; but in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many that are first shall be last and the last, first.

Jesus Talks About His Death

³² And they were on the road heading up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve aside, he began to tell them what was to happen to him: ³³ We will go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. ³⁴ And they shall mock him and shall spit upon him and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again. ³⁵ And there came near to him James and John, the sons of Zebedee, saying to him: Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we shall ask of you. ³⁶ And he said to them: What would you wish that

10:24 Trusting in riches is paralleled with having riches (v. 23). Having them is the same as trusting in them because this is the very nature of wealth. It's impossible to have it without trusting in it. Yet despite these grave warnings about the spiritual dangers of wealth, many Christians earnestly desire to have it!

10:30 We receive these blessings in the church now, in fellowship with our brothers and sisters there. If we chose not to fellowship with others, or if the church is dysfunctional, then these promised blessings won't come true.

10:31 Our society is like an elevator; once you get into it, the thrust is always upwards. People want to be upwardly socially mobile, to improve their position, to get ahead in the race. But the further we get ahead now, the further back we will be eternally.

10:35 Again, straight after the prediction of Christ's death, the disciples start arguing. The message of the cross was so lost on them at that time. And Mark is telling this story to an audience, showing them that the preachers themselves 'didn't get it' initially, and on that humble basis appealing for the hearers to do better than their teachers and 'get it' more quickly.

I should do for you? ³⁷ And they said to him: Grant to us that we may sit, one on your right hand and one on your left hand, in your glory. ³⁸ But Jesus said to them: You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? ³⁹ And they said to him: We are able! And Jesus said to them: The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized. ⁴⁰ But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give; but it will be given to them for whom it has been prepared. ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be moved with indignation concerning James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him, and said to them: You know that they who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it is not to be so among you; but whoever would become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever would be first among you, shall be servant of all; ⁴⁵ for the Son of Man came not to be served by others, but to serve- and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus Heals Bartimaeus

⁴⁶ And they arrived in Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his

disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus the son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, and say: Jesus! You Son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁸ And many rebuked him, saying that he should hold his peace. But he cried out more zealously: You, Son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁹ And Jesus stood still and said: Call him. And they called to the blind man, saying to him: Be of good courage! Rise, he calls for you! ⁵⁰ And he, casting away his garment, sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ And Jesus said: What will you have me do for you? And the blind man said to him: Rabbi- that I may receive my sight. ⁵² And Jesus said to him: Go your way. Your faith has made you whole. And immediately he received his sight and followed him in the way.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 15 Aug. 16

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, ² instructing them: Go into the village in front of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³ And if anyone says

10:40 *Not mine* – Again we see the subjection of Jesus to the Father.

10:43 So we should be looking for opportunities to serve others every day. “Brother, sister, let me serve you” should be the heartbeat of our daily lives.

10:47 *Son of David* – He recognized that the promises to David of a future descendant of David who would also be God’s Son had come true in Jesus (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

10:50 His garment was probably his only possession.

to you: Why are you doing this? You are to say: The Lord has need of him; and immediately he will send him back here. ⁴ And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. ⁵ And those that stood there said to them: What are you doing, untying the colt? ⁶ And they said to them just as Jesus had said, and they let them go. ⁷ And they brought the colt to Jesus, and put on it their garments; and he sat upon it. ⁸ And many spread their garments upon the road, and others spread branches which they had cut from the fields. ⁹ And they that went ahead and they that followed, cried, Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest! ¹¹ And he entered into Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked at everything, it being now evening, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus and the Fig Tree

¹² And the next day, when they left Bethany, he felt hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf,

he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves- for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Jesus addressed it: Henceforth, no one will eat fruit from you again. And his disciples heard it. ¹⁵ And they came to Jerusalem, and he entered into the temple and began to throw out those that sold and those that bought in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money exchangers and the seats of those that sold the doves. ¹⁶ And he would not permit anyone to carry any merchandise through the temple. ¹⁷ And he taught and said to them: Is it not written: My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves! ¹⁸ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it, and sought a way to destroy him. For they feared him, for all the crowd were astonished at his teaching. ¹⁹ And every evening he left the city. ²⁰ And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots. ²¹ And Peter, remembering, said to him: Rabbi, look at the fig tree which you cursed. It is withered away! ²² And Jesus answering said

11:15 Making money out of religion is so obnoxious to Jesus.

11:16 *Not permit* – Jesus did all this without being stopped; and He did it single-handed. We see here the power of His personality; it was with this same authority that He could command the eager crowds to go home after He had fed them. This was partly a gift from God, but partly a result of His intense focus and strength of mind.

11:17 This prophecy is about the future Kingdom of God. But Jesus understood that we should be living the Kingdom life now. We should do the same; there will be no huge difference between the type of life we now live, and the life we will eternally live. In this sense we “have eternal life” in that we live today the kind of life we will eternally live.

11:22 *Have faith* – They were amazed at *His* faith, but Jesus tells them not to just ad-

to them: Have faith in God. ²³ Truly I say to you, Whoever shall say to this mountain: Be removed and thrown into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that what he said will happen- he shall have it. ²⁴ Therefore I say to you: All things, whatever you pray and ask for, believe that you will receive them- and you shall have them. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, forgive those you have something against; so that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

The Question of Authority

²⁷ And they arrived in Jerusalem. And as he was walking into the temple, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ²⁸ They said to him: By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you authority to do these things? ²⁹ And Jesus said to them: I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. ³⁰ The baptism of

John, was it from Heaven, or from men? Answer me. ³¹ And they reasoned among themselves, saying: If we shall say: From Heaven- he will say: Why then did you not believe him? ³² But if we say: From men- they were in fear of the people. For all truly held John to be a prophet. ³³ And they answered Jesus, saying: We do not know. And Jesus said to them: Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 16 Aug. 17

The Parable of the Vineyard

And he began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it, and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower; and rented it to husbandmen. Then he went into another country. ² And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, so he might receive from the husbandmen the fruits of the vineyard. ³ And they took him and beat him, and sent him away empty handed. ⁴ And again he sent to them another servant- and him they wounded in the head and handled shamefully. ⁵ And he sent

mire His faith, as people admire a picture or image of Jesus, but see that His faith and life is to be our pattern. If He had such faith, then His followers also ought to.

11:26 Therefore forgiveness of others is vital for our own salvation. We ask God to forgive us our “secret sins”, those we don’t even recognize we have committed; and therefore we are wiser to forgive others without demanding their repentance.

12:1 God is the vineyard owner, the vineyard is Israel. God did everything so that they might bring forth spiritual fruit; as He does for us. The servants He sent are the prophets.

12:2 *At the season* – there were many times when the harvest could have come; the Kingdom of God could have been established earlier, but God has given us genuine freewill, and so He awaits the time when His people give Him the fruit. This could imply that Jesus will only return once Israel have repented and are giving spiritual fruit to God.

another- and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶ He had one other, a beloved son. He sent him last to them, saying: They will reverence my son. ⁷ But those husbandmen said among themselves: This is the heir! Come, let us kill him and the inheritance shall be ours. ⁸ And they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. ⁹ What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰ Have you not read in the scripture: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner? ¹¹ This was from the Lord and it is marvellous in our eyes? ¹² And they sought to arrest him; but they feared the crowd. For they perceived that he had spoken that parable against them; and they left him and went away.

The Jews Try to Trap Jesus with Trick Questions

¹³ And they sent to him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him out in his teaching. ¹⁴ And when they arrived, they said to him: Teacher, we know you are truthful and do not care about

anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵ Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them: Why do you test me? Bring me a denarius, that I may look at it. ¹⁶ And they brought it. And he said to them: Whose is this image and inscription? And they said to him: Caesar's. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him. ¹⁸ And there came to him Sadducees (these say that there is no resurrection) and they asked him: ¹⁹ Teacher, Moses wrote to us: If a man's brother dies and leaves a wife behind him and leaves no children, then his brother should take his wife and raise up seed to his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died leaving no seed. ²¹ And the second took her, and died leaving no seed behind him, and the third likewise. ²² And the seven left no seed. Last of all the woman also died. ²³ In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? For the seven had her as wife. ²⁴ Jesus said to them: Is not the reason you err

12:7 *This is the heir* – Implies the Jews recognized who Jesus really was (11:28-33 implies the same). The Jewish conscience about Jesus is apparent today too.

12:9 *Others* – The Gentiles.

12:12 Mark emphasizes how "the crowd" were supportive of Jesus (11:18,32; 12:37; 14:2). But this same crowd were soon shouting "Crucify him!". We must battle against this same fickleness of human nature – to love and adore Jesus one moment, and deny Him the next.

12:17 We are made in God's image and so we should give our bodies and lives to God.

12:24 *You do not know the scriptures* – But they did know them, many could recite the

that you do not know the scriptures, nor the power of God? ²⁵ For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven. ²⁶ But concerning the dead, that they are raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You do err greatly. ²⁸ And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing; and knowing that he had answered them well, he asked him: What commandment is the first of all? ²⁹ Jesus answered: The first is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. ³¹ The second is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. ³² And the scribe said to him: Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, that He is one and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with

all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. ³⁵ And Jesus asked, as he taught in the temple: Why do the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself said in the Holy Spirit: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord; and how is he therefore his son? And the common people heard him gladly. ³⁸ And in his teaching he said: Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and to have salutations in the marketplaces, ³⁹ and the chief seats in the synagogues and chief places at feasts. ⁴⁰ They that devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers, these shall receive greater condemnation. ⁴¹ And he sat down over against the treasury, and watched how the crowd threw money into the treasury; and many that were rich threw in a lot. ⁴² And there came a poor widow, and she threw in two small copper coins,

entire Old Testament from memory. We can know the Bible and yet not know it at all if we don't personally believe in the power of God which it teaches.

12:31 To love our neighbor as ourselves we must love ourselves; in the sense of perceiving our own value and meaning in God's eyes. We all tend in some ways to have too negative a view of ourselves.

12:33 The whole burnt offerings involved every part of the animal being burnt to God. To love God and our neighbour involves giving our entire lives to God; the life of faith can't be a hobby, a book we read occasionally out of interest, a church meeting we occasionally attend, a social circle we move in.

12:40 *Greater condemnation* – there will be degrees of both reward and punishment given to people by Jesus when He returns and judges us.

which make a penny. ⁴³ And he gathered his disciples, and said to them: Truly I say to you, this poor widow threw in more than all they that are throwing money into the treasury. ⁴⁴ For they threw in money they didn't need, but she though needy threw in all that she had- all her livelihood.

CHAPTER 13 Feb. 17 Aug. 18
Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple

And as he left the temple, one of his disciples said to him: Teacher, look what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings! ² And Jesus said to him: Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another. All will be thrown down. ³ And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately: ⁴ Tell us, when will these things occur, and what shall be the sign when these things are about to happen? ⁵ And Jesus began to say to them: Take heed that no one lead

you astray. ⁶ Many shall come in my name, saying, I am he; and shall lead many astray. ⁷ And when you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be disturbed. These things must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁸ For nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, there shall be earthquakes in various places, there shall be famines. These things are the beginning of the birth pains. ⁹ But be warned. For they shall deliver you up to councils, and in synagogues they shall beat you, and before governors and kings shall you stand for my sake, to bear witness before them. ¹⁰ And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. ¹¹ Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Say whatever shall be given you in that hour, for it is not you that will speak but the Holy Spirit. ¹² And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children shall rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³ And you

12:43 Jesus was very observant to notice those two coins going into the box. He is the same today – He notices the quiet devotion and sacrifice for Him which nobody else does. This is why He teaches against doing good deeds which others see, and was so against how the Scribes behaved (12:39).

13:2 This chapter, known as the Olivet prophecy, gives signs which were fulfilled immediately before the destruction of the temple by the Romans in AD70. However it is clear that Jesus was also thinking about the signs which would be seen in Israel and the world leading up to His return. We can therefore say that what happened in AD70 is a type of our last days.

13:8 *Birth pains* – The bringing to birth will be when Jesus returns and we are fully 'born again' and enter His Kingdom with immortal nature (Jn. 3:3-5). Living in the last days just before He returns will therefore be a painful and frightening time for the believers.

13:10 The quicker we preach the Gospel to all nations, the quicker the end will come.

13:13 It seems the believers will be persecuted in the last days.

shall be hated by all for my name's sake; but he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. ¹⁴ But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where it should not (let him that reads understand), then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵ And let him that is on the housetop not go down, nor enter in to take anything out his house. ¹⁶ And let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. ¹⁷ But alas for women who are pregnant, and for those who are nursing infants in those days! ¹⁸ And pray that it is not in the winter. ¹⁹ For those days shall cause distress, such as there has never been similar, from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and never shall be again. ²⁰ And except the Lord had shortened the days, no flesh would have been saved; but for the elect's sake, which He chose, He shortened the days. ²¹ And then if anyone shall say to you: Look, here is the Christ! or Look! There he is!- do not believe them. ²² For false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead

astray (if possible) the elect. ²³ But be warned, I have told you all things beforehand. ²⁴ But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, ²⁵ and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. ²⁶ And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷ And then shall he send the angels and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. ²⁸ Now from the fig tree learn its lesson. When its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that the summer is near. ²⁹ So you also, when you see these things happening, you will know that he is near- at the doors. ³⁰ Truly I say to you: This generation shall not pass away, until all these things happen. ³¹ Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words shall not pass away. ³² But of that day or that hour knows no one except the Father, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son. ³³ Be warned, watch and pray. For you do not know

13:18 The actual timing of events in both AD70 and in the last days can be affected by our prayers.

13:19 This alludes to Dan. 12:1, which speaks of a "time of trouble such as never was" for Israel. This means that a situation worse than the Nazi holocaust must yet happen to Israel. We can therefore expect world opinion to increasingly turn against the Jews.

13:24,25 Sun, moon and stars are used in the Bible as symbols for the rulers of a nation, especially Israel (Gen. 37:9).

13:32 If God knows something which Jesus doesn't, then Jesus can't be God Himself.

13:33 We cannot know the exact time when Jesus will return; therefore we must watch [be alert] and pray. Ignore the various claims that we can work out from Bible prophecy which year Jesus will return in.

when the time is. ³⁴ Like a man going on a journey; on leaving his house, he puts his servants in charge, each according to his assigned tasks. He also commands the gatekeeper to stay awake. ³⁵ Therefore stay awake. For you do not know when the lord of the house comes, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crow, or in the morning. ³⁶ In case he comes suddenly finding you asleep—³⁷ what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!

CHAPTER 14 Feb. 18 Aug. 19

The Anointing of Jesus

Now it was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might arrest him using trickery and kill him. ² For they said: Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people. ³ And while he was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of ointment of pure nard—very expensive. She broke the vial and poured it over his head. ⁴ But there were some

that had indignation among themselves, saying: For what purpose has this waste of the ointment been made? ⁵ For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred denarii and given to the poor. And they scolded her. ⁶ But Jesus said: Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work upon me. ⁷ For you have the poor always with you, and whenever you want you can do them good, but me you do not have always. ⁸ She has done what she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for the burying. ⁹ And truly I say to you: Wherever in the whole world the gospel shall be preached, what this woman has done shall be spoken of as a memorial to her. ¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, he that was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests, that he might betray him to them. ¹¹ And they, when they heard it, were glad; and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Jesus Prepares to Eat the Passover

¹² And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the

13:34 *Assigned tasks* – Each of us has a specific part within the body of Christ. If you don't know what it is, what God's hope of you and expectation of you is, then pray to find out.

13:37 *Stay awake* – But according to the parable of Mt. 25:5, even the faithful in the last days will fall asleep. We will be saved by grace.

14:5 The lesson is not to have a utilitarian approach to life. If our love of Jesus is strong, we will feel like doing things which others consider senseless and not sensible. But do them.

14:8 That woman perceived that Jesus was going to die; she had heard and believed Jesus' predictions about this. But the disciples had tuned out those predictions. Mark is showing in his preaching of the Gospel how slow the preachers had been to 'get it' themselves. And this gave the preaching more appeal and credibility.

Passover, his disciples said to him: Where will you have us prepare for you the Passover to eat? ¹³ And he sent two of his disciples and said to them: Go into the city and there you shall meet a man bearing a pitcher of water. Follow him. ¹⁴ And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house: The teacher asks, where is the guest room in which I can eat the Passover with my disciples? ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare it for us. ¹⁶ And the disciples went into the city and found as he had said to them. And they made ready the Passover. ¹⁷ And when it was evening he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said: Truly I say to you, one of you shall betray me— even he that eats with me. ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful, and to say to him one by one: Is it I? ²⁰ And he said to them: It is one of the twelve. He that dipped in the dish at the same time with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes, even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born.

The Last Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread and when he had blessed it, he broke it and gave it to them, and said: Take, eat, this is my body. ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And he said to them: This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly I say to you: I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God. ²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them: All of you shall fall away. For it is written: I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. ²⁸ However, after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you into Galilee. ²⁹ But Peter said to him: Although all shall fall away, I will not! ³⁰ And Jesus said to him: Truly I say to you, yes to you today, that this night, before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me three times. ³¹ But Peter said emphatically: Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same.

14:13 Women and not men were the water carriers. This person was one of Jesus' followers; the liberation of women within the teaching and practice of Jesus was one of the factors which led to the explosion of Christianity amongst first century women.

14:19 At the breaking of bread, we should examine ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28). This was prefigured by how the disciples each asked Jesus "Is it I [who will betray you]?" and by how the Jews had to search their homes for yeast [representing sin] before they ate the Passover.

14:29 There is a tradition, and also some internal evidence, that Mark was writing down Peter's account of the Gospel. Although Mark is the shortest Gospel, the account of Peter's denials is most detailed in Mark. This shows how Peter was focusing upon his own weaknesses as he retold the Gospel; as we should.

Jesus in Gethsemane

³² And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples: Sit here while I pray. ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them: My soul is exceeding sorrowful even to death. Stay here and watch. ³⁵ And he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. ³⁶ And he said: Abba, Father, all things are possible for You; remove this cup from me. However, not as I will but what You will. ³⁷ And he returned and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: Simon, why do you sleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you do not fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he returned and found them sleeping. Their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he returned a third time and said to them: Sleep on now and take your rest. It is enough. The hour comes, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Arise! Let us be going. He that betrays me is nearby. ⁴³ And immediately, while he yet spoke, Judas

came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders bearing swords and staves. ⁴⁴ Now he that betrayed him had given them a signal, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he. Take him and lead him away safely. ⁴⁵ And when he arrived, immediately he came to him and said: Master, Master; and kissed him. ⁴⁶ And they arrested him and took him away. ⁴⁷ But one of the disciples that was standing nearby drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them: Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching and you did not arrest me; but this is done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. ⁵⁰ And all the disciples left him and fled. ⁵¹ And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him. ⁵² But he left the linen cloth and fled naked.

The Trial of Jesus

⁵³ And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and there came together all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and

14:36 ‘Abba’ has been interpreted as meaning ‘Daddy’. This is how close Jesus felt to God; and we can also.

14:37 *One hour* – His brief prayer of 14:36 took one hour to pray. We read those words too quickly.

14:51 Was this young man Peter (see v. 54)? Jesus speaks of him as “young” in Jn. 21:18.

warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought evidence against Jesus to put him to death, and did not find it. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying: ⁵⁸ We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. ⁵⁹ But not even then did their testimony agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in their midst and asked Jesus: Do you answer nothing? What is this that these witnesses say against you? ⁶¹ But he held his peace and said nothing. Again the high priest questioned him, saying: Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? ⁶² And Jesus said: I am, and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. ⁶³ And the high priest tore his clothes and said: What further need have we of wit-

nesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy. What think you? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. ⁶⁵ And some began to spit on him and to cover his face, striking him and saying to him: Prophecy! And the guards took him and beat him with their hands.

Peter's Denials

⁶⁶ And as Peter was downstairs in the courtyard, there came one of the maids of the high priest. ⁶⁷ And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said: You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus! ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying: I neither know, nor understand what you say; and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. ⁶⁹ And the maid saw him and began again to say to them that stood by: This is one of them! ⁷⁰ But he again denied it. And after a little while, again they that stood by said to Peter: Of a truth you are one of them; for you are a Galilean. ⁷¹ But he began to curse and to swear

14:68 *The cock crew* – Peter should've seen the warning sign. Did he psychologically ignore it; or did he resolve that next time he would not fail? He should've removed himself from temptation; but like us so often, he didn't. He, like us, thought he was stronger than he was.

14:68 He “went out” from the Lord. “Went out” is the language of Judas going out (Jn. 13:30 – in essence, Peter and Judas did the same thing at the same time). Other prototypes of the rejected likewise had gone out from the Lord. Cain “went out” (Gen. 4:16), as did Zedekiah in the judgment of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:4; 52:7). Esau went out from the land of Canaan into Edom, slinking away from the face of his brother Jacob, sensing his righteousness and his own carnality (Gen. 36:2-8). Yet Peter in this life “went out” from the Lord and then some minutes later further “went out and wept bitterly” (Lk. 22:62), living out the very figure of condemnation – and yet was able to repent and come back. In this life we can be judged, condemned, weep...but still repent of it and thereby change our eternal destiny. But at the final judgment: it will be just too late. That ‘judgment’ will be a detailed statement of the outcome of the ongoing investigative judgment which is going on right now.

under oath: I do not know this man of whom you speak. ⁷² And immediately the second time the cock crew. And Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him: Before the cock crows twice, you shall deny me three times. And as he thought upon it, he wept.

CHAPTER 15 Feb. 19 Aug. 20

The Trial Before Pilate

And immediately in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes and the whole council, made their decision and bound Jesus and took him away and delivered him up to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him: Are you the King of the Jews? And he answering said to him: So you say. ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And

Pilate again asked him: Have you no answer to make? See how many accusations they make against you. ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate marvelled. ⁶ Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man named Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And Pilate answered them saying: Will you have me release to you the King of the Jews? ¹⁰ For he knew that because of envy the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, that instead he should release Barabbas to them. ¹² And Pilate again an-

14:72 *Three times* – Mark’s record of the Lord’s trial is not merely a historical account. It’s framed in terms of our need to testify for our faith too. The Lord’s example in His time of suffering was and is intended to be our example and inspiration, in that we are to in a very practical sense enter into His sufferings. Mark records the Lord’s prediction that His people would have to witness before both Jewish and Gentile authorities (Mk. 13:9-13) – and then Mark goes on in the next chapter to describe Jesus doing just this. The Lord asked His suffering followers not to prepare speeches of self-defence – perhaps exemplified and patterned for us in the way that He remained silent before His accusers. Peter is recorded as denying Christ three times – just as the Romans interrogated Christians and asked them to three times deny Christ. The Christians were also asked to curse, or *anathematizein*, Jesus. And when we read of Peter’s cursing, the same word is used. We’re left with the impression that Peter actually cursed Christ. And so Mark, who was likely writing the Gospel on Peter’s behalf, is showing that Peter, the leader of the church, actually pathetically failed to follow his Lord at this time. And yet the Gospel of Mark was being distributed to Christians who were being dragged before Jewish and Roman courts. The idea was surely to give them an example and encouragement from Peter’s failure, rather than portray a positive example of a man overcoming the temptation to curse and deny Christ. But this was how the Lord used Peter – as an example from failure for all of us.

15:10 Envy and jealousy were the real reasons why Jesus was killed. Every time we suffer from them, we are fellowshipping the sufferings of Jesus. If we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him. This is what the symbol of baptism shows – we go under the water, but come up out of it with Christ.

swered and said to them: What then shall I do to him whom you call the King of the Jews? ¹³ And they cried out again: Crucify him! ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them: Why? What evil has he done? But they cried out exceedingly: Crucify him! ¹⁵ And Pilate, wishing to calm the crowd, released to them Barabbas and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. ¹⁶ Then the soldiers led him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute

him: Hail, King of the Jews! ¹⁹ And they hit his head with a rod and spat upon him, and kneeled down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple cloak and dressed him in his own garments. And they led him out to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

²¹ And they compelled a passer-by to carry his cross, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside, the father of Alexander and Rufus. ²² And they brought him to the place named Golgotha, which means, Place of the skull. ²³ And

15:15 The moment of the Lord being delivered over by Pilate is so emphasized. There are few details in the record which are recorded verbatim by all the writers (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:25; Jn. 19:16). The Lord had prophesied this moment of handing over, as if this was something which He dreaded (Mk. 9:31; 10:33); that point when He was outside the legal process, and must now face His destruction. The Angels reminded the disciples: “Remember *how* he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men” (Lk. 24:6,7). The emphasis is on “*How*”, with what passion and emphasis. Rom. 4:25 makes this moment of handing over equivalent to His actual death: “Who was *delivered* (s.w.) for our offences, and raised again for our justification”. So much stress is put on this moment of being delivered over to crucifixion. The Gospel records stress that Pilate delivered Him up; but in fact God did (Rom. 8:32); indeed, the Lord delivered Himself up (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). Always the same word is used. These passages also stress that He delivered Himself up, and was delivered up, *for us*. It was *our salvation* which motivated Him at the moment of being delivered up. Perhaps it was at that moment that He had the greatest temptation to walk through the midst of them and back to Galilee. As the crowd surged forward and cheered, knowing they’d won the battle of wills with Pilate...” take ye him and crucify him” ringing in His mind...this was it. This was the end.

15:22 John says that the Lord went out bearing His cross. Luke says that Simon was asked to carry the hinder part of the cross behind Him. Matthew and Mark say Simon carried the cross. Mk. 15:22 (Gk.) says that the soldiers carried Jesus to Golgotha. J.B. Phillips renders it: “They got him to a place Golgotha”. It would seem that the Lord collapsed, perhaps fainting. If He was crucified on an olive tree (excavations of crucified men suggest this is what was used), it would not have been simply because of the weight of the stake. Take a picture of Him lying there, with the face that was marred more than the children of men pressed into the hot dust of that Jerusalem street. And

they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not accept it. ²⁴ And they crucify him and part his garments among themselves, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read: The King of the Jews. ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right hand and one on his left. ²⁸ And the scripture was fulfilled, which said: And he was numbered with the transgressors. ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying: Ha! You that

would destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself and come down from the cross! ³¹ In like manner also the chief priests mocked among themselves and the scribes, saying: He saved others. Himself he cannot save! ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so we may see and believe! And they that were crucified with him ridiculed him. ³³ And when the sixth hour had come, darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which means: My God, my God, why have

some human fool probably said something like ‘Come on, get up’ (doubtless with embellishments). If indeed He did faint, there would have been that sense of ‘coming round’, the “Where am I?”, the memory and consciousness flooding back. “Have I died and been resurrected?” No, as some nameless soldier kicked Him and told Him to get up.

15:23 Significantly, very few actual details are given by the Gospel writers of both the scourging and the crucifixion. It could be that they felt it impossible to dwell upon these things; or it could be that they and their readers knew what was involved in these practices, and we are left to dwell upon them in our own imagination. We are intended to reconstruct in our own minds what may have happened... We have a solemn duty towards Him to do this. This is perhaps why the tenses change so dramatically in the records. Take just Mk. 15:23-26: “They offered...they crucify...and part...casting lots...crucified...was written”. These arresting changes are surely to encourage us to re-live it all. Mark speaks of “they crucify him”, going on to say that “then are there two crucified with him” (Mk. 15:25 RV), whereas Luke records the act in the past tense. Mark’s present tenses are arresting: “plaiting...they clothe him...they smote...” (Mk. 15:17,19 RV). Perhaps Mark is seeking consciously to make us imagine it all as going on before our eyes.

15:34 Mt. 27:46 says that at “*about* the ninth hour, Jesus cried” those words about being forsaken. Mark says it was *at* the ninth hour, and we know it was at the ninth hour that Christ uttered His final words of victory. Yet it must have been only a few minutes before the ninth hour when Christ faltered; hence Matthew says that it was “*about* the ninth hour”. What is a few minutes? Only a few hundred seconds, only moments. Only moments before the sweetness of the final victory, “It is finished” or accomplished, the Son of God was faltering. The conclusion is that *at the very last moment* our Lord faltered. It was 11:59, into injury time, and He faltered. Enter, *please*, into the sense of crisis and intensity. This is the only time that he prays to God as “God” rather than

you forsaken me? ³⁵ And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said: Look, he calls Elijah. ³⁶ And one ran and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a rod and gave it to him to drink, saying: Leave him be. Let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down. ³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the veil of the temple was torn in two- from the top to the bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw how he breathed his last breathe, he said: Truly this man was the Son of God.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴⁰ And there were also women watching from afar, among whom were both Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; ⁴¹ who, when he was in Galilee, had also followed him and ministered to him; and many other women that also had come with him up to Jerusalem. ⁴² And when evening had come, because it was the Preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathaea, a councillor of honourable rank, who also was looking for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ And Pilate

wondered if he were already dead, and called the centurion. He asked him whether he was already dead. ⁴⁵ And when it was confirmed by the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷ And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where he was laid.

CHAPTER 16 Feb. 19 Aug. 21

The Resurrection

And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun was risen, they went to the tomb. ³ And they were talking among themselves: Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us? ⁴ And looking up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled aside. ⁵ And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶ And he said to them: Do not be

“Father” / *abba*. This itself reflects the sense of distance that enveloped Him. For He was your Lord and your Saviour hanging there, it was your salvation which hung in the balance. The more we appreciate this wavering at the last minute, the more fully we will appreciate the wonder of the final victory.

16:3 The women who came to the tomb weren't looking for the risen Lord; they came to anoint the body. But their love of the Lord was counted to them as seeking Him (Mt. 28:5). The Bible is full of how God counts people as righteous although they are not. This is what love is, in some ways. As God counts us as righteous, so we should recognize that our weak brethren are counted righteous by Him.

alarmed. You seek Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here! See the place where they laid him! ⁷ Go tell his disciples, and Peter, that he goes ahead of you into Galilee. There shall you see him, just as he told you. ⁸ And they went out and ran from the tomb. Trembling and astonishment had come upon them, and they said nothing to anyone. For they were afraid. ⁹ Now when he had risen from the dead early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹ And they, when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, disbelieved. ¹² And after these things he was manifested in another guise to two of them as they walked on their way into the countryside. ¹³ And they went away, and told it to the rest, who did not believe them either. ¹⁴ And later he was

manifested to the eleven themselves as they were eating; and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those that had seen him after he had risen. ¹⁵ And he said to them: You are to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that disbelieves shall be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs shall accompany them that believe- in my name shall they cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues, ¹⁸ they shall pick up snakes, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no way hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. ¹⁹ So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰ And they went and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen.

16:7 Jesus was so concerned for the spiritual welfare of Peter, the one who had denied Him. The risen Lord especially wanted the women to tell *Peter* that He was ‘going before him’ to Galilee – with the implication that even in his weakness and dejection, He wanted Peter to still try to follow Him and re-live the cross in his life. We who also deny Jesus can take comfort from this loving concern He has even for us. And we can learn to treat others who fail likewise.

16:16 Baptism is therefore very important if we wish to be saved.

16: 17 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given in the first century, but they were later withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:8).

LUKE

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 10 Sep. 9

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, ² even as they delivered them to us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, ³ it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

The Conception of John the Baptist

⁵ There was in the days of Herod, king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elisabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ And they had no child, because Elisabeth was barren and they both were now well stricken in years. ⁸ Now it came to pass, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to enter into the

temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole crowd of the people were praying outside in the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was disturbed when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him: Fear not, Zacharias, because your prayer is heard; your wife Elisabeth shall carry a son and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you shall have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. And he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall be turned to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. ¹⁸ And Zacharias said to the angel: How shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife well stricken in years. ¹⁹ And the angel answering said to him: I am Gabriel who stands

1:6 Zacharias was “blameless” in God’s sight, even though in this very period of his life he was in some ways lacking faith that his prayers would be answered. He was counted by God as righteous – “righteous before God”.

1:13 He had prayed so long for a child that maybe it became a formality and he couldn’t believe the answer had come. Our prayers may be heard and answered, but it may take years for the answer to be delivered. And all that time we think God’s not answered. Daniel had a similar experience in Daniel 10.

1:19 Angels are sent all the way from God’s presence to earth in order to answer our

in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you these good tidings. ²⁰ And you shall be dumb and not able to speak until the day that these things shall come to pass, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. ²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² And when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, and he continued making signs to them and remained dumb. ²³ And it came to pass, when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. ²⁴ And after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying: ²⁵ Thus has the Lord done to me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men.

The Conception of Jesus

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city

of Galilee, named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came in to her and said: Greetings, you that are highly favoured, the Lord is with you! ²⁹ But she was greatly disturbed at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary. For you have found favour with God. ³¹ And you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. ³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be, seeing I do not know a man? ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her: The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow

prayers. A guy standing at a bus stop praying to God can call forth an Angel to be sent to earth in answer to his prayers.

1:30 *Found favour* – She had the spiritual ambition to ask to be the mother of Messiah. Hence her reaction was joy rather than “Oh no! I’m pregnant without a husband!”. And she was likely an illiterate, barefoot teenager. She was of low social status (:48,53).

1:32 *Shall be* – Note all the future tenses. Jesus didn’t pre-exist as a person before His birth. Jesus was “conceived” within Mary (v. 31). He didn’t literally come down from Heaven as a person. He began inside Mary. David was his father or ancestor because Mary too was an ordinary woman, who was in the line of David. Jesus only became God’s Son when He was born (v. 35). The Son of God therefore didn’t exist from creation, as the false doctrine of the Trinity requires.

1:35 The Holy Spirit is paralleled with the power of “the Most High”. The Holy Spirit refers to God’s power; it isn’t a person. God is “the highest”, and therefore neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit are equal to Him; they are lower than Him as He is the highest.

you. Therefore also the holy thing which is begotten within you shall be called the Son of God. ³⁶ And Elisabeth your kinswoman, she who was called barren, has in her old age also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month of her pregnancy. ³⁷ For no word from God shall be void of power. ³⁸ And Mary said: Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it unto me according to your word! And the angel departed from her. ³⁹ And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elisabeth. ⁴¹ And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the baby jumped within her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby jumped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfilment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord. ⁴⁶ And Mary said: My soul

does magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸ because He has looked upon the low estate of His handmaid. For from this time forward all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For He that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is His name, ⁵⁰ and His mercy is to generations and generations on them that fear Him. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with His arm, He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart, ⁵² He has put down princes from their thrones and has exalted them of low station in life. ⁵³ The hungry He has filled with good things and the rich He has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has given help to Israel His servant, that He might remember mercy ⁵⁵ (as He spoke to our fathers) toward Abraham and his seed for ever. ⁵⁶ And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned home.

The Birth of John

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ And her neighbours and her kinsfolk heard that the Lord had magnified His mercy towards her; and they rejoiced with her. ⁵⁹ And it came to pass on the eighth day, that

1:36 Often God arranges that someone else, e.g. a family member, has a similar experience to us – so that by fellowship with them we can find comfort and encouragement.

1:46 Mary's song is full of allusion to the song of Hannah when she was enabled to conceive Samuel (1 Sam. 2). Although she was illiterate, she knew her Bible well. She had memorized it and felt herself into it. She saw the similarities between herself and Hannah. We too should ponder Scripture and see the similarities between ourselves and others we read of there, so that they become our heroes and inspirations.

1:53 The rich Jewish women no doubt wanted to be mother of Messiah. But God delights to work through the low, poor and humble who love His word.

they came to circumcise the child, and they would have called him Zacharias, after the name of the father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered and said: No, he shall be called John. ⁶¹ And they said to her: There are none of your kindred that are called by this name. ⁶² And they made signs to his father, what he wanted him called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, saying: His name is John. And they all marvelled. ⁶⁴ And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed and he spoke, blessing God. ⁶⁵ And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ And all that heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: What then shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him. ⁶⁷ And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David ⁷⁰ (as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been since the world began), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, ⁷² to show mercy towards our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant. ⁷³ The

oath which He spoke to Abraham our father, ⁷⁴ to grant to us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. ⁷⁶ Yes, and you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High. For you shall go before the presence of the Lord to make ready His ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, when the sunrise shall dawn upon us, ⁷⁹ to shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace. ⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day he appeared publicly to Israel.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 11 Sep. 10

The Birth of Jesus

Now it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This census first took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to register themselves, everyone to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because

1:74 Zacharias shared the common Jewish misunderstanding of Messiah as the One who would bring salvation from the Romans. But it's also possible to understand his words spiritually, in terms of our freedom from sin. A faithful man can still hold misunderstandings, and God didn't reject him because of it.

1:77 If we really feel God's forgiveness, then we know salvation; but such wonderful experience comes from appreciating the seriousness of our sins. The proud and self-righteous have no feeling for the wonder of God's forgiveness.

he was of the house and family of David) ⁵ to enrol himself with Mary, who was engaged to him, being great with child. ⁶ And it came to pass, while they were there, the time came that she should give birth. ⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. ⁸ And there were shepherds in the same region staying in the field and keeping watch at night over their flock. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were terrified. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them: Be not afraid. For I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign to you: You shall find a baby wrapped in birth clothes and lying in a manger. ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a crowd of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: ¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those in whom He is well pleased. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to each other:

Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us. ¹⁶ And they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they told people about the saying which was spoken to them about this child. ¹⁸ And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken to them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ And Mary treasured up all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, just as it had been spoken to them. ²¹ And after eight days, when he was circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which name was given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Simeon and Anna Meet Jesus

²² And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought him up to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord), ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of

2:7 From birth, Jesus knew rejection from men; for surely somebody could have found a better bed for a heavily pregnant woman. When we experience rejection, He knows how we feel.

2:8 Shepherds were one of the most despised classes in Palestinian society. But God chose to use them as the witnesses to the birth of His Son.

2:15 *That has come to pass* – Faith is believing what we can't see but what has been revealed to us by God's word. The shepherds are a classic example of faith. Therefore the shepherds rejoiced because their faith had been rewarded – they found everything exactly as had been said and as they had believed (v. 20). This was and is the joy of faith rewarded.

the Lord: A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.²⁵ And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him.²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law,²⁸ then he took him into his arms and blessed God, and said:²⁹ Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation,³¹ which You have prepared before the presence of all peoples;³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.³³ And his father and his mother were marvelling at the things which were spoken concerning him.³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the falling and the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against.³⁵ Yes, and a sword shall pierce through your own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.³⁶ And there was one Anna, a

prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity,³⁷ and she had been a widow eighty four years. She departed not from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.³⁸ And coming up to worship at that very same hour, she gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all those that were looking for redemption in Jerusalem.³⁹ And when they had accomplished all things that were according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

Jesus at Twelve Years Old

⁴¹ And his parents went up every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover.⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to the tradition of the feast.⁴³ And when they had finished the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not.⁴⁴ Supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and then they looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances.⁴⁵ And when they did not find him, they

2:32 *A light for revelation* – The Gentiles will only see that light if we reveal Him to them in our witness.

2:35 When the spear pierced the side of Jesus, the heart of Mary was pierced too as she watched. Our reaction to the cross is that the thoughts of our hearts are revealed. Hence the breaking of bread service, when we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, is a time for self-examination because quite naturally the thoughts of our hearts are revealed as we stand before the cross (1 Cor. 11:28).

returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. ⁴⁶ And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ And when they saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him: Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you. ⁴⁹ And he said to them: How is it you searched for me? Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house? ⁵⁰ And they did not understand what he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he left with them and went to Nazareth, and was subject to them; and his mother treasured all these sayings in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus developed both in wisdom and body, and in favour with God and men.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 12 Sep. 11

The Preaching of John the Baptist

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² in the highpriesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³ And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: The voice of one crying, In the wilderness make ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked paths shall become straight, and the rough

2:47 Jesus would've had a natural aptitude for His Father's words. He would've searched for His Father just as any child does for the father they have never seen. As God's Son, His intellect would've been surpassing. His exposition of Scripture at 12 would've been very mature. Note His humility, though, in asking questions – of the men who later would hate and murder Him.

2:48 *Your father...* Jesus rebukes her by saying that she should've guessed that He was to be found in the house of God, His true Father (v. 49). Mary had become so used to the idea of Joseph being the father of Jesus that she had perhaps lost the intensity of persuasion she had when the Angel visited her 13 years ago – that Jesus' Father was God. Time and the incorrect views of others about Jesus and God can likewise make us view them as the world around us does.

2:52 The growth of Jesus in favour with God makes a nonsense of Trinitarian claims. Likewise His growth in wisdom and knowledge is understood quite naturally if we accept Him as God's begotten Son. "God the son" and "Trinity" aren't found in the Bible.

3:5 The leveling of the wilderness is symbolic. Those who were proud like the mountains were brought down low, and those with too negative a view of themselves, as low as the valleys, were lifted up to a higher level. The key in all this was repentance and acceptance of the reality of God's forgiveness and acceptance.

ways smooth. ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. ⁷ He said to the crowds that went out to be baptized by him: You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves: We have Abraham as our father. For I say to you, that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹ And even now, the axe also lies at the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bring forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. ¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, saying: What then must we do? ¹¹ And he answered and said to them: He that has two coats, let him give to him that has none, and he that has food, let him do likewise. ¹² And there came also tax collectors to be baptized; and they said to him: Teacher, what must we do? ¹³ And he said to them: Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.

¹⁴ And soldiers also asked him, saying: And we, what must we do? And he said to them: Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages. ¹⁵ And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether he was the Christ, ¹⁶ John answered, saying to them all: I indeed baptize you with water, but there comes he that is mightier than I, whose shoelaces I am not worthy to untie. He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ Whose fan is in his hand, to cleanse his threshing-floor thoroughly, and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire. ¹⁸ With many other appeals he preached good tidings to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for marrying Herodias his brother's wife, and for all the evil things which Herod had done, ²⁰ also added this, that he locked John up in prison.

3:8 Repentance isn't a matter of words so much as actions, or "fruit". Baptism is part of our process of repentance and forgiveness; but we must attempt to change in practice too.

3:8 *To say within yourselves* – The Bible focuses upon and addresses our internal and very private thought processes. Verse 15 also talks about how people reasoned within themselves. This is the essence of Christianity – to change our spirit, the way we think deep within. The real 'Satan' or adversary is our own innermost mind, and not any external cosmic being.

3:14 John didn't tell the soldiers to stop being soldiers, but to act within moral principles. God meets us where we are, calls different people in different states, and asks them within their contexts to act accordingly. But the military shouldn't be the occupation of choice for a Christian.

3:17 The idea of gathering wheat and destroying the chaff is the language of the final judgment, when Jesus returns. But Jesus was ready to begin that at His first coming. All believers down the centuries have therefore lived in the expectation of His imminent judgment coming; we should live constantly with the awareness that Jesus may return today.

The Genealogy of Jesus

²¹ Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also having been baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in a bodily form as a dove, and a voice came out of heaven: You are My beloved Son. In you I am well pleased. ²³ And Jesus, when he began to teach, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was legally reckoned) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Jesus, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Symeon, the son of Judas, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the

son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 13 Sep. 12

The Wilderness Temptations

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² being tempted by the Devil for forty days. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were completed, he was hungry. ³ And

3:20 *Added this* – God doesn't just switch off watching sinners keeping on sinning. Each and every sin is a felt offence against Him, even if performed by Gentile unbelievers. His sensitivity to sin is amazing, and we should live our lives before Him recognizing it.

3:21 *Jesus also* – The idea is that Jesus was baptized along with all the other people, by full immersion as an adult. If He was baptized, so should we be.

4:1-8 See comments on Matthew 4 and notes about Satan at the end.

4:3 Jesus answers the three temptations with three quotations from Deuteronomy. Those quotations are close to each other – twice from Deuteronomy 6 and once from Deuteronomy 8. These passages were in the context of Israel being 40 years in the wilderness, tested by God and tempted to be disobedient to Him. Jesus perceived the similarities with Himself – 40 days in the wilderness, tested by God and tempted,

the Devil said to him: If you are the Son of God, command these stones that they become bread. ⁴ And Jesus answered him: It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. ⁵ And he led him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the Devil said to him: To you will I give all this authority and the glory of them. For it has been delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. ⁷ Therefore, if you will worship me, it shall all be yours. ⁸ And Jesus answered and said to him: It is written, you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. ⁹ And he led him to Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him: If you are the Son of God, cast yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: He shall give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you, ¹¹ and on their hands they shall carry you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. ¹² And Jesus answering said to him: It is said, you shall not test the Lord your God. ¹³ And when the Devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

Jesus in Nazareth

¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and the news about him went out throughout all the region. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. ¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And there was delivered to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, ¹⁹ to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. ²⁰ And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them: Today has this scripture been fulfilled in your hearing. ²² And all bore him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said:

led by "the Spirit" (v. 1) as Israel were led by an Angel. We too should look for the similarities between our positions and those of others we read about in the Bible. The more we are familiar with the Bible text, the more easily in times of crisis will we find strength and find warning and encouragement directly for us. This is why we should persevere in Bible reading even if at the time we don't understand or feel any immediate benefit. Slowly, God's word becomes a living word, speaking directly to us.

4:15 The popularity of Jesus was huge. But He knew what people were like (Jn. 2:25) and so He avoided the pitfalls of success and popularity. We should handle any popularity or success in the way He did. His focus was upon glorifying God, getting that job done, and whether we stand with our backs to the world or have adulation of men, that must be our focus.

Is this not Joseph's son? ²³ And he said to them: Doubtless you will say to me this proverb: Physician, heal yourself. Whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in your hometown. ²⁴ And he said: Truly I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own hometown. ²⁵ But of a truth I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land. ²⁶ And to none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman that was a widow. ²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. ²⁸ And they were all filled with anger in the synagogue as they heard these things. ²⁹ And they rose up and threw him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. ³⁰ But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

Jesus in Capernaum

³¹ And he came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was

teaching them on the Sabbath day. ³² And they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority. ³³ And in the synagogue, there was a man that had a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice: ³⁴ Leave us alone! What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are! The Holy One of God! ³⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying: Hold your peace and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no hurt. ³⁶ And amazement came upon all, and they spoke together, one with another, saying: What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out. ³⁷ And there went a rumour concerning him into every place of the region round about. ³⁸ And he rose up from the synagogue and entered into the house of Simon. And Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of him concerning her. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever; and it left her, and immediately she rose up and served them. ⁴⁰ And when the sun was setting, they brought to him all

4:23 *Heal yourself* – Did Jesus have some physical weakness, illness or deformity? He had “no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2).

4:27 There were no lepers healed in Israel in Elisha's time. The young Israelite maid who told her Syrian mistress that Elisha was able to cure leprosy was therefore speaking in faith, the faith which believes what hasn't yet been seen (2 Kings 5:3).

4:30 Jesus was therefore able to escape persecution and personal harm. He could've escaped from the cross. This was His agony in Gethsemane. But He resisted that temptation and willingly gave His life for us.

4:35 Jesus rebuked a demon and then rebuked a fever (v. 39). ‘Demons’ was the language of the day for illnesses.

that were sick with various diseases; and he laid his hands on everyone of them and healed them. ⁴¹ And demons also came out from many, crying out and saying: You are the Son of God! But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ. ⁴² Now when it was day, he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought him and came to him, and tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said to them: I must preach the good tidings of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for this is why I was sent. ⁴⁴ And he was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 14 Sep. 13

The Call of the Disciples

Now it came to pass, while the crowd pressed upon him and heard the word of God, that he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret. ² And he saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ And he entered into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. And he sat down and taught the crowds out of the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.

⁵ And Simon answered and said: Master, we toiled all night and took nothing, but at your word I will let down the nets. ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great many fishes; and their nets were breaking. ⁷ And they beckoned to their partners in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸ But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. ⁹ For he was amazed, and all that were with him, at the catch of fish which they had taken. ¹⁰ And so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon: Fear not. From this time forward you shall catch men. ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed him.

Jesus Cures a Leper and a Paralyzed Man

¹² And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, that there was a man full of leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, saying: Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. ¹³ And he stretched forth his hand and touched him, saying: I will. Be made clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him, ¹⁴ and he ordered

5:5 Fishermen don't like being told by carpenters what to do; they 'know it all' about their trade. So Peter had to humble himself to obey Christ's word just as we do; it goes against the grain of our natural instincts.

5:10 Success in preaching, like (in this instance) Peter's success in fishing, comes from obeying Christ's word, being guided by that rather than our natural instincts. We may appear fools in the eyes of men by doing so.

him: Tell no one, but go your way and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing according as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. ¹⁵ However, the report went around concerning him all the more; and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he withdrew himself into the desert and prayed. ¹⁷ And it came to pass on one of those days that he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, who had come out of every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ And men brought on a bed a man that was paralysed; and they sought to bring him in and to lay him before him. ¹⁹ But not finding by what way they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went to the housetop and let him down through the tiles with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. ²⁰ And seeing their faith, he said: Man, your sins are forgiven you. ²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying: Who is this that speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? ²² But Jesus, perceiving their reasoning, answered and said to them: Why reason you so in your hearts? ²³ Which

is easier to say: Your sins are forgiven; or to say: Arise and walk? ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (he said to him who was paralyzed): I say to you, arise and take up your bedding and go to your house. ²⁵ And immediately, he stood up before them, picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. ²⁶ And they were all amazed, and they glorified God; and they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen strange things today.

The Need for Change

²⁷ And after these things he went and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and said to him: Follow me. ²⁸ And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him. ²⁹ And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and of others that were dining with them. ³⁰ And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying: Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners? ³¹ And Jesus answering said to them: They that are in health have no need of a doctor, but they that are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. ³³ And

5:16 If Jesus needed to make time to be alone with God, so do we. It may require us to set the alarm clock 10 minutes earlier each morning.

5:20 Jesus knew they wanted a healing. But first He forgave the man's sins – to show that physical benefit from association with Him is secondary to the forgiveness of our sins. That is our primary and greatest need.

5:31 We are the sick, in need of healing. We will therefore never be ready or good enough for God. We shouldn't delay being baptized or not serve God because we feel we are spiritually sick. It is for us that He died.

they said to him: The disciples of John fast often and make supplications, likewise also the disciples of the Pharisees; but your disciples eat and drink. ³⁴ And Jesus said to them: Can you make the wedding guests fast, while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵ But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then will they fast, in those days. ³⁶ And he spoke also a parable to them: No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it upon an old garment, else he will tear the new, and also the piece from the new will not agree with the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wine-skins, or else the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilt, and the skins will perish. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. ³⁹ And no one having drunk old wine immediately then desires new wine; for he says: The old is good.

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 15 Sep. 14

Sabbath Controversies

Now it came to pass on a Sabbath that he was going through the

grain fields; and his disciples plucked the ears and ate, rubbing them in their hands. ² But certain of the Pharisees said: Why do you do what is unlawful on the Sabbath day? ³ And Jesus answered them, saying: Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and they that were with him? ⁴ How he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him? ⁵ And he said to them: The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath. ⁶ And it came to pass on another Sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ And the scribes and Pharisees watched him closely, whether he would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸ But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man that had his hand withered: Rise up and stand in the midst. And he arose and stood. ⁹ And Jesus said to them: I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm? To save a life,

5:35 Are we fasting because we want Jesus, the bridegroom, to return? Fasting doesn't only mean abstaining from food; fasting means forgiving people and trying to ease the weight of the burdens they carry (Is. 58:6).

5:39 Jesus here recognizes the basic conservatism of human nature; real change is so hard for us.

6:4 Jesus compared those who follow Him to the priests. We are all priests within the new community Jesus has established (1 Pet. 2:9). We all have responsibility for the spiritual welfare of each other; we are not to leave it to a class of specialists to care for them.

6:7 Do you feel in some contexts that everything you do is being watched critically by someone? Jesus knows how you feel.

6:9 Jesus speaks of omitting to do good (in this case, healing the man) as doing harm and destroying life. Sins of commission aren't the only sins; sins of omission are as bad as proactively murdering or harming someone.

or to destroy it? ¹⁰ And he looked round about on them all, and then said to him: Stretch out your hand. And he did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Jesus Calls and Teaches His Disciples

¹² And it came to pass in these days that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when it was day, he called his disciples, and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles. ¹⁴ Simon, whom he also named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became the betrayer. ¹⁷ And he came down with them and stood on a level place; and a great crowd of his disciples, and a great number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon,

came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. ¹⁸ And they that were disturbed with unclean spirits were healed. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power went out from him and healed them all. ²⁰ Then he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples, and said: Blessed are you poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ Blessed are you that hunger now; for you shall be filled. Blessed are you that weep now; for you shall laugh. ²² Blessed are you, when men shall hate you, and when they shall reject you, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy; for your reward is great in heaven. For in the same manner did their fathers treat the prophets. ²⁴ But woe to you that are rich! For you have received your consolation. ²⁵ Woe to you, you that are full now! For you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now! For you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ Woe to you, when all men shall speak well of you! For in the same manner did their fathers do to the false prophets. ²⁷ But I say to you that hear: Love

6:11 *Rage* – Often acts of goodness provoke anger in others; they look at us with an evil eye because we have done good. This often happened to Jesus (Mt. 20:15). This kind of spiritual jealousy led to His death, and we will face it too.

6:19 Healing people was so demanding upon Jesus; He felt the power going out of Him (as in 8:46). If we feel exhausted by serving others – Jesus has ‘been there’.

6:20-22 It's paradoxical that Christians want to be happy, wealthy, popular and well fed. We may take a second job or a very demanding one which leaves us no time or energy for Divine things – just because we want to ‘buy’ those very things which we are blessed if we don't have. This is a huge inversion of values.

6:23 *Is great* – God is watching our lives closely, and sacrificing things for His sake means we accrue some ‘reward’ immediately with Him. Salvation is a gift, by grace. But the nature of who we will eternally be is a function of the degree of sacrifice and service we have achieved in this life.

your enemies, do good to them that hate you, ²⁸ bless those that curse you, pray for those that mistreat you. ²⁹ To him that hits you on the cheek offer also the other, and from him that takes away your cloak- withhold not your coat also. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back; ³¹ and as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise. ³² For if you love those that love you, what praise do you have? For even sinners love those that love them. ³³ And if you do good to those that do good to you, what praise do you have? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those of whom you hope to receive, what praise do you have? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive again as much. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and you shall be sons of the Most High. For He is kind toward the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. ³⁷ Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be

condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven. ³⁸ Give; and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they pour into your lap. For with what measure you use, it shall be measured to you again. ³⁹ And he spoke also a parable to them: Can the blind guide the blind? Shall they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is perfected, shall be as his teacher. ⁴¹ And why do you see the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye? ⁴² Or how can you say to your brother: Brother, let me cast out the splinter that is in your eye- when you yourself do not perceive the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite! Cast out first the beam out of your own eye, and then shall you see clearly to cast out the splinter that is in your brother's eye. ⁴³ For there is no good tree that brings forth corrupt fruit, nor a corrupt tree that brings forth good fruit. ⁴⁴ For each tree is known by its own fruit. For from thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush do

6:29 When Jesus was struck on the cheek He asked "Why do you smite me?" (Jn. 18:23). He didn't literally offer His other cheek. So we must interpret this in principle rather than literally.

6:32 Let's think what acts of love we can do today to those who do *not* love us and will not recompense us.

6:38 *They* – The Angels at the day of judgment. For this doesn't come true in this life.

6:40 We will be "perfected" when Jesus returns and we are given God's nature (Heb. 11:40). Then, we will be like Jesus. 'We shall be like *Him*' (1 Jn. 3:2). The wonder of the Kingdom will not simply be that we won't die – but that we will be like Jesus, with His love, sensitivity, authority, ability to talk with God with no barriers between... Oh how rich the promise.

6:41 If Jesus was a carpenter, He may have thought up this idea one day whilst working, with His mind always on the things of God.

they gather grapes. ⁴⁵ The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good, and the evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ⁴⁶ And why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do the things which I say? ⁴⁷ Everyone that comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you to whom he is like. ⁴⁸ He is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when the flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it; because it had been founded upon a rock. ⁴⁹ But he that hears and does not do is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation, against which the stream broke- and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 16 Sep. 15

A Centurion’s Servant Cured

After he had ended all his sayings in the ears of the people, he entered into Capernaum. ² And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear to him, was sick and at the point of death. ³ And when he heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, pleading with him to come and

heal his servant. ⁴ And they, when they came to Jesus, pleaded earnestly, saying: He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation and he built our synagogue. ⁶ And Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying to him: Lord, trouble not yourself. For I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; ⁷ therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to you. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers; and I say to one: Go! And he goes. And to another: Come! And he comes. And to my servant: Do this. And he does it. ⁹ And when Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that followed him: I say to you, I have not found so great a faith, not even in Israel. ¹⁰ And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant healed.

Jesus Raises a Dead Man

¹¹ And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² Now when he came near to the gate of the city, there was carried out one that was dead, the only son of his mother, and

6:45 We may think that we’re clever enough to think evil of a person but say nice things to their face. The culture of nicespeak is no more than hypocrisy, and God will judge it. Our thoughts *will* eventually be reflected in our words. We must change our hearts and not our outward appearances.

7:6 *I am not worthy* – But the people said openly that he was “worthy” (v. 4). Even if others think and speak well of us, let us not think that we are worthy of Jesus; but always maintain our sense of sinfulness and humility before Him.

she was a widow; and many people of the city were with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her: Weep not. ¹⁴ And he came near and touched the coffin; and the bearers stood still. And he said: Young man, I say to you, arise. ¹⁵ And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ And fear took hold of all, and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet has arisen among us, and God has visited His people! ¹⁷ And this report about him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

Jesus Gives His Opinion About John

¹⁸ And the disciples of John told him of all these things. ¹⁹ And John calling to himself two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, asking: Are you he that comes, or look we for another? ²⁰ And when the men came to him, they said: John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask: Are you he that comes, or do we look for another? ²¹ In that hour he cured many of diseases and illnesses and evil spirits, and on many that were

blind he bestowed sight. ²² And he answered and said to them: Go and tell John the things which you have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them. ²³ And blessed is he, whoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me. ²⁴ And when the messengers of John had departed, he began to say to the crowds concerning John: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? ²⁵ But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft clothing? Look, they that are gorgeously apparelled and live delicately, are in kings' courts. ²⁶ But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a prophet. ²⁷ This is he of whom it is written: Look, I send My messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way before you. ²⁸ I say to you, among those that are born of women- there is none greater than John. Yet he that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he. ²⁹ When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they ac-

7:14 To touch coffins or dead bodies made a person unclean under Jewish law; but Jesus touched lepers and now touched the coffin to show His identification with the unclean. Those who realize they too are unclean will be comforted by this.

7:19 This could imply a collapse of faith in John. He doubted whether his cousin Jesus really was Messiah as he had earlier taught; because Jesus wasn't acting as he had expected Messiah to act. God and Jesus are not to be defined by our expectations of them; but we are to accept them for who they present themselves to be in reality. Hence Jesus sent a message back to John warning him that blessed is that man who doesn't stumble over Jesus (v. 23). The Bible records the failings of great men of faith. There are no white faced saints. Although John was weak at this point, Jesus goes on to speak very positively of him in v. 28. We should also be positive about each other despite being aware of each others' weaknesses.

knowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized by him. ³¹ And the Lord said: Unto whom shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? ³² They are like children that sit in the marketplace and call to each other, who say: We piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep. ³³ For John the Baptist came eating no bread nor drinking wine, and you say: He has a demon. ³⁴ The Son of Man comes eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners! ³⁵ But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Jesus at the Home of Simon

³⁶ And one of the Pharisees requested him to eat with him. And he entered into the Pharisee's house and sat down to the meal. ³⁷ And a woman who was in the city, a sinner, when she knew that he was dining in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and

standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee that had invited him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying: This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is that touches him, that she is a sinner. ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him: Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said: Teacher, speak. ⁴¹ A certain lender had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty. ⁴² When they had nothing with which to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? ⁴³ Simon answered and said: He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And he said to him: You have rightly judged. ⁴⁴ And turning to the woman, he said to Simon: Saw you this woman? I entered into your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wetted my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss

7:30 if we refuse to be baptized, this is what we are doing.

7:32 The children invited other children to play sad funerals, and they refused; so they asked them to play happy weddings, and they still refused. God appealed to all kinds of people through the different style of Jesus and John; but the Jews refused to really respond.

7:35 *All her children* – Both the converts of Jesus and of John.

7:43 The point is that we are all sinners and so the amount we owe is really the degree to which we perceive our sinfulness. The more we realize our sins, the more we will love Jesus for forgiving us.

7:44 Jesus therefore spoke with His back to Simon. He was being intentionally rude to His host to emphasize the degree to which He accepted and respected that repentant woman.

my feet. ⁴⁶ My head with oil you did not anoint, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, that her sins, which are many, are forgiven (for she loved much). But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. ⁴⁸ And he said to her: Your sins are forgiven. ⁴⁹ And they that sat at food with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that even forgives sins? ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman: Your faith has saved you. Go into peace.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 17 Sep.16

The Parable of the Sower

And it came to pass soon afterwards, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God; and accompanying with him were the twelve, ² and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, ³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them out of their means. ⁴ And when a great crowd came together, and they of every city had come to him, he

spoke by a parable: ⁵ The sower went to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶ And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷ And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. ⁸ And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried: He that has ears to hear, let him hear. ⁹ And his disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰ And he said: To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest the parables remain as parables; so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. ¹¹ Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. ¹² Those by the way side are they that have heard; then comes the Devil and takes away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³ And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; but these have no root, they for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ And that which fell among

7:48 She already knew this, without Jesus having told her, because she loved Him so much. And He observed that her love was because she had been forgiven so much. When we are forgiven, we're not always told so directly by Jesus; but we feel it, as she did.

8:3 Jesus attracted a group of poor men and wealthy women. He calls very different people into contact with Him and therefore each other, making the true church of Jesus an example of extraordinary unity; it's not composed of just one psychological type, one social class, colour, race or gender. It's a wonderful mixture. It's the very opposite of a social club, which attracts the same types together.

8:8 *He cried* – Jesus so desperately wanted – and wants – people to understand His teaching.

the thorns, these are those that have heard, but as they go on their way, they are choked with cares and riches and the pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ And that in the good ground are those with an honest and good heart, who having heard the word, hold it fast and bring forth fruit with patience. ¹⁶ Nobody, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed; but puts it on a stand, so that they that enter may see the light. ¹⁷ For nothing is hid, that shall not be revealed; nor anything secret, that shall not be known and come to light. ¹⁸ Take heed therefore how you hear. For whoever has, to him shall be given; and whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he thinks he has.

Jesus Calms the Storm

¹⁹ And there came to him his mother and relatives; and they could not come to him because of the crowd. ²⁰ And it was told him: Your mother and your relatives stand outside, desiring to see you. ²¹ But he answered and said to them: My mother and my relatives are these that hear the word of God and do it. ²² Now it came to pass on one of those days that he boarded a boat, he and his disciples, and he said to them: Let us go over to the other side of the lake. And

they cast off. ²³ But as they sailed, he fell asleep; and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filling with water; and were in danger for their lives. ²⁴ And they came to him and woke him, saying: Master, master, we perish! And he awoke, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. ²⁵ And he said to them: Where is your faith? And being afraid they marvelled, saying to each other: Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?

The Healing of Legion

²⁶ And they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when he had arrived upon the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had demons, and for a long time he had worn no clothes and abode not in any house, but in the tombs. ²⁸ And when he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said: What have I to do with you, Jesus, you Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me. ²⁹ For he was commanding the unclean spirit to come out from the man. For oftentimes it had seized him, and he was kept under guard and bound with chains and fetters; and breaking the chains

8:16 If we hide our spiritual light, it will go out. Witnessing to our faith is for our benefit as well as that of those who receive our preaching.

8:21 Do we perceive our spiritual family as even more significant for us than our natural family? This is very hard to do, as hard as it was for Jesus to speak as He did here.

8:28 If Jesus is Son of the Most High God, then He cannot be equal to God in a Trinitarian sense; for God is the *most* high.

apart, he was driven by the demon into the desert. ³⁰ And Jesus asked him: What is your name? And he said: Legion. For many demons had entered into him. ³¹ And they begged him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain, and they begged him that he would give them leave to enter into them. And he gave them permission. ³³ And the demons came out from the man, and entered into the swine, and the herd rushed down the hill into the lake and were drowned. ³⁴ And when the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and reported it in the nearby town and in the countryside. ³⁵ And they went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man, from whom the demons had left, sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus; and they were afraid. ³⁶ And they that saw it told them how he that was possessed with demons had been healed. ³⁷ And all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into a boat and returned. ³⁸ But the man from whom

the demons had left pleaded with him that he might be with him; but he sent him away, saying: ³⁹ Return to your family, and declare what great things God has done for you. And he went his way, publishing throughout the whole city how great were the things Jesus had done for him. ⁴⁰ And when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him. For they were all waiting for him.

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl

⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue; and he fell down at Jesus' feet and begged him to come into his house. ⁴² For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age; and she was dying. But as he went, the crowds crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman who had suffered from chronic bleeding for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood upon doctors and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴ came behind him and touched the border of his garment; and immediately her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said: Who is it that touched me? And when all denied, Peter and they that were with him said: Master, the crowds press upon you and crush you. ⁴⁶ But Jesus

8:32 Keeping pigs was illegal for Jews as pigs were unclean animals.

8:42 Often we have been rushing to do something very important, and then somebody or something else demands our attention. The phone rings as we are rushing out of the door; a child insists upon having our attention as we are in the middle of an important conversation. In those moments of frustration, remember Jesus here. How calm He was, never flustered; how caring for people, to the point that He never ultimately ignored anyone's genuine need.

8:45 Jesus knew who had touched Him. But He wanted the woman to come out openly in front of the crowd and declare her faith. Jesus works in our lives to ensure that we openly declare our faith before the world, even when we try not to.

said: Someone did touch me. For I perceived power going out from me. ⁴⁷ And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him, declared in the presence of all the people for what reason she touched him, and how she was healed immediately. ⁴⁸ And he said to her: Daughter, your faith has made you whole. Go in peace. ⁴⁹ While he yet spoke, there came one from the house of the ruler of the synagogue, saying: Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher. ⁵⁰ But Jesus hearing it, responded: Fear not. Only believe, and she shall be made whole. ⁵¹ And when he came to the house, he did not permit anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John and James, and the father and mother of the girl. ⁵² All were weeping and bewailing her, but he said: Weep not. For she is not dead but sleeps. ⁵³ And they laughed at him with scorn, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he, taking her by the hand, called, saying: Little girl, arise. ⁵⁵ And her spirit returned and she rose up immediately, and he commanded that something be given

her to eat. ⁵⁶ And her parents were amazed, but he ordered them to tell no one what had been done.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 18 Sep. 17

The Twelve are Sent Out to Preach

And he called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. ² And he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ And he said to them: Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money. Neither have two coats. ⁴ And into whatever house you enter, there stay and from there depart. ⁵ And as many as do not welcome you, when you depart from that city, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony against them. ⁶ And they departed and went throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. ⁷ Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done; and he was very worried, because of what was said by some, that John had risen from the dead; ⁸ and by some, that Elijah had appeared, and by others, that one of the old

8:50 Fear is the opposite of faith.

8:54 *Taking her by the hand* – Jesus knew the girl would be scared when she woke up alive, without any human touch. We see His total faith that the miracle would happen; and also His extreme sensitivity to people, how He thought ahead to how they were going to feel. Likewise with His command to get her something to eat. May His sensitive spirit be ours, always thinking ahead to how others will be feeling in response to events.

9:2 The frequent connection between preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and healing was because the healings were foretastes of how things would be when the Kingdom of God is established upon earth.

9:5 Jews were supposed to shake off the dust of Gentile areas from their feet. Jesus is saying that the Jews who didn't accept Him were no better than Gentiles. If we reject Christ, we will be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:28).

prophets had arisen. ⁹ And Herod said: John I beheaded, but who is this, about whom I hear such things? And he sought to see him.

Jesus Feeds 5000 Men

¹⁰ And the apostles, when they had returned, declared to him what things they had done. And he took them and withdrew to a city called Bethsaida. ¹¹ But the crowds knew it, and they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and those that had need of healing he cured. ¹² And the day began to wear away; and the twelve came and said to him: Send the crowd away, that they may go into the villages and countryside and lodge and get provisions. For we are here in a deserted place. ¹³ But he said to them: You give them something to eat. And they said: We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless we go and buy food for all these people. ¹⁴ For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples: Make them sit down in groups, about fifty in each. ¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶ And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them and broke them, and gave them to the disciples

to set before the crowd. ¹⁷ And they ate and were all filled, and there was taken up of the leftovers twelve baskets.

Jesus Talks Privately with the Disciples

¹⁸ And it came to pass, as he was praying alone, that his disciples joined him; and he asked them, saying: Who do the crowds say that I am? ¹⁹ And they answering said: John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and others, that one of the old prophets has risen. ²⁰ And he said to them: But who do you say that I am? And Peter answering said: The Christ of God. ²¹ And he ordered and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²² saying: The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and the third day be raised up. ²³ And he said to all: If anyone would follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life shall lose it, but whoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit his life? ²⁶ For whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed

9:12 Jesus preached in a “deserted place” so that the people had to make some effort to go to Him. We have to make some effort on our part to hear the word of God, even though salvation is of grace.

9:18 *Praying alone* – We must find time to pray alone, and not have a prayer life which is simply saying “Amen” to the prayers of others.

9:23 *Daily* – We should rise each day and remind ourselves that we are to pick up the cross of Jesus, accompanying Him on His ‘last walk’ to death. How we start each day is important.

9:24 How can we lose our lives for His sake today?

when he comes in his own glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I tell you a truth: There are some that stand here, who shall in no way taste death, until they see the kingdom of God.

The Transfiguration

²⁸ And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter, John and James and went up into the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered and his garment became white and dazzling. ³⁰ And talking with him were two men, who were Moses and Elijah, ³¹ who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. ³³ And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here! Let us

make three booths, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. Not knowing what he said. ³⁴ And while he said these things, there came a cloud that overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered into the cloud. ³⁵ And a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is My Son, My chosen. Hear him. ³⁶ And when the voice came, Jesus was found alone. And they kept quiet and told no one in those days any of the things which they had seen. ³⁷ And it came to pass, the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸ And a man from the crowd cried, saying: Teacher, I beg you to look upon my son; for he is my only child. ³⁹ And a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. ⁴⁰ And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not. ⁴¹ And Jesus answered and said: O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall

9:35 Hear Him – Alluding to the prediction of Dt. 18:15 that the faithful would hear the voice of the Messiah. This Old Testament prophecy is quoted about Jesus in Acts 3:22. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about Himself; He was “the word made flesh” (Jn. 1:14).

9:37 We also at times ‘come down from the mountain’ of intense spiritual experience to face the crowds of this world, lack of faith, human need and argument. We may have a wonderful Sunday service, but have to return into the world on Monday or Sunday evening. In those moments, remember Jesus went through the same. He understands.

9:39 Bruising him – The child bruised himself, as in v. 42 “dashed him”. The language of demon possession simply refers to mental illness, in this came epilepsy and self-harm.

9:41 How long? – This is a phrase often found on the lips of God’s people in the Bible. We long for the day when human weakness will be no more, when Jesus has returned and established His Kingdom on earth.

I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here. ⁴² And as he was coming, the demon dashed him down and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all astonished at the majesty of God. But while all were marvelling at all the things which he did, he said to his disciples: ⁴⁴ Let these words sink into your ears. For the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men. ⁴⁵ But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

Who is the Greatest?

⁴⁶ And there arose a dispute among them, which of them was the greatest. ⁴⁷ But when Jesus saw the reasoning of their heart, he took a little child and set him by his side, ⁴⁸ and said to them: Whoever shall receive this little child in my name receives me, and whoever shall receive me, receives Him that sent me. For he that is least among you all, the same is great. ⁴⁹ And John answered and said: Master, we saw one casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he follows not with us. ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him: Forbid not. For he that is not against you is for you.

The Challenge of the Cross

⁵¹ Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵² and sent messengers before his face; and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. ⁵³ But they did not receive him, because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said: Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did? ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them, saying: You know what kind of Spirit you have. ⁵⁶ And they went to another village. ⁵⁷ And as they were going along the road, someone said to him: I will follow you wherever you go. ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him: The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. ⁵⁹ And he said to another: Follow me. But he said: Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. ⁶⁰ But he said to him: Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but you go and publish the kingdom of God. ⁶¹ And another also said: I will follow you Lord, but first permit me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. ⁶² But Jesus said to him: No one, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

9:51 In Luke, Jesus is described as always ‘going up to Jerusalem’ even when He was going geographically away from it. We too may take two steps backwards at times, but our overall direction is ultimately towards God’s Kingdom.

9:60 At times, Jesus is very demanding. To bury your father was seen as a Jew’s greatest domestic obligation. But Jesus and His work must come first.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 19 Sep. 18***The Sending of the 70***

Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of him into every city and place, where he was about to go. ² And he said to them: The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He send out labourers into His harvest. ³ Go your way. See, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and greet no one on the way. ⁵ And into whatever house you shall enter, first say: Peace to this house. ⁶ And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it, but if not, it shall return to you. ⁷ And in that same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give. For the labourer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ And into whatever city you enter, if they welcome you, eat such things as are set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick that are therein, and say to

them: The kingdom of God comes near to you. ¹⁰ But into whatever city you shall enter and they do not welcome you, go out into the streets of it and say: ¹¹ Even the dust from your city, that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God comes near. ¹² I say to you, it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. ¹³ Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which were done in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, shall you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades. ¹⁶ He that hears you hears me; and he that rejects you rejects me, and he that rejects me rejects Him that sent me. ¹⁷ And the seventy returned with joy, saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name! ¹⁸ And he said to

10:2 The harvest of people for God's Kingdom will not be reaped if there aren't enough workers or we work poorly. The salvation of others has therefore been delegated to us, to some extent. Let's go and reap the harvest and pray that others will assist the work.

10:3 Jesus was "the lamb of God"; in our preaching Him, we are Him to this world. And so in the context of their preaching work in the world, Jesus called His followers "lambs". The principle is stated in v. 16 – whoever hears us hears Jesus personally.

10:4 *Greet no one* – Greetings in the East took a long time. Jesus didn't intend them to be rude, but to be urgent about their mission, and dispense with niceties to fulfill it. Do we have that intensity and urgency about our preaching the Gospel?

10:13 *They would have repented* – God knows all possible futures and possible pasts, and His Son had some of this ability. This knowledge of 'what could have been' must give God such huge sadness; for the reason why we weep is because of our sense of 'what could have been'. It must be so hard being God.

10:18 Jesus has just used the figure of falling from Heaven to earth in v. 15. It means

them: I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ See, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall in any way hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. ²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in spirit, and said: I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father. For so it was pleasing in Your sight. ²² All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son wills to reveal Him. ²³ And turning to the disciples, he said privately: Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see. ²⁴ For I say to you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ And a certain lawyer stood up, and to test him, asked: Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

²⁶ And he said to him: What is written in the law? How do you read it? ²⁷ And he answered saying: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself. ²⁸ And he said to him: You have answered correctly. This do and you shall live. ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour? ³⁰ Jesus answered and said: A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he encountered robbers who both stripped him and beat him, and departed leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a certain priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine, and he put him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the host, and said: Take care of him, and if you spend

to lose power, and shouldn't be read literally. The power of the adversary ['Satan' is a Hebrew word meaning 'adversary'] had been taken away.

10:20 Our names are written in God's book of life, but they can be removed from it if we fall away (Rev. 3:5).

10:35 *Two denarii* – The wage for one day's work was one denarius (Mt. 20:2). Maybe the implication was that the Samaritan would "come again" after two days. If a day with God is as a thousand years, it could be that Jesus, the Samaritan, will return after 2000 years from when He first bound up wounded humanity and put us in the "inn" of the church.

more, I, when I come back again, will repay you. ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved a neighbour to him that encountered the robbers? ³⁷ And he said: The one who showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him: Go and do likewise. ³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and heard his word. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said: Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me. ⁴¹ But the Lord answered and said to her: Martha, Martha, you are anxious and disturbed about many things. ⁴² But one thing is needful. For Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 20 Sep. 19

Teaching about Prayer

And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples. ² And he said to them: When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. ³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins. For we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation. ⁵ And he said to them: Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight and say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived from a journey and I have nothing to set before him. ⁷ And he from within shall answer and say: Do not trouble me! The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed, I cannot rise

10:37 *Do likewise* – The Samaritan was symbolic of Jesus and His saving work for sinners, which the representatives of the Jewish law did not do. But He asks us to not only benefit from His work, but go out into the world and do the same, taking risks and sacrificing our own safety to do so. The Jews claimed Jesus was a Samaritan – a mixed race of people whom ‘pure’ Jews despised (Jn. 8:48).

10:42 Here for all time we are encouraged to give more importance to hearing Christ's word than to domestic duties.

11:2 When God declared His Name to Moses in Ex. 34:4-8, He gave Moses a list of His characteristics – grace, justice, judgment, mercy, forgiveness etc. Our first request of God should be that those characteristics – His Name, what He stands for – be revealed and glorified in our lives by whatever situations we are in, and our reactions to them. If this is our first desire, then all else will fall into place ultimately. The next request is for God's Kingdom to come – for Jesus to return to earth and establish God's Kingdom here. We tend to make prayer a list of specific requests, but Jesus teaches us to be less specific initially, and focus always upon those essential principles and have them as our greatest desires.

11:4 It is good for us to tell God in prayer that we forgive our enemies. But this makes this simple prayer hard to pray truthfully. For we must forgive others if we hope for forgiveness ourselves.

and give anything to you? ⁸ I say to you, though he will not want to rise and give anything to him, yet because he is his friend, and because of the man's persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. ⁹ And I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a snake? ¹² Or if he shall ask for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

The Controversy About Beelzebub

¹⁴ And he was casting out a demon that was dumb. And it came to pass, when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke and the crowds marvelled. ¹⁵ But some of them said:

By Beelzebub the prince of the demons he casts out demons. ¹⁶ And others, testing him, sought from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a family divided against a family falls apart. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ And even if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁰ But if I by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. ²² But when one stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him his whole armour in which he had trusted, and divides his spoils. ²³ He that is not with me is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters. ²⁴ When the unclean spirit has gone out of a

11:9 The 'asking' is for the reasons given in the parable – the man asks for things in order to give them to someone else in need (v. 6). If we ask for things in order to assist others, then God's promise will hold true. But it's not a promise that whatever we ask for ourselves will be given to us.

11:10 We knock on God's door, but He through Jesus knocks on our door (Rev. 3:20). There is a mutuality between God and us. We knock on His door, He knocks on ours.

11:13 *Give the Holy Spirit* – The parallel Mt. 7:11 says that God will give "good things" to those who ask Him. Being given the special power of God ("Holy Spirit") doesn't mean that we will be able to speak in tongues / languages, do miracles etc. – those gifts have been withdrawn (1 Cor. 13:8-10). But this doesn't mean that He doesn't amazingly answer prayer, and those answers are in a way a gift of Holy Spirit.

11:23 *Scatters* – Sins of omission are understood by Jesus as active opposition to Him. How we live life is crucially important; our inaction is seen as actively working against the Lord's work.

person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says: I will return to my house from which I came.²⁵ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.²⁶ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.²⁷ And it came to pass, as he said these things, that a certain woman out of the crowd lifted up her voice and said to him: Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which you did suck.²⁸ But he said: Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Jesus Criticizes the Jews

²⁹ And when the crowds were gathering together to him, he began to say: This generation is an evil generation. It seeks after a sign, but there shall no sign be given to it, except the sign of Jonah.³⁰ For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation.³¹ The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and shall condemn them. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a

greater than Solomon is here.³² The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.³³ No one when he has lit a lamp puts it in a cellar, neither under a bucket, but on the lightstand, so that they who enter in may see the light.³⁴ The lamp of your body is your eye. When your eye is single, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is evil, your body also is full of darkness.³⁵ Look therefore whether the light that is in you is not darkness.³⁶ If therefore your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining gives you light.³⁷ Now as he spoke, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, and he went in and sat down to eat.³⁸ And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner.³⁹ And the Lord said to him: Now you the Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and plate, but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness.⁴⁰ You foolish ones, did not He that made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give for alms those things which are within, and behold, all things are clean to you.

11:28 Mary, mother of Jesus, did hear God's word and kept it in her heart (Lk. 2:19). This was the side of Mary that Jesus wanted people to honour, rather than her physically having been His mother.

11:32 At the day of judgment, we will be judged in full view of others. The Ninevites will watch the judgment process of the first century Jews. We therefore shouldn't be hypocritical in front of others now, because in the end they will see us revealed at judgment day for who we really are.

11:34 Our perceptions, our filtering process which we apply to life, are so important.

⁴² But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint, rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God; but these you should have done and not to leave the other undone. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it. ⁴⁵ And one of the lawyers answering said to him: Teacher, in saying this you reproach us also. ⁴⁶ And he said: Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and consent to the works of your fathers; for they killed them and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said: I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute, ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation: ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanc-

tuary. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation. ⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you took away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those that were entering in, you hindered. ⁵³ And when he got out from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press upon him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 21 Sep. 20

Jesus Repeats the Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount

In the mean time, when the many thousands of the crowd were gathered together, so much so that they trod one upon another, he began to say to his disciples first of all: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² But there is nothing covered up that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. ³ Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. ⁴ And I say to you my friends, do not be afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can

11:52 We can hinder or stumble people from entering the Kingdom. This is perhaps the greatest sin. We therefore need to be so careful how we treat people, so that we do nothing which may lead them to turn away from the hope of the Kingdom because of our actions, exclusion of them or hypocrisy.

12:1 Hypocrisy is like leaven (yeast). Once one person starts being hypocritical, others tend to be; it spreads easily and has a huge effect, just as leaven does on bread. Jesus taught “first of all”, most importantly, to beware of hypocrisy. We need to ask ourselves daily whether we are being hypocritical; because it’s *so* important not to be. All will be revealed anyway (:2,3) – at the day of judgment.

do. ⁵ But I will warn you about whom you shall fear. Fear Him, who after He has killed has power to cast you into Gehenna. Yes, I say to you, fear Him! ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two very small coins? And not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. ⁷ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not! You are of more value than many sparrows. ⁸ And I say to you, every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God. ⁹ But he that denies me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but to him that blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven. ¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour what you should say. ¹³ And one out of the crowd said to him: Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. ¹⁴ But he said to him: Man! Who made me a judge or a divider over you? ¹⁵ And he said to them: Take heed and keep yourselves from

all covetousness. For a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. ¹⁶ And he spoke a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. ¹⁷ And he reasoned within himself, saying: What shall I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops? ¹⁸ And he said: This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater ones, and there will I store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry. ²⁰ But God said to him: You foolish one, this night is your soul required from you, and the things which you have prepared, whose shall they be? ²¹ So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. ²² And he said to his disciples: Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for life, what you shall eat. Nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. ²³ For the life is more than the food, and the body more than the clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, how they do not sow nor reap. They have no store nor barn, but God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to the measure

12:7 God sees and knows absolutely everything – even within the animal creation. Let's live with that awareness, that He is so intensely watching. Knowing this shouldn't frighten us but rather encourage us – "fear not!".

12:19 The 'soul' here refers to the self; Jesus piercingly analyzes the self-talk of materialistic people. It's our self-talk that we need to watch; what are the conversations that we carry on with ourselves as we walk, travel, prepare food... ? The words "I", "my" and "soul" occur often in this story – circle them in your Bible. The man was totally self-centred.

of his life? ²⁶ If then you are not able to do even that which is least, why are you anxious concerning the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin. Yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God does so clothe the grass in the field, which today is and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O you of little faith? ²⁹ And do not seek what you shall eat and what you shall drink, neither be of doubtful mind. ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, but your Father knows you have need of these things. ³¹ Seek His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. ³² Fear not little flock. For it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell that which you have and give alms. Make for

yourself purses which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief draws near nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Readiness for Christ's Return

³⁵ Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants, whom the master when he comes shall find awake. Truly I say to you, that he shall dress himself for service and make them sit down to eat, and shall come and serve them. ³⁸ And if he shall come in the second watch and if in the third and find them waiting, so blessed

12:30 God knows our basic need for food and clothing and will provide, as He did for Israel after their 'baptism' in the Red Sea and journey through the wilderness. Their shoes didn't get worn out, and He gave them bread and water daily. David says he never saw the children of the righteous begging bread (Ps. 37:25). We must really believe this promise.

12:33 Jesus was speaking to poor people when He said this. The poor can easily assume that all Christ's teaching about wealth and generosity are for the attention of rich Christians only. But this is not the case. The poor, too, are asked to be radically generous.

12:35 An allusion to the night of Israel's Passover exodus from Egypt. We are to have that same intensity, aware that Jesus could return at any moment.

12:36 How immediately we respond to the knowledge that Christ has returned will affect our eternal future, as in Mt. 25:10. If we are longing for His return and have a light hold on our material life, we will be ready to go immediately with joy and no regrets. The more we possess, the harder this will be.

12:37 Another unreal element in the parables – the Master would never come and serve His servants. But Jesus will do so – because He will be *so* pleased that they were watching and eager for His return. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, when Jesus again will eat and drink with us (Mt. 26:29), He will come and serve us. His loving servanthood is a characteristic that He has even now; it wasn't just how He was when on earth. He will always be the same as He was then (Heb. 13:8).

are they. ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake, and not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also- be ready. For in the hour you do not expect- the Son of Man comes. ⁴¹ And Peter said: Lord, are you telling this parable aimed at us, or to everyone? ⁴² And the Lord said: Who then is the faithful and wise steward whom his master shall set over his household to give them their portion of food in due season? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant, whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing. ⁴⁴ Of a truth I say to you, that he will set him over all that he has. ⁴⁵ But if that servant shall say in his heart: My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and to be drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant shall come in a day when he does not expect, and at an hour he does not know, and shall cut him into pieces and put him with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that servant, who knew his master's will and did not prepare or did not do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. ⁴⁸ But he that did not know and did things worthy of stripes, he shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whom much is given, of him shall much be required, and to whom peo-

ple commit much, of him will they ask the more. ⁴⁹ I came to cast fire upon the earth, yet it is already kindled! ⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and great is my distress until it be accomplished! ⁵¹ Do you think that I came to give peace in the earth? I tell you no, but rather division. ⁵² For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three. ⁵³ They shall be divided, father against son and son against father. Mother against daughter and daughter against her mother. Mother in law against her daughter in law and daughter in law against her mother in law. ⁵⁴ And he said to the crowds: Also, When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, Here comes a shower- and so it comes to pass. ⁵⁵ And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, There will be a scorching heat- and it comes to pass. ⁵⁶ You hypocrites, you know how to interpret the signs of the earth and the sky, but how is it you do not know how to interpret this time? ⁵⁷ And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ For as you are going with your adversary before the magistrate, on the way give diligence to be rid of him. Lest he drag you to the judge and the judge shall deliver you to the officer, and the officer shall throw you

12:49 The judgment of God is likened to fire; but that fire is kindled, the match is set to it, by human beings. God's judgment is only confirming sinful people in what they themselves have chosen.

12:51 Jesus 'came' to send judgment (v. 49); and He came to send division within families. Such division is therefore His judgment upon them; but they will have kindled that fire themselves by their own rejection of His message of peace.

into prison. ⁵⁹ I say to you, you shall never get out, until you have paid the very last coin.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 22 Sep. 21

The Problem of Suffering

Now there were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered and said to them: Do you think that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they have suffered these things? ³ I tell you no, but unless you repent, you shall all in like manner perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you no, but unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. ⁶ And he spoke this parable: A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit thereon and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser: Behold, these three years I came seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground? ⁸ And

he answering said to him: Master, leave it alone this year also, I shall dig about it and fertilize it. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you shall cut it down. ¹⁰ And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath day. ¹¹ And a woman was there who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years; she was bent over and could in no way straighten herself. ¹² And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her: Woman, you are free from your infirmity. ¹³ And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, answered and said to the crowd: There are six days in which men ought to work. In them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. ¹⁵ But the Lord answered them and said: You hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath release his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away for watering? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound for

13:3 Sin and suffering aren't necessarily related in this life. The book of Job is all about this. Indeed, the wicked prosper. But sin will have its recompense – which creates the necessity for the coming of the day of judgment when Jesus returns.

13:7 The “man” who owned the vineyard [Israel] is God; the “vinedresser” is Jesus. The three years are the three years of Christ's ministry. Jesus knew God so well that He asked Him to delay His plan to destroy Israel, to give them yet more opportunity to give spiritual fruit (v. 8). Moses and other Bible characters showed us that we can reason with God, and in some cases He is prepared to change His stated intentions. Prayer is *so* powerful! Earlier, Israel were the vine and the Lord Jesus the vinedresser. But now *we* are the vine, and God Himself the vinedresser (Jn. 15:1). We are in good hands; and the Father and Son who through Biblical history showed themselves so sensitive to spiritual fruit are the very same ones who will meet us in the last day.

eighteen years, to have been freed from this bond on the Sabbath day? ¹⁷ And as he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the crowd rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

The Last Judgment

¹⁸ He replied: To what is the kingdom of God like? And unto what shall I liken it? ¹⁹ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the sky lodged in the branches of it. ²⁰ And again he said: Unto what shall I liken the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like the yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all raised. ²² And he went on his way through cities and villages, teaching and journeying on to Jerusalem. ²³ And one said to him: Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said to them: ²⁴ Strive

to enter in by the narrow door. For I say to you, many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. ²⁵ When the master of the house is risen and has shut the door, and you begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying: Lord, open to us!- he shall answer and say to you: I do not know who you are. ²⁶ Then shall you begin to say: We did eat and drink in your presence, and you did teach in our streets. ²⁷ And he shall say: I tell you, I do not know from where you are. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity. ²⁸ There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast out. ²⁹ And they shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.

13:21 The Gospel is like leaven [yeast]. It can influence a huge amount of flour. The Gospel we preach has more power and potential to radically change people than we realize.

13:23 We all tend to wonder about such questions of Divine ‘fairness’. Jesus gives no answer but says that we should focus instead upon our own salvation (v. 24) – rather than dabble in questions which are God’s concern and beyond our comprehension.

13:25 The ideas of standing at the door and knocking are all found in Rev. 3:20, where Jesus says that He does this to us. If we’ve not opened to Him, not responded to His promptings in this life, then He will not open the door to eternity to us when He comes again.

13:26 *Eat and drink in your presence* – A reference to the fact they had participated in the communion service? There will be some who break bread who will not be saved ultimately. We must ask “Lord, is it I?”

13:28 *You shall see... yourselves* – The purpose of the judgment process will be for our benefit, to help people see themselves from outside of themselves, to see themselves as they really are. It’s not in order for God to gather information and make a verdict; He knows all things. In this sense, “judgment” is a metaphor not to be pushed too far.

Sorrow for Jerusalem

³¹ In that very hour certain Pharisees came warning him: Get out and leave here. For Herod wants to kill you. ³² And he said to them: Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow; and on the third day I shall reach my goal. ³³ Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following. For it cannot be possible that a prophet can die anywhere except Jerusalem. ³⁴ O Jerusalem! Jerusalem that kills the prophets and stones them that are sent to her! How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her own brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you shall not see me, until you shall say: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 22 Sep. 21

And it came to pass, when he went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees on a Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching him. ² And before him was a certain man that had the dropsy. ³ And Jesus answering spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not? ⁴ But

they held their peace. And he took him and healed him, and let him go. ⁵ And he said to them: Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately draw him up on a Sabbath day? ⁶ And they could not answer these things.

Teaching About Humility

⁷ And when he noted how they chose out the chief seats, he told a parable to those that were invited, saying to them: ⁸ When you are invited by anyone to a marriage feast, do not sit in the chief seat; lest a more honourable man than you be invited by him, ⁹ and he that invited you shall come and say to you: Give this man your place. Then you shall be shamed into taking the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that has invited you comes, he may say to you: Friend, go up higher. Then shall you have glory in the presence of all that sit to eat with you. ¹¹ For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. ¹² And he also said to him that had invited him: When you make a dinner or a supper, call not your friends, nor your brothers and sisters, nor your kinsmen, nor rich neighbours, unless they also invite you and repay you. ¹³ But when

14:10 We are to take the lowest place in the ecclesia / church. Jesus is the one who invited us (v. 9), and He will “come” and inspect us at His return. And He will rearrange the order at which we sit at table. Our breaking of bread services are foretastes of our eating with Jesus at His return. We should take the lowest place in those meetings, at least in our hearts; aware of our own failings, and seeing our brothers and sisters positively and with grace.

14:13 The poor, maimed, lame and blind are the very ones whom God invites to His

you make a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you shall be blessed; because they do not have anything to repay you with. For you shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

The Parable of the Great Supper

¹⁵ And when one of his dinner guests heard these things, he said to him: Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! ¹⁶ But he said to him: A certain man made a great supper and he invited many. ¹⁷ And he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were invited: Come. For everything is now ready. ¹⁸ And they all began to make similar excuses. The first said to him: I have bought a field and I need to go out and see it; I pray you excuse me. ¹⁹ And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to test them. I pray you, have me excused. ²⁰ And another said: I have married a wife, and therefore, I

cannot come. ²¹ And the servant came and told his master 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 here the poor and maimed and blind and lame. ²² And the servant said: Master, what you did command is done, and still there is room. ²³ And the master said to the servant: Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I say to you, that none of those men that were invited shall taste my supper.

Radical Demands

²⁵ Now there went with him great crowds; and he turned and said to them: ²⁶ If anyone comes to me, and hates not his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and

supper (v. 21). The connection is clear enough – we are to act to others as God does to people; and He has a way of inviting the most desperate people into fellowship with Him. Snobbery should have no part in Christian life. *We* are the spiritually poor and handicapped street people whom God has invited into His Kingdom in these last days. That's what v. 21 teaches. And so we ought to invite such people into our homes – with all the problems that can bring. There should be no sense of social superiority at all in the true church. This is utterly abhorrent to God.

14:18 The man begs Jesus to 'excuse' him. The New Testament is written in Greek, and we read through the mask of translation. The same Greek word translated 'excuse' here is also translated 'reject' elsewhere. Those who are rejected at the last day will have begged Jesus to reject them by their behavior in this life. He will only confirm them in their choices. If more than anything else we want to be in God's Kingdom; then we will.

14:23 The implication could be that as the last days progress and the return of Christ becomes imminent, the standard of those accepted will decrease; only the absolutely desperate [in whatever way – not just materially] will be responding to the Gospel. We who have responded in what appear to be the last days are therefore a desperate lot indeed.

come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have enough to complete it? ²⁹ Unless, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish it, all that watch begin to mock him, saying: ³⁰ This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹ Or what king, as he goes to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel, whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an ambassador and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So therefore whoever of you does not renounce all that he has, cannot be my disciple. ³⁴ Salt therefore is good, but if the salt has lost its taste, with what shall it be seasoned? ³⁵ It is useful neither for the soil nor for the manure heap, it is thrown away. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

CHAPTER 15 Mar. 23 Sep. 22

The Lost Sheep

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to him

to hear him teach. ² And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying: This man receives sinners and eats with them. ³ And he spoke to them this parable, saying: ⁴ What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, does not leave the other ninety nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them: Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! ⁷ I say to you, that even so there shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, than over ninety nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

The Lost Coin

⁸ Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, does not light a lamp and sweeps the house and seeks diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. ¹⁰ Even so, I say to you, there is

14:31 The King who comes against us with far more strength is God; coming in judgment of our sins. Sin is serious, and isn't just ignored by God with a grin. It is a felt offence against Him, that provokes His wrath. We make peace with Him, we are reconciled, through the work and sacrifice of Jesus.

15:4 The answer is: No shepherd does this, nor does he throw a party for the sake of that sheep (v. 6). The point of unreality in these parables would've been immediately noticed by the first century hearers. The point of unreality is what teaches the lesson – in this case, that God is exceptionally concerned about the lost. As we should be too.

15:8 Her dowry was all that a woman possessed; even her body wasn't hers. To lose a dowry coin was therefore to lose part of herself; this is how hard God takes when He loses one of His people. She searched "until she finds it" – God, and we too, should search for the lost with the attitude that we will search until we find them. We certainly

joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

The Lost Sons

¹¹ And he said: A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the inheritance of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered into money all he had, and took a journey into a far country; and there he squandered his inheritance in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his belly with the husks that the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses he said: How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will rise and go to my father, and will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. ¹⁹ I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. ²⁰ And he rose and went to

his father. But while he was yet far away, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and embraced and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no more worthy to be called your son. ²² But the father said to his servants: Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf, kill it and let us eat and make merry. ²⁴ For this my son who was dead, is alive again! He was lost and is found! And they began to be merry. ²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and inquired what these things might mean. ²⁷ And he said to him: Your brother came, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound. ²⁸ But he was angry and would not go in; and his father came out and encouraged him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father: Look! For so many years I have served you, and I never transgressed a commandment of yours, and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But when this your son came, who

should not exclude any of God's people from His house; we should search passionately for any who leave.

15:12 This request was equivalent to saying 'I wish you were dead'.

15:20 For an old man to run publically was seen as undignified. This unreal feature of the story shows just how much he was delighted his son was returning; it speaks of the radical joy of God when we return to Him. When a prodigal returned to a village, they would've been badly mocked by everyone who knew them. The father therefore ran to the son to shield him from the name calling and stone throwing of children. We should seek to shield from shame those who 'come back'.

has devoured your living with prostitutes, you killed for him the fattened calf. ³¹ And he said to him: Son, you are ever with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But it was fitting to celebrate and be glad. For this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.

CHAPTER 16 Mar. 24 Sep. 23

The Parable of the Clever Steward

And he said also to the disciples: There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused of wasting his goods. ² And he called him and said to him: What is this that I hear of you? Render the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward. ³ And the steward said to himself: What shall I do, seeing that my master takes away the stewardship from me? I do not have strength to dig. To beg I am ashamed. ⁴ I have resolved what to do, so that when I am discharged as steward, others may receive me into their houses. ⁵ And calling to him each one of his master's debtors, he said to the first: How much do you owe my master? ⁶ And he said: A hundred measures of oil. And he said to him: Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty. ⁷ Then said

he to another: And how much do you owe? And he said: A hundred measures of wheat. He said to him: Take your bill and write eighty. ⁸ And his master commended the unrighteous steward, because he had done wisely. For the sons of this world are for their own generation wiser than the sons of the light. ⁹ And I say to you: Make to yourselves friends by means of worldly riches; that, when they shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. ¹⁰ He that is faithful in a very little, is faithful also in much, and he that is unrighteous in a very little, is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ If therefore you have not been faithful in the handling of worldly riches, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful in what is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³ No servant can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or else, he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. ¹⁴ And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. ¹⁵ And he said to them: You are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts.

15:32 The vital point of Jesus' parables is often at the end. This story isn't so much about a sinner coming home, but about self-righteous people within the house of God who say "If *he's* coming back, I'm out of here".

16:10 All that we have been given by God, spiritually and materially, is "a very little". Only a small portion of God is known by us (Job 26:14). So because we may correctly understand the Bible on some points, let's not think that we have 100% truth about God or 'know it all'.

16:11 How we handle wealth [whether we have to manage much or little of it] is proportionate to how we will eternally be in God's Kingdom.

For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. ¹⁶ The law and the prophets were until John. From that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man enters violently into it. ¹⁷ But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall. ¹⁸ Everyone that puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he that marries one that is put away from a husband commits adultery.

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹ Now there was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, dining sumptuously every day. ²⁰ And a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² And it came to pass, that the beggar died; and he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's breast, and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his breast. ²⁴ 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 in anguish in this flame. ²⁵ But Abraham said: Son, remember how you in your lifetime received your good things and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now here he is comforted, and you are in anguish. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you there is fixed a great gulf, so that they that would pass from here to you cannot, and none may cross over from there to us. ²⁷ And he said: Therefore I beg you father that you would send him to my father's house. ²⁸ For I have five brothers. That he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ²⁹ But Abraham said: They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. ³⁰ And he said: No father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent. ³¹ And he said to him: If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, even if one rises from the dead.

CHAPTER 17 Mar. 25 Sep. 24

Jesus Teaches About Faith and Forgiveness

And he said to his disciples: Stumbling blocks are sure to come,

16:19 This is a parable, and isn't to be taken literally.

16:23 This is a parody of Jewish beliefs. But those beliefs are in themselves wrong; the righteous don't go to live in Abraham's bosom; death is unconsciousness; the punishment for sin is death when Jesus returns, not torment in fire. Jesus used the wrong beliefs of the Jews against themselves. He spoke to people in their own terms.

16:31 The parables of Jesus often make their key point at the end; and it's the same here. The point of the story is to show that even when Jesus rose from the dead, most of the Jews still wouldn't believe. And that the witness of the written word in the Old Testament was and is as powerful as 'seeing a miracle' of a dead man coming to life.

but woe to the one through whom they come! ² It would be better for him if a millstone was hung about his neck and he was thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble. ³ Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in the day and seven times turns again to you, saying: I repent: You shall forgive him. ⁵ And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith. ⁶ And the Lord said: If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this sycamore tree: Be rooted up and be planted in the sea- and it would obey you. ⁷ But who is there of you, having a servant ploughing or keeping sheep, that will say to him when he comes in from the field: Come immediately and sit down to eat. ⁸ Instead will he not say to him: Make ready my supper and

dress yourself and serve me, and after I have eaten and drunk, then you shall eat and drink? ⁹ Does he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? I think not. ¹⁰ Even so you also, when you shall have done all the things that are commanded of you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.

Jesus Heals Ten Lepers

¹¹ And it came to pass, as they were on their way to Jerusalem, that he was passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers, who stood far away. ¹³ And they lifted up their voices, saying: Jesus, master, have mercy on us! ¹⁴ And when he saw them, he said to them: Go and show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they

17:2 Causing others to stumble is the very worst kind of sin. We should therefore think carefully how our words and actions are going to impact others; and be careful that we set the right example to others. The punishment of a millstone being hung around the neck and cast into the sea is that of Babylon's punishment at the last day (Rev. 18:21). Those within the church who make others stumble, e.g. by unreasonable demands upon them or excluding them, are no better than Babylon, the great enemy of God. How we treat others is very, very important.

17:4 If someone sins so many times each day and claims to have repented, it's obvious their repentance isn't sincere. So Jesus is teaching that we should forgive people without trying to assess if their repentance is sincere, or even if it is apparent that their repentance is insincere. The radical grace of God to us requires that we should simply forgive others without demanding their repentance.

17:10 *Unprofitable servants* – The same phrase is used in Mt. 25:30 about those who will be condemned at the final judgment when Jesus returns. After we have, as we think, done everything we should – we must still recognize that we deserve only condemnation. When doing good deeds, it's necessary to remember that we are sinners; we have already sinned, we still sin, and probably will sin again before Jesus returns. This will mean that we do our good works with a humble spirit; if they are done with a spiritually arrogant attitude, this is a huge turn off to the world and ruins our witness.

were cleansed. ¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, glorifying God in a loud voice. ¹⁶ And he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks— though he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ And Jesus responded: Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? ¹⁹ And he said to him: Arise and go your way. Your faith has made you whole.

The Coming of Messiah

²⁰ And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God comes, he answered them and said: The kingdom of God comes not with observation. ²¹ Neither shall they say, Here it is, or, There it is! For the kingdom of God is among you. ²² And he said to the disciples: The days will come, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you shall not see it. ²³ And they shall say to you, Look there, or, Look here. Do not go, nor follow after them.

²⁴ For as the lightning shines from one part under the heaven to the other part under heaven, so shall the Son of Man be in his day. ²⁵ But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, even so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man. ²⁷ They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸ Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot— they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. ²⁹ But in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰ After the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ In that day, he that shall be on the housetop with his goods in the house, let him not go down to take them away, and let him that is in the field likewise not return back. ³² Remember Lot's wife! ³³ Whoever shall seek to gain his life

17:21 “Within” can also be translated “among”. Jesus as King of the Kingdom of God can be called “the Kingdom of God”. All the principles of God’s Kingdom were to be found in Him. The Jews were looking for Messiah to come, and Jesus is saying they don’t have to look here and there for Him; because He, the Messiah, was already among them. The Kingdom of God wasn’t within the hearts of “you”, i.e. the Pharisees.

17:27 *Until the day* – There is strong Biblical emphasis on the fact that the flood began on the day Noah entered the ark. But Gen. 7:1,4 says that God told Noah seven days before the flood came to enter the ark. But actually he didn’t do this – he entered the very day the rain came. Why? Surely because he was begging people to come into the ark – he was a preacher (2 Pet. 2:5). Do our hearts desperately bleed for the people around us, as we await the coming of Jesus?

17:32 Lot’s wife looked back behind her when she had been told not to. She mourned the loss of her home and possessions. The command Lot received to leave Sodom is therefore typical of the command we will receive to leave this present situation and go

shall lose it, but whoever shall lose it shall preserve it. ³⁴ I say to you: In that night there shall be two men in one bed. One shall be taken, and the other shall be left. ³⁵ There shall be two women grinding together at the mill; one shall be taken and the other shall be left. ³⁶ There shall be two men in the field; one shall be taken and the other shall be left. ³⁷ And they answered and said to him: Where, Lord? And he said to them: Where the body is, there will also the eagles gather together.

CHAPTER 18 Mar. 26 Sep. 25
Jesus Teaches About Prayer

And he spoke a parable to them, that they should always pray and not lose heart, saying: ² There was in a city a judge, who did not fear God and had no regard for man. ³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came often to him, saying: Give me justice against my adversary. ⁴ And for a while he would

not, but afterward he said to himself: Though I neither fear God, nor regard man, ⁵ yet because this widow troubles me, I will give her justice, lest she wear me out by her continual coming. ⁶ And the Lord said: Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And shall not God give justice to His chosen, who cry to Him day and night? Will He be slow to help them? ⁸ I say to you, that He will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?

⁹ And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt. ¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus: God, I thank you that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I get.

to be with Christ in Jerusalem when He returns. If we look back on this world with longing, we will share the judgment of this world. Lot's wife was turned to salt, which was also the punishment which came upon the area around Sodom (Gen. 19:23; Dt. 29:23).

17:37 Don't worry where the judgment seat will be, or how we will get there. We will get there as naturally as God makes the eagles go into the air and come down where the carcass is.

18:3 The element of unreality in this parable is that a widow woman, with no male to advocate for her, went *directly* to the judge. This speaks of the spiritual ambition which we should have in daring to continually pray to God; and perhaps also indicates how approachable God is, even if prayer to God Himself initially seems too wonderful an idea for us.

18:7 The apparent silence of God to our prayers is because of His patience with us, not His deafness or indifference.

18:8 *Shall He find faith on the earth?* – It's an open question. The context speaks of how God answers prayer. The fact He does this should inspire faith. But will there be such faith in the earth [maybe "land", of Israel] on the eve of Christ's return?

¹³ But the tax collector, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: God, be merciful to me, the sinner. ¹⁴ I say to you, this man went home rendered righteous rather than the other. For everyone that exalts himself shall be humbled, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted. ¹⁵ And they were bringing to him even their babies, that he should touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶ But Jesus called them to him, saying: Permit the little children to come to me, and do not forbid them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ Truly I say to you, Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no way enter into it.

The Rich Ruler

¹⁸ And a certain ruler asked him, saying: Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ¹⁹ And Jesus said to him: Why do you call me good? None is good, save one- God! ²⁰ You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery. Do not kill.

Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honour your father and mother. ²¹ And he said: All these things have I observed from my youth. ²² And when Jesus heard it, he said to him: One thing you lack yet. Sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come follow me. ²³ But when he heard these things, he became exceedingly sorrowful. For he was very rich. ²⁴ And Jesus looking at him, said: How hard it shall be for those that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to enter in through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. ²⁶ And they that heard it said: Then who can be saved? ²⁷ But he said: The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. ²⁸ And Peter said: We have left our own and followed you. ²⁹ And he said to them: Truly I say to you: There is no one that has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, ³⁰ who shall not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come, eternal life.

18:13 *Struck his breast* – The same Greek phrase is found only in the account of how those who watched the crucifixion of Jesus struck their breasts (Lk. 23:48). Here in 18:13, striking the breast means contrition and repentance. So it probably means the same in 23:48. Watching the death of Jesus brought people to repentance. This is why when we remember the death of Jesus at the breaking of bread service, we are naturally led to self-examination and repentance (1 Cor. 11:28).

18:14 *Rendered righteous* – We are not righteous in ourselves; but we are counted righteous by God through our being “in Christ” by baptism and continued faith in Him.

18:30 *In this time* – We receive these things in the church of God, through our relationships with others in Christ. Christianity isn't intended to be lived in isolation from other believers.

The Way to Jerusalem

³¹ And he took aside the twelve, and said to them: We will go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets about the Son of Man shall be accomplished. ³² For he shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and shamefully treated, and spat upon. ³³ And they shall scourge and kill him, and on the third day he shall rise again. ³⁴ And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, and they did not understand the things that were said. ³⁵ And it came to pass, as he drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging. ³⁶ And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷ And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passes by. ³⁸ And he cried, saying: Jesus, you son of David, have mercy on me! ³⁹ And those who led the way rebuked him, saying that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more: You son of David, have mercy on me! ⁴⁰ And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him: ⁴¹ What do you want me to do for you? And he said: Lord, that I may receive my sight. ⁴² And Jesus

said to him: Receive your sight; your faith has made you whole. ⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

CHAPTER 19 Mar. 27 Sep. 26

And he entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And a man named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector, and rich, ³ was seeking to see who Jesus was; but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. ⁴ And he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him: Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house. ⁶ And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying: He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord: Behold Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted something from anyone, I restore fourfold. ⁹ And Jesus said to him: Today salvation has come to this house, as he

18:34 Note the repetition of the fact they didn't understand. They had a psychological barrier to the cross, just as we do in some ways – to share in the cross of Jesus is so demanding.

19:7 Fellowshiping with sinners through eating with them was seen as very wrong; the faithful Jew only fellowshiped with those who were “clean” and apparently not associated with sin. Jesus’ open table policy showed the very opposite. There is no ‘guilt by association’; He fellowshiped with people in order to bring them to Him, rather than only eating His bread with those who had reached a certain standard.

19:9 He was a Jew (“son of Abraham”), but worked for the Romans collecting taxes

also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

The Parable of the Minas

¹¹ And as they heard these things, he added and spoke a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. ¹² He therefore said: A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. ¹³ And he called ten servants of his, gave them ten minas and said to them: Trade with this until I return. ¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying: We do not want this man to reign over us. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when he had returned, having received the kingdom, that he commanded these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to

him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. ¹⁶ And the first came before him, saying: Lord, your minas have made ten minas more. ¹⁷ And he said to him: Well done, you good servant. Because you were found faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities. ¹⁸ And the second came, saying: Your minas, Lord, have made five minas. ¹⁹ And he said to him: And you are to be over five cities. ²⁰ And another came, saying: Lord, behold, here is your mina, I kept it laid away in a piece of cloth, ²¹ for I feared you, because you are a hard man. You demand what you did not deposit, and reap that which you did not sow. ²² He said to him: Out of your own mouth will I judge you, you wicked servant. You thought that I am a hard man, demanding back what I did not deposit, and reaping that which I did not sow? ²³ Why then did you not

from the Jews. He would've been a very lonely, despised and rejected person. These are the kinds of people who respond to Jesus.

19:17 *Ten cities* – There is an element of unreality in the parable of the pounds: wise use of a few coins results in power over several cities. We are left to imagine the men marvelling in disbelief at the reward given to them. They expected at most just a few pounds to be given to them. And in their response we see a picture of the almost disbelief of the faithful at their rewards.

19:20 He justifies himself by saying that he has “kept” the money, using the word elsewhere used about the need to *keep* or hold on to the doctrines of the One Faith (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:13; Rev. 6:9). He had done this, he had held on, he hadn't left the faith. And he thought this was enough to bring him to the Kingdom. But we must creatively use the basic gift of the Gospel which we have been given.

19:23 Jesus will explain to the rejected how they might have entered eternity. This will be quite enough mental torment and punishment. The Law of Moses forbade Jews to lend money to other Jews for interest. Jesus was telling His parables to Jews in a Jewish context. He's saying: “Even if you had done what was not the best, not the most obedient; but if you had done *at least something*, I would've accepted you'. But the man thought Jesus was a hard, grace-less man. Alternatively, Jesus may have meant: ‘You could at least have given the Gospel to the Gentiles’.

put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest? ²⁴ And he said to those that stood by: Take away from him the mina and give it to him that has the ten minas. ²⁵ And they said to him: Lord, he has ten minas! ²⁶ I say to you, that to everyone that has, shall be given, but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken away from him. ²⁷ But bring here my enemies, and slay them before me, those who did not want me to reign over them.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying: Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ And if anyone asks you: Why do you untie him? You are to say: The Lord has need of him. ³² And they that were sent went away and found as he had said to them. ³³ And as they

were untying the colt, the owners of it said to them: Why do you untie the colt? ³⁴ And they said: The Lord has need of him. ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments upon the colt and sat Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he went, they spread their garments on the road. ³⁷ And as he was now drawing near, at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, saying: ³⁸ Blessed is the King that comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to him: Teacher, rebuke your disciples. ⁴⁰ And he answered and said: I tell you, that if these shall hold their peace, the stones will cry out. ⁴¹ And when he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying: If you had known in this day, even you, the things which belong to your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies shall set up a barricade around you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and

19:25 Even those accepted into God's Kingdom won't understand everything immediately. We will spend eternity eternally growing in the knowledge of God and Jesus.

19:27 *Slay them* – The punishment for the rejected will be death, “the second death” (Rev. 2:11); not eternal punishment of a conscious person.

19:37 *Now drawing near* – The verb tenses and style here encourage us to visualize Jesus ‘drawing near’. The Gospels often encourage us to play ‘Bible television’ – to reconstruct how things happened as if the scene is playing live before our eyes.

19:41 This was the city which would kill Him – He had predicted that “Jerusalem” would kill him (Lk. 13:33). And yet Jesus had a heart that bled for the salvation of even His enemies and murderers. He so wished for their salvation (Lk. 13:34). Do we have a heart that bleeds for this world?

shall dash you to the ground, and your children within you; and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another. All this will happen because you did not perceive the time of your visitation. ⁴⁵ And he entered into the temple, and began to throw out those that were selling there, ⁴⁶ saying to them: It is written: My house shall be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of thieves! ⁴⁷ And he was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men of the people sought to destroy him. ⁴⁸ But they could not figure out what they might do, because all the people so hung upon his words.

CHAPTER 20 Mar. 28 Sep. 27

The Question of Authority

And it came to pass, on one of the days he was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, there came to him the chief priests and the scribes with the elders. ² And they spoke, saying to him: Tell us. By what authority do you do these things? Or, who is he that gave you this authority? ³ And he answered and said to them: I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, ⁴ the baptism of John, was

it from heaven, or from men? ⁵ And they discussed it among themselves, saying: If we shall say from heaven, he will say, why did you not believe him? ⁶ But if we shall say, from men, all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet. ⁷ And they answered that they did not know. ⁸ And Jesus said to them: Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

The Parable of the Vineyard

And he began to speak to the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard and rented it to husbandmen, and went into another country for a long time. ¹⁰ And when the time came, he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty handed. ¹¹ And he sent yet another servant, and him also they beat, and handled him shamefully, and sent him away empty handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third, and him also they wounded and threw him out. ¹³ And the lord of the vineyard said: What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. It may be they will respect him. ¹⁴ But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned

20:9 The absentee landlords of Galilee were despised by all; and yet the Lord uses one of them as a figure for Himself. Whenever we feel despised, we are sharing in the sufferings of Jesus.

20:13 God sent His Son to Israel, hoping they would reverence Him. But Isaiah 53 had prophesied that when Israel saw Him, they would see no beauty in Him and crucify Him. Yet God restrained that knowledge, in His love and positive hope for His people. God in a sense comes down to our level, rather like you crouch down to speak with a child at their level, and seek to enter into their limitations of perception, their language and outlook. Truly man is not alone. God is with us.

one with another, saying: This is the heir! Let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do to them?¹⁶ He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said: God forbid.¹⁷ But he looked upon them, and said: What then is this that is written: The stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the headstone of the corner?¹⁸ Everyone that falls on that stone shall be broken to pieces, but on whoever it shall fall, it will grind him to dust.

The Jews Try to Catch Out Jesus

¹⁹ And the scribes and the chief priests sought to arrest him in that very hour, but they feared the peo-

ple. For they perceived that he spoke this parable against them.²⁰ And they watched him and sent out spies, who pretended to be sincere, so that they might catch him in something he said; so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the Roman governor.²¹ And they asked him, saying: Teacher, we know you say and teach rightly, and show no favouritism to any person, but in truth teach the way of God.²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them:²⁴ Show me a denarius. Whose image and superscription has it? And they said: Caesar's.²⁵ And he said to them: Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.²⁶ And they were not able to catch him in what

20:15 The parable has a telling twist to it. Absentee landlords who had never visited their land for ages, and found the people they sent to the property beaten up, would usually just forget it. They wouldn't bother. In the parable which draws on this, the Lord asks what the landlord will do. The expected answer was: 'Not much. He got what he could, he was never bothered to go there for years anyway'. But *this* landlord is odd. He keeps on sending messengers when any other landlord would have given up or got mad earlier on. But God's patience through the prophets was likewise unusual. And then, when the tenants thought they must surely be able to get away with it because the Lord seemed so distant and out of touch... He suddenly comes Himself in person and destroys them. He doesn't hire a bunch of people to do it. He comes in person, as the Lord will in judgment. And instead of deciding he'd had his fingers burnt and giving up vineyards as a bad job, this Lord gives the vineyard to others – He tries again. And so the Lord is doing with the Gentiles.

20:18 We have a choice – to be broken in this life by falling upon the rock of Christ, or to be broken by Him when He falls upon this earth in judgment. We must be broken men and women one way or another, either now or then. It's so logical to choose to be broken now. But in spiritual matters, we're not logical in how we reason.

There is evidence within the text of the NT, in addition to church tradition, which would suggest that memorizing Scripture was a common feature of the early believers. A passage in Psalm 118 is referred to here in Lk. 20:18; and also in Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6-8. One wonders if this was a proof text which the early believers would have known by heart.

he said in the presence of the people, so they marvelled at his answer and held their peace.²⁷ And there came to him certain of the Sadducees, they that say that there is no resurrection.²⁸ And they asked him, saying: Teacher, Moses wrote to us, that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but he is childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up seed to his brother.²⁹ There were therefore seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless.³⁰ And the second,³¹ and the third took her, and likewise the seventh also left no children, and died.³² Afterward the woman also died.³³ In the resurrection, whose wife of these shall she be? For the seven had her as wife.³⁴ And Jesus said to them: The children of this world marry and are given in marriage.³⁵ But they that

are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.³⁶ Neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.³⁷ But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, when he called the Lord: The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.³⁸ Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For all live to Him.³⁹ And certain of the scribes answering said: Teacher, you have said well.⁴⁰ And after that they dared not question him anymore.⁴¹ And he said to them: Why do they say that the Christ is David's son? ⁴² For David himself said in the book of Psalms: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on My right hand,⁴³ until

20:36 Angels cannot die: "Death...does not lay hold of angels" (Heb. 2:16 Diaglott margin). If angels could sin, then those who are found worthy of reward at Christ's return will also still be able to sin. And seeing that sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), they will therefore not have eternal life; if we have a possibility of sinning, we have the capability of dying. Thus to say angels can sin makes God's promise of eternal life meaningless, seeing that our reward is to share the nature of the angels. The reference to "*the* angels" shows that there is no categorization of angels as good or sinful; there is only one category of angels. Dan. 12:3 says that the faithful will shine as the stars; and stars are associated with the Angels (Job 38:7). We will be made like Angels; and yet we will be given immortal, sinless nature. Therefore, Angels can't sin. Our hope is to enter into the wonderful freedom of nature which the "Sons of God", i.e. the Angels, now share (Rom. 8:19).

20:37, 38 God is the God of Abraham here and now, even though Abraham is dead and unconscious. Because the dead are unconscious, because our memories of them fade and distort, we tend to think subconsciously that this is how God too sees the dead believers. But "all live to him", the souls under the altar cry out to Him for vengeance; in other words, His constant, detailed awareness of their characters provokes Him to act in world affairs even now (Rev. 6:9; 20:4). The Heavenly Jerusalem with which we are associated in Christ is composed of "the spirits (characters) of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). As we strive to develop a spiritual character now, our spirit becomes associated with those pleasing characters ("spirits") who reached a level of spiritual completion ("perfection").

I make your enemies the footstool of your feet. ⁴⁴ David therefore calls him Lord, so, how is he his son? ⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people, he said to his disciples: ⁴⁶ Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes and love greetings in the marketplaces, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. These shall receive greater condemnation.

CHAPTER 21 Mar. 29 Sep. 28

And he looked up and saw the rich men that were casting their gifts into the treasury. ² And he saw a certain poor widow throwing in there two small coins. ³ And he said: Of a truth I say to you: This poor widow threw in more than all of them. ⁴ For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple

⁵ And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings, he said: ⁶ As for these things which you behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left here one stone upon another; all shall be thrown down. ⁷ And they asked him, saying: Teach-

er, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when these things are about to happen? ⁸ And he said: Take heed you are not led astray. For many shall come in my name, saying: I am he, and, The time is at hand. Do not be led astray by them. ⁹ And when you shall hear of wars and revolutions, do not be terrified. For these things are necessary and must happen first, but the end will not be immediately. ¹⁰ Then said he to them: Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, ¹¹ and there shall be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences, and there shall be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹² But more significantly than all these things, they shall lay their hands on you and shall persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for my name's sake. ¹³ It shall turn out to be your opportunity to give a witness. ¹⁴ Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer. ¹⁵ For I will give you the words and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to contradict. ¹⁶ But you shall be delivered up even by your parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they shall kill some of you. ¹⁷ And you shall be hated of

21:8 *Not be led astray* – This Greek phrase is extensively quoted later in the New Testament concerning the need not be deceived by false teachers *within the church* (1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:13).

21:13 God uses bad situations in order to give us an opportunity to witness to others. When we ask “Why *this?*” – perhaps one of the reasons is so that we might preach through it.

all men for my name's sake. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head shall perish. ¹⁹ In your patience, you shall win your souls. ²⁰ But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. ²¹ Then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them that are in the midst of her depart, and do not let them that are in the countryside enter therein. ²² For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ²³ Woe to them that are with child in those days, and to those nursing babies! For there shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath upon this people. ²⁴ And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. ²⁵ And there shall be signs in sun, moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ Men will be fainting for fear in expectation of

the things which are coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. ²⁷ And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. ²⁸ But when these things begin to happen, look up, lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near. ²⁹ And he told them a parable: Behold the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰ When they shoot forth, you see it, and know of yourselves that the summer is now near. ³¹ Even so, you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I say to you: This generation shall not pass away until all things are accomplished. ³³ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. ³⁴ But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with partying, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵ For so shall it come upon all those that dwell on the face of all the earth. ³⁶ But watch continually, praying that you may have

21:17 This hating by all men may imply a world-wide persecution.

21:24 The “times of the Gentiles” appears to refer to the time of Gentile opportunity to learn the Gospel, according to how Paul alludes to it in Rom. 11:25. So today is a great day of opportunity, to respond to and preach the Gospel. The chance won't always be there.

21:34 Why is there this warning, if the believers of the last days are to be actively persecuted? This verse implies that the world will be in a materially prosperous state in the last days; it will be possible for us to become so preoccupied with it that we do not prepare for the time of tribulation, so that it comes as a sudden surprise. If “that day” is the day of Christ's coming, then it may be that by opting out of the persecution, we will be able to continue to enjoy the materialism of the world, in which case we will be caught unawares by the second coming. Thus while the saints are persecuted, the world enjoys a time of prosperity as it did in the times of Lot and Noah.

21:36 In Greek, the verb ‘to watch’ is related to the noun ‘watch’, referring to soldiers guarding something, or the period of guard duty. The idea behind ‘watching’

strength to prevail against all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man. ³⁷ And every day he was teaching in the temple, and every night he went and stayed on the mount that is called Olivet. ³⁸ And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, to hear him.

CHAPTER 22 Mar. 30 Sep. 29

The Last Passover

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might put him to death, for they feared the people. ³ And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, who was one of the twelve. ⁴ And he went away, and discussed with the chief priests and captains how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ And he consented, and looked for an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the crowd. ⁷ And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the Passover must be sacrificed. ⁸ And he sent Peter and John on an errand, saying: Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

⁹ And they asked him: Where do you want us to prepare for it? ¹⁰ And he said to them: When you enter into the city, there you shall meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house to which he goes. ¹¹ And you shall say to the master of the house: The Teacher says to you: Where is the guest room, in which I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? ¹² And he will show you a large furnished upper room. There make ready. ¹³ And they went and found as he had said to them, and they made ready the Passover. ¹⁴ And when the hour had arrived, he sat down with the apostles. ¹⁵ And he said to them: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I say to you, I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said: Take this and share it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I say to you, I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine from this time forward, until the kingdom of God shall come. ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remem-

is definitely defensive rather than aggressive. Lk. 21:36 defines watching as praying always, concentrating our faith upon the fact that ultimately we will stand acceptably before the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment, and by His grace be saved from the great judgments which will surely come upon this world. The ideas of watching and praying often occur together (Mk. 14:38; Mt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7). Prayer for our forgiveness, for acceptance by our Lord, must therefore characterize our watching in these last days.

22:10 Carrying water was women's work. Jesus seemed to take special pleasure in challenging the 1st century gender roles.

22:16 When we break bread, we remember that we shall by grace do this again with Jesus when He returns.

branch of me. ²⁰ And the cup in like manner after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. ²¹ But behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me at this table. ²² For the Son of Man indeed goes, as it has been determined, but woe to that man through whom he is betrayed! ²³ And they began to question among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. ²⁴ And there arose also a dispute among them, as to which of them would be counted as greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them: The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them, and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. ²⁶ But you shall not be so, but he that is the elder among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that does serve. ²⁷ For which is greater, he that sits at the table, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at the table? But among

you, I am he that serves. ²⁸ But you are those who have stayed with me in my time of trial. ²⁹ And I appoint to you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ³¹ And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, Satan has asked for you that he might sift you as wheat. ³² But I prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have been converted, strengthen your brothers. ³³ And he said to him: Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death. ³⁴ And he said: I tell you Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, until you shall deny three times that you know me. ³⁵ And he said to them: When I sent you out without purse and wallet and shoes, did you lack anything? And they said: Nothing. ³⁶ And he said to them: But now, he that has a purse, let him take it, and likewise a wallet,

22:19 *This is* – The bread isn't the actual body of Jesus; it "is" His body in the sense that the bread represents His body.

22:20 The new covenant is God's solemn set of promises to save us and give us eternal life in His Kingdom on earth as He promised Abraham. That set of promises were confirmed in the death of Jesus; whenever we take the cup we remind ourselves of our participation in this great hope.

22:23 There was some self-examination at the first memorial meeting. There should be every time we conduct the service (1 Cor. 11:28).

22:28 Yet Jesus knew the disciples would run away and Peter would deny Him. But He counted them as righteous; and He sees us so positively today, for all our failings. Quite simply, because He loves us.

22:36 *Buy a sword* – But the Lord's comment in v. 38 suggests He was being sarcastic or ironic in commenting upon their collapse of faith and dependence upon human strength. He wasn't literally suggesting they buy swords – in any case, He surely knew that they already had two swords with them (V. 38). And when the disciples used those swords, Jesus sharply rebuked them (:50,51 "No more of this!"). True Christians follow their Master in non-violent resistance of evil and do not believe in the use of force even in a just cause.

and he that has none, let him sell his cloak and buy a sword. ³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: And he was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me must have its fulfillment. ³⁸ And they said: Lord, look, here are two swords. And he said to them: That is quite enough.

The Prayer and Arrest of Jesus

³⁹ And he came out and went, as his custom was, to the mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them: So that you do not enter into temptation, pray. ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying: Father, if You be willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless let not my will, but Yours be done. ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose up from his prayer, he went to

the disciples, and found them sleeping from sorrow, ⁴⁶ and said to them: Why do you sleep? Get up and pray, so that you will not enter into temptation. ⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸ But Jesus said to him: Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? ⁴⁹ And when they that were about him saw what would follow, they said: Lord, shall we strike with the sword? ⁵⁰ And a certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said: No more of this! And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² And Jesus said to the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders that had come against him: Have you come as against a robber, with swords and staves? ⁵³ When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Peter Denies Jesus

⁵⁴ And they seized him and led him away, and brought him into the high

22:40 Prayer is our strength against temptation.

22:42 The wills of the Father and Son were different; therefore Jesus was not God Himself in a Trinitarian sense.

22:44 This condition indicates Jesus was at the limits of nervous endurance. He prayed to God at this time "with strong crying and tears" (Heb. 5:7). But even now, Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven, praying to God with intense groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). If He is so intensely praying for and with us, and offers our prayers to God with this intensity; then our prayers should also be intense and focused. Be careful not to rattle off the same old phrases in your prayers; put meaning into words; don't let your mind wander in prayer; pray out loud if necessary; and beware of only praying at night, warm in bed and drifting into sleep.

22:54 *High Priest's house* – About seven weeks later, Peter was standing maybe 100 meters from this spot and powerfully persuading people to believe in Christ. He con-

priest's house. And Peter followed from a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat among them. ⁵⁶ And a certain maid seeing him as he sat in the light of the fire and looking earnestly upon him, said: This man also was with him. ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying: Woman, I do not know him. ⁵⁸ And after a little while another person saw him and said: You also are one of them. But Peter said: Man, I am not. ⁵⁹ And after the space of about one hour another confidently affirmed, saying: Of a truth, this man also was with him. For he is a Galilean. ⁶⁰ But Peter said: Man, I do not know what you say. And immediately, as he spoke, the cock crew. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord that he had said to him: Before the cock crow this day, you shall deny me three times. ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly. ⁶³ And the men that held Jesus mocked him and beat him. ⁶⁴ And they blindfolded him and questioned him, saying: Prophecy- who is he that struck you? ⁶⁵ And many other

things they spoke against him, reviling him. ⁶⁶ And as soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away into their council, saying: ⁶⁷ If you are the Christ, tell us. But he said to them: If I tell you, you will not believe. ⁶⁸ And if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from this time forward shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God. ⁷⁰ And they all said: Are you then the Son of God? And he said to them: You say that I am. ⁷¹ And they said: What further testimony do we need? For we ourselves have heard it from his own mouth.

CHAPTER 23 Mar. 31 Sep. 30

Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

And the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying: We found this man perverting our nation and forbidding giving tribute to Caesar, and saying that he is Christ a king. ³ And Pilate asked him, saying: Are you the King of the Jews? And he answered them and said: You say it. ⁴ And Pilate said to the chief

verted more people in one day than anybody else ever is recorded as doing. God used the repentant, public sinner – and very quickly after his repentance. God loves to use humbled people.

22:57 Denied – Years later, Peter wrote that the worst possible category of sin was to “even deny” the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter preached to others and pastored his converts on the very basis that he had denied the Lord – and repented of it. He often alludes to his failings in his preaching addresses. This kind of thing is the very qualification which is required, rather than an apparently sinless life which is in fact only hypocrisy.

23:4 Do we feel that our conscience is so dysfunctional and our heart so hardened in some places that nothing much can touch us and motivate us like it used to? The cross can touch and transform the hardest and most damaged heart. Apart from many

priests and the crowds: I find no fault in this man. ⁵ But they were the more urgent, saying: He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee even to this place. ⁶ But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. ⁷ And when he knew that he was of Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem in those days. ⁸ Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad. For he had for a long time been desirous to see him, because he had heard about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him, and dressing him in gorgeous apparel, sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day. For before they had been enemies. ¹³ And Pilate called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them: You brought to me this man, as one that perverts the people; and

I, having examined him before you, found no fault in this man concerning those things of which you accuse him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore chastise him and release him ¹⁷ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). ¹⁸ But they cried out all together, saying, Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas ¹⁹ (one who had been cast into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder). ²⁰ And Pilate spoke to them again, desiring to release Jesus. ²¹ But they shouted, saying: Crucify, crucify him! ²² And he said to them the third time: Why! What evil has this man done? I have found no cause of death in him. I will therefore punish him and release him. ²³ But they were insistent with loud voices, asking that he might be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ And Pilate gave sentence that what they asked for should be done. ²⁵ And he released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

real life examples around of this, consider the Biblical case of Pilate. Jewish and Roman historians paint a very different picture of Pilate than what we see in the Biblical record. Philo describes him as “ruthless, stubborn and of cruel disposition”, famed for “frequent executions without trial”. Why then does he come over in the Gospels as a man desperately struggling with his conscience, to the extent that the Jewish crowds manipulate him to order the crucifixion of a man whom he genuinely believed to be innocent? Surely because the person of the Lord Jesus and the awfulness of putting the Son of God to death touched a conscience which appeared not to even exist. If the whole drama of the death of Jesus could touch the conscience and personality of even Pilate, it can touch each of us.

23:12 The forces of evil often unite against the righteous.

The Crucifixion

²⁶ And when they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it after Jesus. ²⁷ And a great crowd of the people followed him, and women mourned and wailed for him. ²⁸ But Jesus turning to them, said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the days are coming in which they shall say: Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed! ³⁰ Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall on us, and to the hills: Cover us. ³¹ For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? ³² And two others, both criminals, were led out with him to be executed. ³³ And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other

on the left. ³⁴ And Jesus said: Father, forgive them. For they do not know what they do. And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁵ And the people stood watching. And the rulers also scoffed at him, saying: He saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, His chosen! ³⁶ And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him offering vinegar, and saying: ³⁷ If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself. ³⁸ And there was also a written notice above him: This is the King of the Jews. ³⁹ And one of the criminals that hung there hurled insults at him, saying: Are not you the Christ? Save yourself and us. ⁴⁰ But the other answered, and rebuking him said: Do you not even fear God, seeing you have the same judgment? ⁴¹ But we indeed justly. For we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong. ⁴² And he said: Jesus, remember me when you come in your

23:26 Simon is a Greek name, and the names of his sons are Greco-Roman. The way he is described as “coming out of the field” (Gk.) could imply that he was working, doing what was improper on a feast day, because he was a Gentile. It could be that he simply lived and worked near Jerusalem, he wasn’t a religious guy, and like Saul out looking for lost cattle, he was going some place else, just as we were... until the Lord as it were arrested him with the message of the cross.

23:34 In His final sufferings, Jesus often mentions the Fatherhood of God (Lk. 22:42; 23:34,46; Mt. 26:39,42,44). That God is “our Father” is a comfort in our times of trial. The pain and difficulty of speech in the position of crucifixion was such that it is apparent that the Lord meant us to hear and meditate upon the words He uttered from the cross. It would have been far easier for Him to have prayed those words to Himself, within His own thoughts; but instead He made the effort to speak them out loud. It should inspire a similar effort in us to communicate with others when we feel like retreating into ourselves; to comfort them with our forgiveness; to pray for our enemies.

Divided up his clothes – Such petty materialism in the presence of the cross of Jesus was and is pathetic.

23:42 The command to be baptised into Christ’s death and resurrection was given

kingdom. ⁴³ And he said to him: Truly, I can say to you today right now, that you will indeed be with me in Paradise. ⁴⁴ And it was now about the sixth hour; and a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ the sun's light failing; and the veil of the temple was torn in the middle. ⁴⁶ And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. And having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ And when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying: Certainly this was a righteous man. ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that came together to this sight, when they saw the things that were done, returned, striking their breasts.

The Burial of Jesus

⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances, and the women that had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things. ⁵⁰ And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the

Council, a good and righteous man ⁵¹ (he had not consented to their decision and deed), a man of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews, who was looking for the kingdom of God, ⁵² this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet been laid. ⁵⁴ And it was the day of the preparation; and the Sabbath drew on. ⁵⁵ And the women, who had come with him out of Galilee, followed and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ And they returned and prepared spices and ointments. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

CHAPTER 24 Apr. 1 Oct. 1

The Resurrection

And on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. ² And they found the

after Christ's resurrection (Mk. 16:15,16). The thief couldn't have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection before those things had occurred. The thief asked Jesus to remember him for good, when Jesus returned "in" his Kingdom (RSV). The thief was therefore not ignorant of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God which Jesus had been preaching (Mt. 4:23). He knew that there would be a judgment day at the establishment of that Kingdom, and therefore he asked Jesus, whom he knew would rise from the dead to eventually be the judge on that day, to remember him for good. The thief was certainly not ignorant; he recognised that salvation in the day of resurrection and judgment would be pronounced from the lips of Christ. Jesus replied that the thief *would* be with him in "Paradise". This Greek word always refers to an ideal situation upon *earth*. It is used concerning the restored Garden of Eden which will be seen in the future Kingdom of God on the earth (Rev. 2:7). Christ and the thief did not go to the Kingdom that day. Jesus went to the grave (Acts 2:32; Mt. 12:40). The thief was asking for Jesus to remember him for good at the day of judgment; he was aware that he was responsible, and would appear there. But Jesus gave him the marvellous reassurance – 'I can tell you right *now!* You don't have to wait until then to find out my verdict upon you – you *will* be with me in the Kingdom!'

stone rolled away from the tomb. ³ And they entered in, and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ And it came to pass, while they were wondering about this, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them: Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but is risen! Remember in what way he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee, ⁷ saying that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the others. ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹ And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk, and they disbelieved them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he departed to his home, wondering about what had happened.

Jesus Appears to His Followers

¹³ And two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty furlongs from

Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they discussed with each other about all the things which had happened. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, while they talked and questioned together, that Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them: What communications are these you have one with another as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ And one of them, named Cleopas, answering said to him: Do you live alone in Jerusalem, and therefore do not know the things which have happened there recently? ¹⁹ And he said to them: What things? And they told him the things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, that he was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Moreover besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass. ²² Further, certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb. ²³ And when they did not find his body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ And some of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even as the women had

24:11, 12 The Gospels emphasize the disciples' disbelief and slowness to understand the clear predictions of Jesus about His death and resurrection. Yet the Gospel records are transcripts of the apostles' preaching, and they climax in an appeal to believe the Gospel. This urgent appeal was made by the lips of men who had just confessed how slow they had themselves been to respond. But that integrity and humility was what gave their appeal such power and persuasion.

said. But him they saw not. ²⁵ And he said to them: O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and so enter into his glory? ²⁷ And beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them from all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. ²⁸ And they drew near to the village where they were going, and he made as though he would go further. ²⁹ And they urged him, saying: Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. And he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to eat, he took the bread, and blessing and breaking it, he gave to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. ³² And they said to each other: Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us on the road, while he opened up the scriptures to us? ³³ And they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, ³⁴ saying: The Lord has indeed

risen, and has appeared to Simon! ³⁵ And they told the things that had happened on the road, and how he was known to them by the breaking of the bread. ³⁶ And as they spoke these things, he stood in the midst of them, and said to them: Peace to you! ³⁷ But they were terrified and afraid, and supposed that they saw a ghost. ³⁸ And he said to them: Why are you disturbed? And why do questions arise in your heart? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see! For a ghost has not flesh and bones, as you see me having. ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and wondered, he said to them: Have you here anything to eat? ⁴² And they gave him a piece of a boiled fish. ⁴³ And he took it and ate before them. ⁴⁴ And he said to them: These are my words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things necessary be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning me. ⁴⁵ Then opened he their mind so that they might understand the scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said

24:31 God does open and close our understanding. Let's be patient with those whose eyes are still closed. There was a time when we too 'didn't get it'.

24:35 *By the breaking of the bread* – Perhaps this means that the body language of Jesus as He broke bread *after* His resurrection was identical with that which He had in His human life before that. Resurrection and receiving Divine nature won't change us unrecognizably; we will recognize each other. We personally shall be saved through resurrection; what died shall revive and be immortalized.

24:39 Ghosts and immortal souls don't exist in reality. But Jesus reasoned with them on the basis of their wrong understanding, to lead them to the crucial conviction that He personally was alive.

to them: Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And I will send to you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. ⁵⁰ And he led them out until they were as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they did homage to him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple, praising God.

JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 10 Oct. 10

Prologue: The Word Becomes Flesh

In the beginning was the word {logos}, and the word was towards God, and the word was Di-

vine. ² This existed, in the beginning, with God. ³ All things created came into existence on account of it; and without it nothing created came into existence. ⁴ In it was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ This light

“The Word” cannot refer directly to a person, because a person cannot be “with God” and yet *be* God at the same time. The Greek word ‘logos’ which is translated “word” here, does not in itself mean ‘Jesus’. It is usually translated as “word”, but also as: –

- Account
- Cause
- Communication
- Doctrine
- Intent
- Preaching
- Reason
- Saying
- Tidings

‘Logos’ can strictly refer to the inner thought which is expressed outwardly in words. In the beginning God had this ‘logos’. This singular purpose was centred in Christ. Christ in person was not “the word”; it was God’s plan of salvation through Christ which was “the word”. ‘Logos’ (“the Word”) is very often used concerning the Gospel about Christ – e.g. “the *word* of Christ” (Col. 3:16; cp. Matt. 13:19; John 5:24; Acts 19:10; 1 Thess. 1:8). Notice that the ‘logos’ is *about* Christ, rather than him personally. When Christ was born, this “word” was turned into a flesh and blood form – “the word was made flesh” (John 1:14). Jesus personally was ‘the word made flesh’ rather than “the word”; he personally became “the word” through his birth of Mary, rather than at any time previously.

The plan, or message, about Christ was with God in the beginning, but was openly revealed in the person of Christ, and the preaching of the Gospel about him in the first century. Thus God spoke His word to us through Christ (Heb. 1:1,2); he thereby fulfilled the prophecy concerning himself, “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 13:35). It was in this sense that “the word was with God...in the beginning”, to be “made flesh” at Christ’s birth.

“The Word Was God”

Our plans and thoughts are fundamentally us. “As (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7), and as God thinks, so is He. Thus God’s word or thinking *is* God: “the word was God”. Because of this parallelisms like Ps.29:8 are common: “The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness”. Because of this, God’s Word is spoken of as if it is God Himself. Thus we are told concerning the Word, “All things were made by Him” (John 1:3). However “*God* created” all

Footnote: “In the beginning was the Word” probably comments on the Jewish concept that the Torah (the five books of Moses) existed before creation. Jn. 1:1-3 is saying that the important thing to appreciate is that those words of God prophesied about Jesus; God’s plan about him existed before creation (cp. Lk. 1:70).

shines in the darkness, but the darkness cannot understand it. ⁶ It happened that a man of God was sent. His name was John. ⁷ This one came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe in the light. ⁸ John was not the light, but was sent that he might testify concerning the light- ⁹ the true light, who by coming into the world enlightens every man. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world had originated on account of him, the world recognised him not. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and they of his own people rejected him. ¹² But whoever accepts him, those who believe in his name, to them he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ These were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ For this, the word became flesh, and indwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John testifies of him and cries out, saying: This was he of whom I said: He that comes after me is ranked above me! For he was senior to me. ¹⁶ Of his fullness we all received, with grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given

through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made Him known.

The Ministry of John

¹⁹ And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him: Who are you? ²⁰ He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed: I am not the Christ! ²¹ And they asked him: What then? Are you Elijah? And he said: I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered: No. ²² They replied to him: Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. How do you describe yourself? ²³ John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet: I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord. ²⁴ These priests and Levites had been sent from the Pharisees. ²⁵ Again they asked him: Why then do you baptize, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet? ²⁶ John answered: I baptize in water; but in the midst of you stands one whom you do not know. ²⁷ He that comes after me, his shoe-lace I am not worthy to untie. ²⁸ This

things by His word of command (Gen. 1:1). It is evident from Gen. 1 that God was the Creator, through His word, rather than Christ personally. It was the *word* which is described as making all things, rather than Christ personally (John 1:1-3). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them (i.e. the stars) by the breath of his mouth... he spake, and it was done" (Ps. 33:6,9).

God's word being His creative power, He used it in the begetting of Jesus in Mary's womb. The Word, God's plan put into operation by His Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), brought about Christ's conception. Mary recognized this in her response to the news about her forthcoming conception of Christ: "Be it unto me according to Your *word*" (Luke 1:38). When Christ was born, all of God's Word/Spirit was expressed in the person of Jesus Christ.

incident took place in Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him, and he said: Behold! The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is he of whom I said: After me comes a man who is ranked above me. For he was senior to me. ³¹ I did not perceive him, but so he should be made manifest to Israel, for this reason I come baptizing in water. ³² And John testified, saying: I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it remained upon him. ³³ I would not have perceived him except He that sent me to baptize in water, He had said to me: Upon whomsoever you shall see the Spirit descend and remain upon him, the same is he that baptizes in the Holy Spirit. ³⁴ I have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God. ³⁵ The next day John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶ And he watched Jesus as he walked and said: Behold! The Lamb of God! ³⁷ And the two disciples, hearing him speak, followed after Jesus. ³⁸ Jesus turned around, and observing they were following him, said to them: What do you seek? And they replied: Rabbi (we would say Teacher). Where are you staying? ³⁹ He said to them: Come, and you shall see. They went therefore, and saw where he stayed; and they stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

The Calling of the Disciples

⁴⁰ One of the two that had heard John and had followed Jesus was Andrew,

Simon Peter's brother. ⁴¹ The first thing he did was to find his brother Simon; and he said to him: We have found the Messiah (we would say Christ). ⁴² He took him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said: You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas (we call him Peter). ⁴³ The next day Jesus decided to go into Galilee; and he found Philip. Jesus said to him: Follow me. ⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him: We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote! Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said to him: Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him: Come and see. ⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, and said of him: Behold, a true Israelite in whom is no deceit! ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him: How is it you know me? Jesus answered: Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. ⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him: Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are King of Israel. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied: Because I said to you: I saw you underneath the fig tree- do you believe? You shall see greater things than these! ⁵¹ And he said to him: Truly, truly, I say to you. You shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 11 Oct. 11

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

On the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The

mother of Jesus was there; ² Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the marriage. ³ When they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to him: They have no wine! ⁴ Jesus said to her: Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come. ⁵ His mother said to the servants: Whatever he commands you, do it! ⁶ Nearby there were six stone waterpots, placed there for the Jewish custom of purifications, each holding ⁷⁵ to ¹¹⁵ litres. ⁷ Jesus said to them: Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them: Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water which had now become wine, and not knowing where it came from (but the servants that had drawn the water knew), he called to the bridegroom, ¹⁰ and said to him: Everyone serves good wine first, and when all have drunk freely, serves something inferior. But you have kept the good wine until now! ¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, thereby revealing his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Jesus Purges the Temple

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and brothers and disciples; and there they stayed for a few days. ¹³ The Passover of the Jews was at that time; and Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he found in the temple those that sold oxen

and sheep and doves, and the money changers sitting at their tables. ¹⁵ He made a whip out of cords and drove them all, with the sheep and oxen, out of the temple; and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ To them that sold the doves he said: Take these things away! Do not make my Father's house a market. ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written: Zeal for Your house shall consume me. ¹⁸ The Jews therefore answered and said to him: What sign will you show us, seeing you do these things? ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said to them: Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. ²⁰ The Jews replied: Forty six years was this temple in building, and will you raise it up in three days? ²¹ But he spoke of the temple of his body. ²² When he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spoke this, and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. ²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs which he did. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he understood mankind, ²⁵ and because he did not need any testimony concerning himself from any human being. For he understood what was in man.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 11 Oct. 11

Jesus and Nicodemus

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a

2:25 *Understood* – Jesus knew how fickle people are, how quickly they change. His understanding of humanity is because He Himself was human.

ruler of the Jews. ² The same came to him by night, and said to him: Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God. For no one can do the signs you do, except God be with him. ³ Jesus answered and said to him: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ⁴ Nicodemus said to him: How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? ⁵ Jesus answered: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God! ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel at what I said to you: You must be born anew. ⁸ The wind blows where it wills, and you hear its sound, but do not know from where it comes and where it goes. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to him: How can these things be? ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to him: Are you the teacher of Israel and

yet do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you: We speak that which we know and testify of that which we have seen; and you do not welcome our witness. ¹² If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven. ¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ that whoever believes may in him have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. ¹⁸ He that believes in him is not condemned. He that does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the ground of condemna-

3:5 Here we see the importance of water baptism. But of itself, it's not enough – we must be spiritually reborn by the action of God's word within us (1 Pet. 1:23) if we are to enter the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns. *Baptism is therefore very important. Contact the publishers if you would like to be baptized.*

3:13 'Ascent' and 'descent' here aren't being used literally. John's Gospel uses very symbolic terms. Jesus was conceived within Mary, He was "begotten" – He 'began' – as a foetus within His mother. Either He literally floated down through the clouds from Heaven to earth – or we must understand 'descending' from Heaven as meaning that He was born on earth but sent by God.

3:14 The serpent was a symbol of sin. Yet it also represents Jesus. On the cross, Jesus was identified very strongly with sinful people, even though He never sinned. He is 'one' with us who are sinners, the sinner's friend who doesn't just turn away from sin but touches and identifies with it in order to cleanse it.

3:14 *In Him* – Gk. 'into Him'. We believe 'into' Jesus by believing and being baptized into Jesus.

tion, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light- for their works were evil. ²⁰ For every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, in case his works should be reprov'd. ²¹ But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be revealed, that they have been done in God.

Jesus and John the Baptist

²² After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he stayed with them and baptized. ²³ And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and people came to be baptized. ²⁴ For John had not then been thrown into prison. ²⁵ Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶ And they came to John, and said to him: Rabbi, he that was with you on the other side of the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, the same baptizes, and all men come to him. ²⁷ John answered and said: A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said: I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. ²⁹ He that has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, that stands by and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. In this my joy is

made full. ³⁰ He must increase but I must decrease. ³¹ He that comes from above is above all. He that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaks. He that comes from heaven is above all. ³² What he has seen and heard, of that he testifies; and no one receives his witness. ³³ He that has received his witness has certified that God is true. ³⁴ For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give him the Spirit by measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. ³⁶ He that believes on the Son has eternal life; but he that does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 12 Oct. 12

Jesus Converts a Samaritan Woman

When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ² (although Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again into Galilee. ⁴ It was necessary for him to pass through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to the city of Samaria called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground which Jacob gave his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was also there. Jesus, being tired from his journey, sat tired by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water, and

3:21 If we feel sinners, we needn't be depressed. This is a result of being in the light.

3:23 Baptism is immersion in water, not sprinkling – hence it required “much water”.

4:6 Jesus' needing to drink and becoming tired, needing to rest, all indicate His humanity. He wasn't God Himself.

Jesus said to her: Give me a drink.
⁸ His disciples had gone into the city to buy food. ⁹ The Samaritan woman replied to him: How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink? (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans). ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that said to you: Give me a drink, you would have asked of him and he would have given you living water. ¹¹ The woman said to him: Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. From where then have you that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his cattle? ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her: Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst. The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up to eternal life. ¹⁵ The woman said to him: Sir, give me this water, that I do not thirst ever again, nor come all the way here to get water. ¹⁶ Jesus said to her: Go, call your husband

and come back here. ¹⁷ The woman answered and said to him: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: You said well that you have no husband, ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands; and he whom you now have is not your husband. This you have said truthfully. ¹⁹ The woman said to him: Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. ²¹ Jesus said to her: Woman, believe me, the hour is coming, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. ²² You worship that which you do not know. We worship what we know. For salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour comes and now is, when true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such worshipers are who the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. ²⁵ The woman said to him: I know that the Messiah is coming (he that is called Christ). When he comes, he will declare to us all things. ²⁶ Jesus said to her: I that speak to you am he. ²⁷ And upon this scene came his

4:14 If we truly believe, we will become a well of water of life to other people. We can become the source of eternal life to people – in that we are the source of their contact with Christ. This means we should witness to people urgently and directly, knowing that we can give people the eternal life which otherwise they wouldn't have.

4:22 People can go through the psychology and feeling of worship – but it's not real worship.

4:24 God is Spirit in the sense that He is identified with His Spirit. God Himself is a personal being, not an abstract puff of 'spirit' blowing around. God "is" a consuming fire; He is revealed through the fire of His judgment, but this doesn't mean that God equals fire and fire equals God. And the same with Him as Spirit.

4:27 Jewish religious leaders didn't speak to women, nor Samaritans; nor did they

disciples, and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman. Yet no one said: What are you seeking? Or, Why do you speak with her? ²⁸ So the woman left her waterpot and went away into the city, and said to the people: ²⁹ Come, see a man who told me all things that I have ever done. Can this be the Christ? ³⁰ They went out of the city and came to him. ³¹ In the meantime the disciples pleaded with him, saying: Rabbi, eat. ³² But he said to them: I have food to eat that you do not know. ³³ The disciples queried each other: Has anyone brought him something to eat? ³⁴ Jesus said to them: My food is to do the will of Him that sent me and to accomplish His work. ³⁵ Do you not say: There are yet four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white, ready to harvest. ³⁶ He that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit to everlasting life; that he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷ For herein is the saying true: One sows and another reaps. ³⁸ I sent you

to harvest that upon which you have not laboured; others have laboured, and you are taking over their labour. ³⁹ And from that city many of the Samaritans believed in him because of the word of the woman, who testified: He told me all things that I have ever done. ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they pleaded with him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² And they said to the woman: Now we believe, not because of your speaking; for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.

Jesus Returns to Galilee

⁴³ And after two days he left for Galilee. ⁴⁴ Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honour in his own country. ⁴⁵ So when he came into Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all the things that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they also had gone up to the feast. ⁴⁶ He came again to Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And

teach the Bible to women; nor would they be alone in a woman's company. Jesus was clearly not worried about gossip or His "image" – He intended to reach out to the marginal and despised.

4:29 It's quite natural to tell others of our experience of Christ. The Gospels are full of people doing this.

4:32 Having a stimulating, unexpected conversation about the Lord with someone takes away our awareness of our tiredness and material problems. Preaching is for our benefit and blessing too.

4:39 *All things* – All her sins. On the basis of accepting her sinfulness she could witness to the people in a non-threatening way. Some people believe in Christ because of the word of a preacher; others believe in Him directly (v. 42). In some cases, therefore, we have the ability to bring a person to Christ; if we don't do our part, they will not be saved. In this sense Paul can write to people and claim that they owed him their salvation.

there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded that he would come to Capernaum and heal his son. For his son was at the point of death. ⁴⁸ Jesus replied to him: Except you see signs and wonders, you will in no way believe. ⁴⁹ The nobleman said to him: Sir, come before my child dies. ⁵⁰ Jesus said to him: Go your way. Your son lives. The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. ⁵¹ And as he was going home, his servants met him, saying that his son lived. ⁵² So he inquired of them the hour when he began to get better. They replied to him: Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. ⁵³ The father knew that that was the hour when Jesus had said to him: Your son lives. And so he and his household believed. ⁵⁴ This was the second sign that Jesus did, when he had gone from Judea to Galilee.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 13 Oct. 13

Jesus Heals a Lame Man

After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ² Now there

is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. ³ In these lay a crowd of those who were sick, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴ For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and disturbed the water. Whoever was first to step into the pool, after the waters were disturbed, was healed of whatever disease he had. ⁵ One man there had been ill for thirty eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing he had been there a long time, he said to him: Would you be made whole? ⁷ The sick man answered him: Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed. As I approach someone else steps in front of me. ⁸ Jesus said to him: Arise, take up your bed and walk. ⁹ And straightway the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to him who had been cured: It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed. ¹¹ But he answered them: He that made me whole, the same said to me: Take up your bed and walk. ¹² They asked him: Who

4:53 Believed – But he is described as having “believed” the word of Jesus already, in v. 50. There are different levels of faith and conversion.

5:2 There is – Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70. The present tense indicates that John’s Gospel was written before AD70 – not generations after the events, as wrongly claimed by Bible critics.

5:8 Jesus didn’t criticize the man for believing in a myth about an Angel touching water. Instead, Jesus focused the man upon the simple reality – that God alone through His Son can heal. We need to be patient with those who have wrong understandings and believe groundless myths; and gently re-focus them upon the simple truths of the Gospel.

is the man that said to you: Take up your bed and walk? ¹³ But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place ¹⁴ Afterwards, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him: Look, you are made whole. Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you. ¹⁵ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.

Jesus Comments Upon His Relationship with God

¹⁶ And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them: My Father works even until now and therefore I also work. ¹⁸ For this cause the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath law, but he called God his own Father, making himself seem like God. ¹⁹ Jesus therefore answered and said to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: The Son can do nothing of himself but only what he sees the Father doing.

For whatever works He does, these the Son does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all things that Himself does; and greater works than these will He show him, that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he will. ²² For neither does the Father judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that does not honour the Son does not honour the Father that sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that hears my word and believes Him that sent me has eternal life, and comes not into condemnation, but has passed out of death into life. ²⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you: The hour comes and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given the Son life in himself. ²⁷ And He has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is a Son

5:13 Some of those Jesus cured didn't have any faith in Jesus – this man didn't even know Jesus' Name. This shows what it means to really be able to do miracles by the Holy Spirit – even ignorant unbelievers could be healed. This contrasts with the false claims of many 'faith healers' in Christian churches today, who claim they have Holy Spirit gifts, but can only claim to heal those who have faith.

5:18, 19 Jesus answers their misunderstanding that He was claiming equality with God by making some statements that for all time end any question about whether Jesus is equal with God. He states clearly that He can do nothing of Himself, His power is only from God and not of Himself; and His will is not that of His Father (v. 30).

5:24 We have eternal life in the sense that we can live now the kind of life which we will eternally live in God's Kingdom. We will die, be unconscious, but be raised to stand before Jesus at His return, and by His grace live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth.

5:27 Because the Lord Jesus had our human nature He is therefore qualified to be our judge at the last day.

of Man. ²⁸ Marvel not at this! For the hour comes, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, ²⁹ and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. ³⁰ I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I seek not my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. ³¹ If I testify of myself, my witness is not true. ³² It is another that testifies of me; and I know that the witness which He testifies of me is true. ³³ You asked John the Baptist, and he has testified to the truth. ³⁴ Not that the testimony that I receive is from man; but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵ He was the lamp that burns and shines, and you were willing to rejoice for a period in his light. ³⁶ But the witness which I have is greater than that of John. For the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, testify that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father that sent

me, He has testified of me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape. ³⁸ And you do not have His word dwelling in you, for you do not believe the one whom He has sent. ³⁹ You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me; ⁴⁰ but you will not come to me, so that you may have life. ⁴¹ I receive not glory from men. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts. ⁴³ I come in my Father's Name, and you do not accept me. If another shall come in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, you who accept praise from each other, but do not seek the praise that comes from the only God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one that accuses you, Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. For he wrote of me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?

5:29 We receive eternal life at the resurrection, when Jesus returns. We don't have immortality naturally within ourselves, in the form of some 'immortal soul'. This isn't a Biblical idea. The resurrection is very important in the process of salvation. Therefore it's also important to identify ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus through baptism, so that we too will literally be resurrected and share in His eternal life at His return.

5:37 God sent Jesus. He that sends is superior to and different from Him that is sent (Jn. 13:16). Jesus isn't God.

5:39, 40 It's possible to read the Bible a lot but never truly come to Jesus. To study the Bible but not have the living word / voice of God abiding in us (v. 38). We should be Christ-centric more than Bible-centric.

5:43 Jesus as God's Son carried His Father's Name. The Name of God is essentially His attributes and character; and Jesus showed these to perfection. But we shouldn't misunderstand this to mean that Jesus is God Himself in person, just because He carries His Father's Name.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 14 Oct. 14
Jesus Feeds 5000 Men

After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. ² And a great crowd followed him, because they saw the signs which he performed on those that were sick. ³ And Jesus went up into the mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. ⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. ⁵ Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great crowd came to him, said to Philip: Where are we to buy bread that these may eat? ⁶ And this he said to test him. For he knew what he would do. ⁷ Philip answered him: Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him: ⁹ There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are these among so many? ¹⁰ Jesus said: Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. ¹¹ Jesus therefore took the loaves and having given thanks, he distributed them to those that were sitting down. Likewise also the fishes, as much as they could eat. ¹² And when they were filled, he said to his disciples: Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, so nothing goes to waste. ¹³ So they gathered

them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign which he did, they said: This is of a truth the prophet that comes into the world! ¹⁵ So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself. ¹⁶ And when evening came, his disciples went down to the sea. ¹⁷ And they entered into a boat and were going over by sea to Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ And the sea was rising because of a great wind that blew. ¹⁹ When therefore they had rowed about five or six kilometres, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were afraid. ²⁰ But he said to them: It is I! Be not afraid! ²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. ²² On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea noticed that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. ²³ (Some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks). ²⁴ When the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor

6:14 The sign or miracle which Jesus did left people with no option but to believe. The miracles claimed by the Pentecostal movement today are highly disputable and therefore don't have the same effect. Whatever phenomena their 'healings' reflect, it's not proof they possess the Holy Spirit gifts.

his disciples, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. ²⁵ And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him: Rabbi, when did you come here? ²⁶ Jesus answered them and said: Truly, truly, I say to you: You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.

Bread from Heaven

²⁷ Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set His seal of approval. ²⁸ They replied to him: What must we do, that we may work the works of God? ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them: This is the work of God- that you believe in him whom He has sent. ³⁰ They replied to him: What then will you do for a sign, so that we may see and believe you? What work will you do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. ³² Jesus replied to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: It was not Moses that gave

you the bread out of heaven, but my Father; who now gives you the true bread out of heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world. ³⁴ They replied to him: Lord, always give us this bread. ³⁵ Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life. He that comes to me shall not hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I say to you: That you have seen me, and still you do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I will in no way reject. ³⁸ For I came down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of Him that sent me, that of all which He has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father: That every one that sees the Son and believes in him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴¹ The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said: I am the bread which came down out of Heaven. ⁴² And they said: Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How

6:26 Some people show an interest in our message just because of a hope that they will get some material benefit. Jesus didn't refuse to assist these people; but He made it clear that He realized what was going on.

6:30 Jesus had just miraculously fed these people and they still wouldn't believe and sought for yet more signs from Him. The faith produced by the miracle in v. 14 was therefore not very long lived. It is by hearing and responding to the word of Jesus that we can have a deep and lasting faith, rather than from seeing 'miracles'.

6:33 Jesus compares Himself to the manna. The manna 'came down' from God in the sense that it was from God. It didn't literally float down from Heaven to earth through the atmosphere, it was created on earth. And so with Jesus. He didn't exist as a person before He was born.

6:42 Although Jesus was perfect, He never omitted any act of righteousness nor com-

does he now say, I came down out of Heaven? ⁴³ Jesus answered and said to them: Murmur not among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to me, except the Father that sent me draws him; and I will raise him up in the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets: And they shall all be taught by God. Everyone therefore who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father, save he that is from God, he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down out of Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever. Yes! The bread which I will give is my flesh – given for the life of the world. ⁵² The Jews therefore argued with each other, saying: How can this man give us his flesh to

eat? ⁵³ Jesus replied to them: Truly, truly, I say to you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For my flesh is the true food, and my blood is the true drink. ⁵⁶ He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eats me, he also shall live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down out of Heaven. Not as the fathers ate and died; he that eats this bread shall live forever. ⁵⁹ These things said he in the synagogue, while teaching in Capernaum. ⁶⁰ Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said: This is a hard saying; who can hear it? ⁶¹ But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said to them: Does this cause you to stumble? ⁶² What then if you should see the Son of Man ascending where

mitted any sin, the people amongst whom He lived for 30 years didn't think He was anything special. This shows the humility of Jesus, and how He successfully hid His righteousness rather than did anything to display it to others. In this we have another window onto His perfection.

6:51 After their 'baptism' in the Red Sea, God's people walked through the wilderness fed only by manna (1 Cor. 10:1,2). After our baptisms, we too walk through the wilderness, eating the manna daily – taking strength from Jesus, His word and His sacrifice for us.

6:53 This may be a reference to the huge importance of breaking bread in memory of Jesus – the bread represents His flesh, the wine represents His blood.

6:60 To drink blood was abhorrent to Jewish people. Jesus chose this controversial way of speaking in order to make people chose between Him, and their surrounding religious culture. We can't follow His words, and also the surrounding culture and networks of thinking.

6:62 "Before" refers to where He was "before" He began to 'come down' to them in revealing Himself as God's Son (:41,42). He's saying: 'So would you prefer me to

he was before? ⁶³ It is the spirit that gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you that do not believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said: For this cause have I said to you, that no one can come to me, except it be given to him of the Father. ⁶⁶ Upon this many of his disciples withdrew, and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ Jesus asked the twelve: Would you also go away? ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ And we have believed and know that you are the Holy One of God. ⁷⁰ Jesus answered them: Did not I choose you the twelve, and one of you is a devil? ⁷¹ Now he spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot; for he was the one of those twelve who would betray him.

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 15 Oct. 15

The Feast of Tabernacles

And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. ² Now the feast of the Jews, the feast of tabernacles, was at hand. ³ His brothers said to him: Depart from here and go into Judea, so your disciples may also see the works you do. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, manifest yourself to the world. ⁵ For even his brothers did not believe in him. ⁶ Jesus replied to them: My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify of it, that its works are evil. ⁸ You go up to the feast. I will not be going up to this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled. ⁹ And having said these things to them, he stayed in Galilee. ¹⁰ But when his brothers

just go back to how I was when I lived amongst you in Nazareth, the incognito Son of God, no teaching, no miracles?'

6:63 The words of God and Jesus are "Spirit" in the sense that they are inspired, or in-spirit-ed, with and by the Spirit of God. All Scripture is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). We are born again of the Spirit (Jn. 3:5), and yet also by the word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). God's Spirit works in us in many ways, one of them is through His word.

6:64 Jesus knew about Judas but still was hurt when the betrayal happened, and even "trusted" him (Ps. 41:9; Jn. 13:18). The Lord Jesus had human nature; and it is part of our nature to know something on one level, and yet for love's sake we choose not to know it.

6:69 *We have believed* – Jesus responded by saying that one of them would betray Him (v. 70). He knew that these believers in Him had too positive a view of themselves as a community. The church today must bear this in mind.

7:3 Jesus was rejected by His family; He knows how we feel when this happens to us for His sake.

7:7 The testimony of Jesus against this world wasn't very overt; it wasn't in the words He spoke, at least not those recorded in the Gospels. His testimony was perhaps in His perfect life, in His caring for and saving those whom this world ignored, despised and

had gone to the feast, then he also went to it, not publicly but as it were in secret. ¹¹ The Jews searched for him at the feast, and asked: Where is he? ¹² And there was much murmuring among the crowds concerning him. Some said: He is a good man. Others said: Not so. He deceives the people. ¹³ Yet no one spoke openly about him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

¹⁴ When the feast was half way through, Jesus went into the temple and taught. ¹⁵ The Jews marvelled, saying: How is it that this man has learning, when he has never had an education? ¹⁶ Jesus answered them and said: My teaching is not mine, but His that sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know of this teaching, whether it is of God, or I speak from myself. ¹⁸ He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but he that seeks the glory of Him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. ¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law and yet none of you does the law? Why do you seek to kill me? ²⁰ The crowd answered: You are crazy! Who seeks to kill you? ²¹ Jesus answered and said to them: I did one work and you all marvel because of it! ²² Moses has given you circumcision (not

that it is of Moses but of the fathers) and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me, because I made a man completely whole on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. ²⁵ Therefore, some of those from Jerusalem asked: Is this not he whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ And lo, he speaks openly and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ? ²⁷ However we know from where this man is; but when the Christ comes, no one knows from where he is. ²⁸ Therefore Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying: You both know me, and know from where I am, and that I have not come of myself. But He that sent me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹ I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent me. ³⁰ Therefore they sought to take him, but no one laid his hand on him- because his hour had not yet come. ³¹ But of the crowd many believed in him; and they said: When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than those which this man has done? ³² The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him, and the chief priests

destroyed. Our testimony also is more in our actions and personalities than in specific words of testimony.

7:20 Literally: “You have a demon!”— This was the language of the day for saying ‘You are mad!’, and should not be taken literally.

7:23 Sometimes we have to break one command or principle in order to keep another. God has arranged things in this way so that we think carefully about the meaning of our actions and the reason for our obedience to Him.

and the Pharisees sent officers to take him. ³³ Jesus replied: Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to Him that sent me. ³⁴ You shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, you cannot come. ³⁵ The Jews queried among themselves: Where will this man go that we shall not find him? Will he go to the diaspora among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? ³⁶ What is his meaning when he said: You shall seek me and shall not find me; and, Where I am, you cannot come? ³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying: If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ He that believes on me, as the scripture has said: From within him shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ He spoke of the Spirit, which they that believed in him were to receive. For the Spirit had not yet been received, as Jesus had not yet been glorified. ⁴⁰ Therefore some of the crowd, when they heard these

words, said: This is truly the prophet! ⁴¹ Others said: This is the Christ. But some said: What! Does the Christ come out of Galilee? ⁴² Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes of the seed of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was born? ⁴³ So there arose a division in the crowd because of him. ⁴⁴ And some of them would have taken him; but no one laid hands on him. ⁴⁵ The officers went to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them: Why did you not bring him? ⁴⁶ The officers answered: Never has a man spoken like this man! ⁴⁷ The Pharisees therefore answered them: Are you also led astray? ⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees? ⁴⁹ But this rabble, which does not know the law, are accursed! ⁵⁰ Nicodemus (he that had earlier come to him by night, being one of them) ⁵¹ said to them: Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and knowing what he is

7:34 There's a hard logic here – we either seek Him now when we can find Him, or we will seek Him like the foolish girls of Mt. 25:11 will do – when it's all too late.

7:35, 36 It must've been so frustrating for Jesus to be so constantly misunderstood; His words and ideas were continually understood within different frames of reference and worldviews. When we experience the same, we know that He can empathize with us.

7:38 *Living water* – The Jewish hearers would've associated this with the Old Testament teaching that “living water” was to be used to cleanse lepers; and that “living water” would flow out of the temple to heal the world (Lev. 14:6; Ez. 47:1-9). We are to be the source of cleansing for others – which means we are intended to communicate our faith to them. And we, rather than any physical religious building, are to be the source of new life and cleansing for the world.

7:48 The fact the great and learned of this world haven't believed in Christ is no reason not to. Fact is, the minority are in the right. “How can so many be wrong?” really begs the answer: “Quite easily, according to the Bible and also human experience”.

7:50 Nicodemus sets us a good example of speaking up for Jesus in the midst of secular society which has no time for Him, even if it means being mocked and despised.

doing? ⁵² They answered and said to him: Are you also of Galilee? Search the scrolls and you will see, that no prophet is to rise from Galilee. ⁵³ At that, each of them went home.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 16 Oct. 16

A Woman Taken in Adultery

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² And early in the morning he again went into the temple, and all the people came to him; and he sat down and taught them. ³ And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery; and having placed her before him, ⁴ they said to him: Teacher. This woman has been caught in the very act of adultery! ⁵ Now, in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say? ⁶ And this they said to test him, so they might have some reason to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. ⁷ But when they continued asking him, he stood up and said to them: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸ And again he stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. ⁹ And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the

eldest, to the last; and Jesus was left alone with the woman, with her still standing in the middle. ¹⁰ And Jesus stood up and said to her: Woman! Where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you? ¹¹ And she said: No one, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither do I condemn you. Go your way. From this time forward, sin no more.

Controversy with the Jews

¹² Again Jesus spoke to the crowd, saying: I am the light of the world. He that follows me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life. ¹³ The Pharisees replied to him: You testify of yourself. Your witness is not true. ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them: Even if I testify of myself, my witness is true. For I know from where I came and where I go; but you do not know where I come from, nor where I go to. ¹⁵ You judge after the flesh. I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and He who sent me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it is written, that the witness of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am he that testifies of myself; and the Father that sent me testifies of me. ¹⁹ They replied to him: Where is your Father? Jesus answered: You know

8:3 If they caught her in the act, then where was the man?

8:6 What did He write? Their sins? Or did He just doodle in the dust from sheer male embarrassment at being in the presence of a naked woman who clearly respected and loved Him?

8:12 *Light* – The Greek word can mean a torch, a burning flame held on a pole. There's a similarity of ideas with crucifixion; Jesus was lifted up on the pole, and thus becomes the light of our world, we understand everything in the context of His death there and all it means for us and demands of us.

8:19 The Pharisees studied the Bible all the time and could recite much of the Old

neither me, nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also. ²⁰ These words spoke he in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; and no one took him- because his hour had not yet come. ²¹ He replied again to them: I go away, and you shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come. ²² The Jews replied: Will he kill himself? Because he said: Where I go, you cannot come. ²³ And he said to them: You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. ²⁴ I replied to you, that you shall die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you shall die in your sins. ²⁵ They replied to him: Who are you? Jesus said to them: Even that which I have spoken to you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. However, He that sent me is true, and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world. ²⁷ They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. ²⁸ Jesus continued: When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And He that sent me is with

me. He has not left me alone. For I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. ³⁰ As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

Controversy About Abraham

³¹ Jesus replied to those Jews that had believed him: If you abide in my word, then are you truly my disciples. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ³³ They answered him: We are Abraham's seed, and have never yet been in bondage to anyone. What do you mean, you shall be made free? ³⁴ Jesus answered them: Truly, truly, I say to you: Everyone who commits sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵ And the servant does not stay in the house for ever. The son stays forever. ³⁶ If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham's seed. Yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak the things which I have seen with my Father, and you also do the things which you heard from your father. ³⁹ They answered and said to him: Our father is Abraham. Jesus said to them: If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But now you seek

Testament. But Jesus said they didn't know God. Knowing God is an experience, not head knowledge.

8:23 *From above... not of this world* – Doesn't mean that Jesus existed in Heaven before His birth. He was not 'of the world' in the sense that we are not 'of the world' (Jn. 17:16). But He like us was born in this world; we are in the world but not "of" it (Jn. 17:15).

8:37 In one sense they were physically Abraham's children; in another sense they weren't (v. 39). All those who believe in Christ and have been baptized into Him are the true children of Abraham and thereby God's people (Gal. 3:27-29).

to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I heard from God. This Abraham did not do. ⁴¹ You do the works of your father. They said to him: We were not born of fornication. We have one Father, even God. ⁴² Jesus said to them: If God were your Father, you would love me. For I came forth and am come from God. For neither have I come of myself, but He sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand my speech? Because you cannot hear my word! ⁴⁴ You are of your father the Devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ He that is of God hears the words of God. For this cause you do not hear them, because you are not of God. ⁴⁸ The Jews answered and said to him: Say we not

well that you are a Samaritan and have a demon? ⁴⁹ Jesus answered: I do not have a demon. I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. ⁵⁰ I do not seek my own glory. There is One that seeks and judges. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you: If a man keeps my word, he shall never see death. ⁵² The Jews said to him: Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets, but you say: If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death. ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died, and the prophets who died? Whom do you make yourself? ⁵⁴ Jesus answered: If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifies me, whom you say is your God. ⁵⁵ You have not known Him, but I know Him; and if I should say I know Him not, I shall be like you, a liar; but I know Him and keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and rejoiced. ⁵⁷ The Jews replied to him: You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? ⁵⁸ Jesus said to them: Truly, truly, I

8:44 “The devil” is a murderer. But “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 Jn. 3:15). The Devil must, therefore, die – but angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35-36) they are therefore immortal, and have eternal life abiding in them. “The devil” is therefore not an Angel. 1 Jn. 3:10 identifies the children of the Devil as those who obey their evil desires – the real Devil. Cain was the first murderer (Gen. 4:8,9). Cain was not a super-human person called the Devil, but an ordinary man, having the characteristics of the serpent and manifesting the flesh. “Deceit” – i.e. lies – proceed “from within, out of the heart of men” (Mk. 7:21,22).

8:56 The only time we read of Abraham rejoicing was when he laughed for joy at the promise that he would have a descendant (Gen. 17:17). He understood that the son he was having would be in the line from which God's Son, Messiah, would be born.

8:58 As God's Son, Jesus carried His Father's Name. “I am” may be a reference to this – although the same Greek phrase is used by the healed blind man in Jn. 9:9. To the Jews, Abraham was the greatest man who would ever live. Jesus is saying “I am

say to you: I am of higher status than Abraham ever was.⁵⁹ Therefore they took up stones to cast at him; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

CHAPTER 9 Apr. 17 Oct. 17

Jesus Cures a Blind Man

And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth.² And his disciples asked him: Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?³ Jesus answered: Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be revealed in him.⁴ We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day. The night comes, when no one can work.⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.⁶ When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay,⁷ and said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent). He went away therefore and washed, and went home seeing.⁸ His neighbours and those that had seen him previously, as a beggar, said: Is this

not he that sat and begged?⁹ Others said: It is he. Others said: No, but he is like him. He said: I am he.¹⁰ They replied to him: How then were your eyes opened?¹¹ He answered: The man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: Go to Siloam and wash. So I went away and washed, and I received sight.¹² And they said to him: Where is he? He said: I do not know.¹³ They took him that was previously blind to the Pharisees.¹⁴ Now it was the Sabbath on the day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.¹⁵ So the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. And he said to them: He put clay upon my eyes, and I washed and I could see.¹⁶ Therefore, some of the Pharisees said: This man is not from God, because he keeps not the Sabbath. But others said: How can a man that is a sinner do such signs? And there was division among them.¹⁷ Therefore they said to the man born blind: What do you say concerning him, in that he opened your eyes? And he said: He is a prophet!¹⁸ The Jews did not believe him, that he had been

now, as I stand here, more important than Abraham". As they stood there, Jesus was the one to be honoured rather than Abraham. He is saying 'I am now, more important than Abraham ever was'. Jesus does not say 'Before Abraham was, I was'.

9:3 Disease and suffering don't come necessarily as a punishment for sin. In our case, they come so that God's purpose may be manifested through them.'

9:6 The word of Christ [His spittle] mixed with clay [human flesh] brings sight.

9:7 This may have looked forward to baptism, the washing we must do once we 'see'.

9:11 *The man* – There was nothing in Jesus to give anyone the idea that He was God. This is a perversion of later human theology rather than the testimony of the Gospel records.

9:16 *This man is not from God, because he keeps not the Sabbath* – Sabbath keepers say the same today; but Jesus' answer remains the same for them too.

blind and had received his sight, until they called his parents, ¹⁹ and asked them: Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see? ²⁰ His parents answered and said: We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹ But how he now sees, we do not know. Or who opened his eyes, we do not know. Ask him! He is of age. He shall speak for himself. ²² These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews. For the Jews had agreed already, that if anyone should confess him to be Christ, he should be thrown out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents replied: He is of age, ask him! ²⁴ So they questioned the man that was born blind a second time, and said to him: Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner. ²⁵ He answered: Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see. ²⁶ They replied to him: What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? ²⁷ He answered them: I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Would you also become his disciples? ²⁸ And they reviled him

and said: You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know from where he came. ³⁰ The man answered and said to them: This is the marvel! You do not know from where he came, even though he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone be a worshiper of God and does His will, him He hears! ³² Since the world began it has never been heard of a man born blind having his eyes opened. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing. ³⁴ They answered and said to him: You were altogether born in sins, and you teach us! And they excommunicated him. ³⁵ Jesus heard that they had excommunicated him; and on finding him, he said: Do you believe on the Son of God? ³⁶ He answered and said: Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in him? ³⁷ Jesus said to him: You have both seen him, and he it is that speaks with you. ³⁸ And he said: Lord, I believe. And he worshiped him. ³⁹ And Jesus said: For judgment I came into this world, that they that cannot see may see, and that they that see may

9:21 Their fear of religious disfellowship is contrasted with the fearless attitude of their son. Excommunication is a practice much abused by many religious groups.

9:31 The man reasoned that Jesus must have prayed to God in order for God to do this miracle; and been pleasing to God, for God heard Him to an amazing extent. He came to a very accurate understanding of the nature of Jesus and His relationship with His Father.

9:34 They threw Him out of the synagogue for believing in Jesus and for having been cured by Him. Typical religious abuse.

9:38 The man believed *after* His healing; the real possession of the Holy Spirit gifts enabled miracles to be done upon unbelievers and people like this man who were ignorant of Jesus (v. 25).

become blind. ⁴⁰ Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said to him: Are we also blind? ⁴¹ Jesus said to them: If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say: We see, therefore your sin remains.

CHAPTER 10 Apr. 17 Oct. 17

Jesus as the Good Shepherd

Truly, truly, I say to you: He that enters not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ² But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens the gate, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he brings out all his sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him. For they do not know the voice of strangers. ⁶ This parable spoke Jesus to them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. ⁷ Je-

sus then said to them: Again, truly, truly, I say to you: I am the door of the sheepfold. ⁸ All that came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹ I am the door. By me if anyone enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief only comes so that he may steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and I know my own and my own know me. ¹⁵ Even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my

9:41 Knowledge / 'seeing' brings responsibility to Divine judgment.

10:5 There is something instinctively attractive to us about the words of Jesus. When we read the uninspired 'gospels', it's clear almost instinctively to Christians that they aren't the true words of Jesus.

10:9 The 'entering in' to the sheepfold [the church] is through baptism into Christ. There is no other way "in".

10:12 This is an unusual shepherd – fighting with a wolf to the death for the sheep. Wolves don't fight that desperately. But this one does. Sin appears a menace but something which can easily be overcome by a man – when in fact it can't be overcome so easily, it is a bitter fight to the death.

10:15 *Knows me, and I know the Father* – The Greek verbs here are in the continuous tense. God grows in knowledge of Jesus, and Jesus grows in knowledge of God. It's a dynamic relationship between them; eternity won't be 'the same old scene' for us, we too will grow in knowing God – and even vice versa.

10:16 *Other sheep* – The Gentiles?

voice, and they shall become one flock with one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it away from me, but I lay it down myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again. This command I received from my Father. ¹⁹ Because of these words, again a division arose among the Jews. ²⁰ And many of them said: He has a demon and is mad. Why do you listen to him? ²¹ Others said: These are not the sayings of one possessed with a demon. Can a demon possessed person open the eyes of the blind?

The Unity of the Father and Son

²² It was the feast of the dedication at Jerusalem. ²³ It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple along Solomon's porch. ²⁴ The Jews surrounded him and said to him: How long do you hold us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly. ²⁵ Jesus answered them: I told you and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify of me. ²⁶ But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. ²⁸ And I give to them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and

no one shall snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one. ³¹ Once again the Jews took up stones to stone him. ³² Jesus said to them: Many good works have I shown you from the Father. For which of those works do you stone me? ³³ The Jews answered him: For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you, being a man, make yourself as God! ³⁴ Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: I said, you are gods? ³⁵ If he called those men gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), ³⁶ do you say of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world: You blaspheme, because I said: I am the Son of God? ³⁷ If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. ³⁸ But if I do them, though you do not believe me, believe the works; that you may know and understand, that the Father is in me and I in the Father. ³⁹ Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands. ⁴⁰ He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained. ⁴¹ Many came to him. And they said: John did no miracle,

10:30 The unity between Father and Son spoken of here is the same kind of unity possible between the Father and all His children (Jn. 17:21). The use of the neuter form for "one" (*hen esmen*) in Jn. 10:30 shows that the Father and Son aren't interchangeable – they are at one with each other, not one and the same.

10:33-36 Jesus denied being God. He quotes an example of how men can be called "gods", *elohim*; and He shows people are illogical to claim He thought He was God, when He had only said He was the *Son* of God.

but everything that John said about this man was true. ⁴² And many believed in him there.

CHAPTER 11 Apr. 18 Oct. 18

The Resurrection of Lazarus

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² And it was that Mary who had anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. ³ The sisters therefore sent to him, saying: Lord, he whom you love is sick. ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said: This sickness is not to death, but for the glory of God, that thereby the Son of God may be glorified. ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ When he heard that Lazarus was sick, he therefore stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this, he said to the disciples: Let us go into Judea again. ⁸ The disciples said to him: Rabbi, only a few days ago the Jews wanted to stone you; and you want to go there again? ⁹ Jesus answered: Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if a man walks in the night, he stumbles, because the

light is not in him. ¹¹ These things he spoke, and after this he said to them: Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. ¹² The disciples replied to him: Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of Lazarus' death; but they thought that he spoke of Lazarus taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus said to them plainly: Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him. ¹⁶ Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples: Let us also go, that we may die with him. ¹⁷ So when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in his tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near to Jerusalem, about three kilometres away. ¹⁹ And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary stayed in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² And even now, I know that whatever you shall ask of God, God will give you. ²³ Jesus said to her: Your brother shall rise again. ²⁴ Martha said to him: I know that

10:41 John did no miracles and preached a hard hitting message of repentance and preparation for the coming of Jesus. People flocked to hear him, accepting what he said, repented and were baptized. His own sincerity must therefore have been so obvious; it was this which gave him authority in the eyes and ears of his audiences. The same can be true in our preaching.

11:6 Lack of immediate answer to our requests doesn't mean God or Jesus haven't heard them. They have 'answered', but for various reasons, to glorify His Name the more, they may delay in 'coming' in response.

he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. ²⁵ Jesus said to her: I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes on me, though he die, yet shall he live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes on me shall never die. Do you believe this? ²⁷ She said to him: Yes, Lord. I have believed you are the Christ, the Son of God, he that is to come into the world. ²⁸ And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here and calls you. ²⁹ And she, when she heard it, arose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still in the place where Martha met him). ³¹ The Jews then who were with her in the house and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Therefore, when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying to him: Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who had come with her, he groaned in the

spirit and was disturbed, ³⁴ and said: Where have you laid him? They said to him: Lord, come and see. ³⁵ Jesus wept. ³⁶ The Jews said: Look how he loved him! ³⁷ But some of them said: Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have also caused that this man should not have died? ³⁸ Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay across it. ³⁹ Jesus said: Take away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, said to him: Lord, by this time the body stinks. For he has been dead four days. ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her: Did I not say to you, that if you believed, you should see the glory of God? ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said: Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² And I know you hear me always, but because of the crowd that stands around I said it, that they may believe you did send me. ⁴³ And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come out! ⁴⁴ He that was dead came out, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to

11:24 Nothing is said here about an immortal soul which goes to reward in Heaven after death. Instead the emphasis is upon the literal bodily resurrection of believers from the dead, when Christ returns. By baptism we identify with the death and resurrection of Jesus, and can share in this great hope (Rom. 6:3-5).

11:38 *Groaning* – In prayer to God. Likewise the ‘weeping’ of v. 35 was in prayer – Rom. 8:26 says that Jesus prays for us now with groaning. We should therefore take our prayer life seriously, knowing that there is such intense mediation going on for us in Heaven itself, before the throne of God.

11:41 Jesus thanked God for the answer to His prayers even before the answer had happened, i.e., before Lazarus had come forth. Jesus was no hypocrite – He was practicing what He had taught in Mk. 11:24: “When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for”.

them: Loose him, and let him go away. ⁴⁵ Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to Mary and saw what he did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done.

The Response of the Pharisees

⁴⁷ The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: What will we do? For this man does many miracles. ⁴⁸ If we leave him alone, all men will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. ⁴⁹ But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them: You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, so that the whole nation does not perish. ⁵¹ Now this he said not of himself, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation. ⁵² And not for the nation only, but that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad. ⁵³ So from that day forward, they took advice how they might put him to death. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but departed from there into

the country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there he stayed with the disciples. ⁵⁵ Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand; and many from the countryside went to Jerusalem to purify themselves before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They looked for Jesus, and spoke one with another, as they stood in the temple: What do you think? That he will not come to the feast? ⁵⁷ Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, they were to inform them, so that they might arrest him.

CHAPTER 12 Apr. 19 Oct. 19

Mary Anoints Jesus

Therefore, six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they made him supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat and ate with him. ³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, the one that would betray him, said: ⁵ Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor? ⁶ Now

11:44 The miracle was not only of resurrection; but that a man with tied feet and hands could get out of graveclothes and walk across a cave to its entrance and out into the open air. The wonders which God does in our lives contain so many 'smaller' wonders, the more we analyze them.

11:52 The cross should elicit unity between God's children. This should be especially seen at the breaking of bread meeting, when we gather together to remember Christ's death. This is not the place for division and exclusion of God's children, but for celebrating our unity.

this he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. ⁷ Jesus replied: Leave her alone, she intended to keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ The poor you have always with you, but me you do not have always. ⁹ The common people of the Jews learned that he was there, and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death, ¹¹ because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

¹² The next day, a great crowd that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³ took the branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, and cried out: Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel! ¹⁴ And Jesus, having found a young donkey, sat upon it- as it is written: ¹⁵ Fear not, daughter of Zion! Look, your King

comes, sitting on an donkey's colt. ¹⁶ These things his disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him, and that they had done these things to him. ¹⁷ The crowd that was with him, when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, made testimony. ¹⁸ For this cause also the crowd went and met him, for they heard that he had done this miracle. ¹⁹ The Pharisees complained to one another: You see that you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.

Jesus Speaks of His death

²⁰ Now there were certain Greeks among those that went to worship at the feast. ²¹ These went to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him: Sir, can we see Jesus? ²² Philip went and told Andrew, and then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus told them: The hour comes that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you: Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ He

12:6 Someone with the perception of Jesus surely knew what was going on. But He didn't challenge Judas about it, in the hope he would repent. When we see the failures of others, it may not be wise to immediately challenge them.

12:7 Despite so clearly predicting His death, it seems only Mary really understood. In his preaching of the Gospel, John was saying that the male disciples – the public preachers of the Gospel – hadn't understood the most basic part of it, i.e. the death of Christ, but one *woman* did. Thus John is holding up a *woman* as the role model for all his hearers and readers.

12:24 Jesus perceived the great potential, the fruit, in the awful experience He was about to go through. We can face our sufferings likewise.

12:25 We must die first in order to live eternally. This is the symbolism of baptism – going under the water is like death with Jesus, coming up out of the water is like

that loves his life loses it, and he that hates his life in this world, shall keep it to everlasting life. ²⁶ If anyone desires to serve me, he must follow me. Where I am, there shall also my servant be. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him. ²⁷ Now is my soul disturbed; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name. Therefore, there came a voice out of Heaven: I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. ²⁹ The crowd that stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus responded: This voice has not come for my sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. ³³ But this he said to signify by what manner of death he should die. ³⁴ The crowd asked him: We have heard out of the law that the Christ abides forever; and how do you say: The Son of Man must be lifted up?

Who is this Son of Man? ³⁵ Jesus replied to them: Yet a little while is the light among you. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness does not overtake you. He that walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light. Jesus spoke these things, then he departed and hid himself from them.

Belief in Jesus

³⁷ But though he had done so many signs before them, yet they did not believe in him. ³⁸ So that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, when he spoke: Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ³⁹ Because of this they could not believe, because Isaiah also said: ⁴⁰ He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts, and turn, so that I should heal them. ⁴¹ These things said Isaiah, because he foresaw his glory, and he spoke about

resurrection with Him (Rom. 6:3-5). But we must live out this principle in daily life, sacrificing what we could have in this life so that we might live eternally.

12:27 This is a wonderful insight into the internal thought process of Jesus as He struggled with temptation. Because He endured temptation, He is able to support us when we are tempted (Heb. 4:15,16).

12:32 We need to reconstruct in our own minds the picture of Christ hanging crucified upon the cross. If we are God's people, we will be drawn closer to Him by it. "All men" here doesn't refer to every human being, but to those who draw near to Jesus on the cross. This group of people are 'all things' to God.

12:34 *Son of man* – This was Jesus' favourite self-description. He thus emphasized His humanity, that He was one of us, of our nature.

12:40 God blinds the eyes of those who don't want to see. We must be careful not to slip into the downward spiral, but remain instead in an upward spiral of belief and response to that belief.

him. ⁴² Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. ⁴³ For they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God. ⁴⁴ And Jesus cried and said: He that believes on me does not believe on me, but on him that sent me. ⁴⁵ And he that sees me, sees him that sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in the darkness. ⁴⁷ And if anyone hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not. For I came not to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He that rejects me and receives not my sayings has one that judges him. The word that I spoke, the same shall judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I spoke not from myself, but the Father that sent me, He has given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.

⁵⁰ And I know that His commandment is everlasting life. The things therefore which I speak, even as the Father has said to me: So I speak.

CHAPTER 13 Apr. 20 Oct. 20

The Last Supper

Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour had come, that he should depart out of this world to his Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² And during supper, when the Devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which

12:42 Many people today 'believe' but will not openly admit it, because they are worried what people will think of them. God arranged circumstances so that rulers like Nicodemus and Joseph 'came out' openly; but others didn't respond to that and because they hid their candle under a bucket, they lost their faith, their light went out.

12:43 If we believe and confess that faith, through baptism and an open life of commitment, then God glorifies us – in His own book, in His own way, even if the world doesn't see it.

12:48 It's as if Bible verses, the words of Jesus, will be quoted back to us at judgment day and we will be asked how we responded to them. There will be a process of judgment, not just a yes / no statement from our Judge.

13:1 To give your life for God's people is 'love to the end'. Jesus defined that for us in His crucifixion.

13:3, 4 We sense in these verses the very definite sense of purpose which there was in Jesus. We who carry His cross should have the same. The stream of small decisions we face each day we will make in the context of the purpose-driven life which we have in Christ.

13:5 To wash the guests' feet was the job of the lowest servant. Jesus showed us that true greatness is in humble service, being a "servant of all". Even Peter struggled to

he was girded. ⁶ When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him: Lord, are you going to wash my feet? ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him: What I am doing you do not comprehend now, but later you shall understand. ⁸ Peter said to him: You shall never wash my feet! Jesus answered him: If I do not wash you, you have no part with me. ⁹ Simon Peter said to him: Lord, wash not only my feet but also my hands and my head. ¹⁰ Jesus said to him: He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you. ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said: Not all of you are clean. ¹² So when he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and sat down again, he said to them: Do you comprehend what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me teacher and lord, and you say well; for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one an-

other's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you: A servant is not greater than his lord, neither is one sent greater than he that sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, and if you do them, you will be blessed. ¹⁸ I speak not of you all. I know whom I have chosen; but the scripture must be fulfilled: He that eats my bread lifted up his heel against me. ¹⁹ From this time forward I will tell you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe that I am he. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you: He that receives whoever I send receives me, and he that receives me, receives Him that sent me. ²¹ When Jesus had said this, he was disturbed in his spirit, and testified: Truly, truly, I say to you: One of you shall betray me. ²² The disciples looked at each other, wondering of whom he spoke. ²³ There was at the table reclining on Jesus' chest one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned

understand the huge extent of this principle (v. 7) and we also find it hard to grasp.

13:8 *No part* – This could be a reference to the vital importance of baptism in order to be “in Christ”; “he who believes *and* is baptized shall be saved” (Jn. 3:3-5); unless a person is born of water and spirit, they cannot enter God’s Kingdom (Jn. 3:3-5).

13:16 Jesus repeatedly describes Himself as “sent” by God; He therefore recognized that God was greater than Him, as He stated specifically in Jn. 14:28. He wasn’t therefore ‘God’ in a Trinitarian sense.

13:19 The purpose of prophecy / Biblical prediction is not to give us a road map of events in the future, but rather so that when events happen, we will be able to understand them in their Divine context.

13:20 We are the representatives of Jesus in this world, and our behaviour should be appropriate.

13:23 This other disciple was probably John. In preaching the Gospel, John deemphasized himself. He describes himself as simply a disciple whom Jesus loved. We should have such self-effacement when preaching Christ, focusing upon Him rather than ourselves.

to him, and said to him: Tell us who it is of whom he speaks. ²⁵ He leaning back, as he was on Jesus' breast, said to him: Lord, who is it? ²⁶ Jesus answered: It is he to whom I gave the morsel of bread after I dipped it. When he had dipped the morsel, he had given it to Judas the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ Then after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him: What you are about to do, do quickly. ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew for what reason Jesus spoke this to Judas. ²⁹ Some thought because Judas had the money bag, that Jesus said to him: Buy what things we have need of for the feast, or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ He then having received the morsel went out immediately into the night.

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denials

³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said: Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² And God shall glorify him in Himself, and will glorify him immediately. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me, but as I said to the Jews, where I go, you cannot

come. So now I say to you. ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. Even as I have loved you, you also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know you are my disciples- if you have love for one another. ³⁶ Simon Peter said to him: Lord, where do you go? Jesus answered: Where I go, you cannot follow now, but you shall follow afterwards. ³⁷ Peter said to him: Lord, why cannot I follow you even now? I will lay down my life for you! ³⁸ Jesus answered: Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you: The cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times.

CHAPTER 14 Apr. 20 Oct. 20

Knowing the Father and Son

Do not let your heart be disturbed. Believe in God, believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And where I go, you know the way. ⁵ Thomas said to him:

13:26 This was the sign of being the specially favoured guest. Realizing the greatness of Christ's love for us leads us to either repent, or as Judas, go out into the darkness.

13:34 What's "new" about this commandment is to love *as Jesus has loved us*. And He died for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

13:35 Our unusual love for others should be a startling witness which grabs the attention of those around us.

14:2 God's house refers to His temple, His family – not to Heaven as a location. There is a specific place for each of us within His family and purpose. "I go" is in answer to Peter's question of 13:36: 'Where are you going?'. Jesus was going to the cross, and would 'come again' in His resurrection. These verses do not teach that we will go to Heaven.

Lord, we do not know where you go. How do we discern the way? ⁶ Jesus said to him: I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me. ⁷ If you had truly known me, you would have truly known my Father also. From this time forward you will truly know Him and will have seen Him. ⁸ Philip said to him: Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us. ⁹ Jesus said to him: Philip, have I been with you such a long time, and still you do not truly know me? He that has seen me has seen the Father. How do you ask: Show us the Father? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not from myself; but the Father abiding in me does His works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. ¹² Truly, truly, I say to you: He that believes in me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father. ¹³ And whatever you shall ask in my name,

that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you shall ask anything in my name, that will I do.

The Comforter

¹⁵ If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that he may be with you for ever- ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. For it neither sees him nor knows him. You truly know him, for he abides with you and shall be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you desolate as orphans. I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you will see me. Because I live, you shall live also. ²⁰ In that day, you shall truly know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you. ²¹ He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ²² Judas (not Iscariot) said to him: Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to

14:6 Non-Christian religions therefore cannot lead us to God in truth.

14:9 'Seeing' in John's Gospel often means to understand. Nobody can literally see God, but Jesus has revealed Him to us (Jn. 1:18); we can 'see' Him insofar as we 'see' or understand Jesus.

14:10 The words and works of Jesus are paralleled here. Our words too must be backed up by our actions and congruent with them.

14:13 This is not a blanket promise to do whatever anybody asks; whatever we ask that glorifies God, He will do.

14:19 The resurrection of Jesus guarantees our resurrection – if we are baptized into Him and His new life is lived in us (Rom. 6:3-5).

14:21 *Has... and keeps* – Correct knowledge of Christ's word is important. We cannot keep His word without knowing what it is.

14:22, 23 The reason why not everyone 'gets it' about God and Jesus is because they don't keep their word.

us, and not to the world? ²³ Jesus answered and said to him: If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him; and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ He that does not love me, does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. ²⁵ These things have I spoken to you, while still with you. ²⁶ But the comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and cause you to remember all that I said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give it to you. Let not your heart be disturbed, neither let it be fearful. ²⁸ You heard how I said to you: I go away and I come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father. For the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer say much to you. For the prince of the world comes; but he has

no claim on me. ³¹ And he comes so that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, thus I shall now do. Arise, let us leave here.

CHAPTER 15 Apr. 21 Oct. 21

The True Vine

I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. ² Every branch in me that carries no fruit, he prunes away; and every branch that carries fruit, he cleanses it, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can you, except you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him, the same carries much fruit. For severed from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If a man does not abide in me, he is thrown out as a branch and withers, and these are gathered and thrown into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in me and

14:26 The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, therefore had special relevance to the disciples who heard Jesus; it brought all things He had said to them back to their memory, so that they could write the inspired Gospel records.

14:27 *Peace* – In Hebrew, *shalom*. Jewish people called out “Shalom!” to each other, but the “Shalom” of Jesus isn’t mere words but a real peace which can be felt, known, experienced.

14:28 *The Father is greater than I* – This clearly refutes the idea that Jesus is the same as God. God was greater than Jesus.

15:1, 2 Jesus doesn’t say “I am the trunk and you are branches”. He is us and we are Him. This is how intimately connected He is with us, and why no branch can claim to not be in association with the other branches.

15:4, 5 True spiritual fruit cannot be produced by those outside of Christ.

15:6 If we go out of association with the vine, we will wither. Christianity can’t be lived in isolation from other believers.

15:7 John also writes that if we ask anything according to *God’s* will, then we will be

my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you. ⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; and so shall you be my disciples. ⁹ Even as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. ¹² This is my commandment: That you love one another, even as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: That a man lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends, if you do the things which I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants. For the servant does not know what his lord does; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father, I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain. So that whatever you shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it to you.

¹⁷ These things I command you, so that you may love one another.

The Believer and the World

¹⁸ If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But all these things will they do to you for my name's sake, because they do not truly know Him that sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He that hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ All this happens so that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law: They hated me without a cause. ²⁶ And when the

heard (1 Jn. 5:14). But if God's word abides in us, then we will ask according to *our* will and be heard – because our will becomes God's will if His word abides in us. We will not ask what *we* want but what *God* wills – His will shall become *our* will.

15:15 Islam and many other religious systems speak much of 'submission'. But we are the friends of Jesus, not His slaves. Our work for Him is from a motive of love, and is performed in active co-operation with Him as we work together to the same end – the glorification of God.

15:16 The initiative was with God and Jesus – because we are saved by pure grace. We should take the initiative in showing love and grace to others, as God did to us.

15:18-20 We should therefore expect opposition from the world, as predicted in the opening promise of the Bible in Gen. 3:15.

15:22 Knowledge of God's word brings responsibility.

Comforter comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me. ²⁷ And you also shall testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

CHAPTER 16 Apr. 21 Oct. 21

These things have I spoken to you, so that you should not be made to stumble. ² They shall put you out of the synagogues. Yes, the time is coming, when whoever kills you shall think that he offers service to God. ³ And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father nor me. ⁴ But these things have I spoken to you, so that when the time comes, you may remember what I told you. And these things I did not say to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I go to Him that sent me; and none of you asks me, Where do you go? ⁶ But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I do not

go away, the Comforter will not come to you. I will send him to you. ⁸ And he, when he comes, will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. ⁹ Of sin, because they do not believe in me. ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to the Father and you see me no more. ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged. ¹² I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ However, when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he shall guide you into all the truth. For he shall not speak from himself; but whatever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify me; for he shall take what is mine and shall declare it to you. ¹⁵ All things, whatever the Father has, are mine. Therefore I said: that he shall take of mine and declare it to you.

Jesus Promises to See the Disciples Again

¹⁶ A little while, and you will see me no more; and then a little while, and you shall see me, because I go to

16:2 Jesus didn't tell His disciples to leave the synagogues, even though they were full of false teaching and behaviour. He predicted that His followers would be excommunicated from the synagogues because they taught the Truth about Him. The early church grew initially from witness made to Christ in the synagogues. We shouldn't be worried about 'guilt by association' with those who believe and act wrongly; we should try to teach them and witness to them about the real Christ, and in time they will exclude us if they are not of the Truth.

16:5 *None of you asks* – Did Jesus say this in tones of sadness and disappointment, or of irritated criticism? Consider how He spoke v. 31 also.

16:12 Have a look at 1 Cor. 3:2 and Heb. 5:11. These verses in the later New Testament allude here. The New Testament writers such as Paul were so full of the words of Jesus that they consciously and unconsciously alluded to them all the time. The word of Jesus should so abide in us that we do likewise.

the Father. ¹⁷ Some of his disciples questioned each other: What is this that he said to us? A little while and you will see me no more; and then a little while and you shall see me, because I go to the Father? ¹⁸ They said: What is this that he said? A little while? We cannot decipher what he said. ¹⁹ Jesus perceived that they wanted to ask him, and he said to them: Do you inquire among yourselves what I said? A little while and you will see me no more, and then a little while and you shall see me? ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you: You shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy! ²¹ A woman when she is in labour has sorrow, because her hour comes; but when she has delivered the child, she does not remember her anguish, because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² You now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one will take away from you. ²³ And in that day, you shall ask me no questions. Truly, truly, I say to you: If you shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name. ²⁴ So far you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full. ²⁵ These things have I spoken to you in figurative language. The

hour comes, when I shall no longer speak to you in figurative language, but shall show you plainly about the Father. ²⁶ In that day you shall ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I will pray to the Father for you. ²⁷ For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from the Father. ²⁸ I came from the Father and came into the world. Now I leave the world and go to the Father. ²⁹ His disciples said: Now you speak plainly and not in figurative language! ³⁰ Now we are sure that you know all things, and do not need anyone to question you. By this we believe you came from God. ³¹ Jesus answered them: Do you now believe? ³² Behold, the hour comes, yes, has come, when you shall be scattered, every man to his own home, and you shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³ These things have I spoken to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good courage; I have overcome the world.

CHAPTER 17 Apr. 22 Oct. 22

Jesus' Prayer to God

These things spoke Jesus, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he said: Father, the hour comes. Glorify Your son, that the son may glorify

16:17 This is a paradox – the believers would see Jesus when they could no longer see Him. The work of the Comforter is such that we can as it were see Jesus as realistically as the disciples did during His life on earth. But this is *if* we let the Comforter operate fully.

16:33 *I have overcome* – But He had not yet died and thereby overcome the world. He so believed that He would overcome that He spoke as if He already had.

you,² even as You gave him authority over all flesh, so that he should give eternal life to all whom You have given him.³ And this is everlasting life, that they should know You, the only true God, and him whom You sent, Jesus Christ.⁴ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You gave me to do.⁵ And now Father, glorify me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was.⁶ I manifested Your Name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word.⁷ Now they know that all things, whatever You have given me, are from You.⁸ For the words which You gave me I have given to them, and they received them, and knew as a truth that I came forth from You;

and they believed that You did send me.⁹ I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given me; for they are Yours.¹⁰ All things that are mine are Yours, and Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.¹¹ I am no more in the world; but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them whom You have given me in Your Name, that they may be one, even as we are one.¹² While I was with them, I kept them in Your Name which You have given me, and I guarded them; and not one of them perished except the son of perdition, so that the scripture might be fulfilled.¹³ Now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy made full in themselves.¹⁴ I have given them Your word, and the world hated

17:3 “Know” is in the Greek continuous tense. We will spend eternity growing to know God. This is what eternal life will be about. If we don’t want to know God now, then there will be no point giving us eternity in God’s Kingdom to do this.

17:5 We need to remember that the Lord was speaking, and John was writing, against a Jewish background. The language of ‘pre-existence’ was common in Jewish thinking and writing. To be ‘with God’ didn’t mean, in Jewish terms, to be up there in heaven with God literally. Mary had favour *para* God (Lk. 1:30) in the same way as Jesus had glory *para* God, but this doesn’t mean she pre-existed or was in Heaven with God with her “favour”. The Torah supposedly pre-existed, everything on earth was a pattern of the pre-existing ideas of those things which were held in the plan and mind of God in Heaven. John 17:5 has reference to these things: “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed”. The Talmud and Genesis Rabbah speak of the “Throne of Glory” pre-existing before the world existed. And the Lord Jesus seems to be alluding to that. The Jewish mind wouldn’t have understood the Lord Jesus to be making any claim here to have bodily, physically existed before birth. Peter reflected Jewish thinking when he wrote (albeit under inspiration) that Jesus was “foreknown” before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:20 ESV). Think through the implications of being “foreknown” – the Greek word used is the root of the English word ‘prognosis’. If God ‘foreknew’ His Son, the Son was not literally existent next to Him at the time of being ‘foreknown’. Otherwise the language of ‘foreknowing’ becomes meaningless.

17:14-18 We are to be “in” the world, but not “of” the spirit of this world.

them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out from the world, but that You should keep them from the evil. ¹⁶ They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent me into the world, even so I send them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth. ²⁰ Neither for these only do I pray, but for those also that believe in me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in me and I in You, that they may also be one in us; that the world may believe You did send me. ²² And the glory which You have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one. ²³ I in them and You in me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know You did send me and that You have loved them just as You loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also whom You have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which You have given me. For You loved me from before the

foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, the world did not know You; but I knew You, and these knew that You sent me. ²⁶ And I declared to them Your Name, and will declare it, so that the love with which You loved me may be in them, and I in them.

CHAPTER 18 Apr. 22 Oct. 22

Jesus in Gethsemane

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where there was a garden into which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, the one who betrayed him, also knew the place. For Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ Judas along with a detachment of temple guards whom he had been given, and the servants of the chief priests, and the Pharisees, arrived there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Jesus knowing all the things that must come upon him, went forward and said to them: Whom do you seek? ⁵ They answered him: Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them: I am he (Judas, the one who betrayed him, was standing with them). ⁶ When he said to them:

17:23 The unity of believers was a major theme in the Lord's mind as He faced His death. It should be of paramount importance to us too.

17:26 God's Name refers to His characteristics. As the Angel declared these to Moses as he hid in a cave, humbled by God's glory passing by (Ex. 34:4-6), so Jesus declared that Name to perfection in His death. He did this in the life He lived ("I made known to them your name"), but in a very special way at the crucifixion ("and will make it known"). The result of us perceiving this in the cross is that we shall love one another, with the love of Christ.

18:4 *Knowing all... went forward* – His bravery and sense of mission appears the greater when we realize that He 'knew all' that would come. We are to carry His cross, and have His spirit.

18:6 The "I am" was probably a reference to His Father's Name which Jesus carried.

I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again he asked them: Whom do you seek? And they said: Jesus of Nazareth. ⁸ Jesus answered: I told you that I am he. If therefore you seek me, let these go their way-⁹ that the word might be fulfilled which he spoke: Of those whom you have given me I lost not one. ¹⁰ Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. Now the servant's name was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter: Put the sword into its sheath. The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

Jesus Before the High Priest

¹² So the detachment of temple guards and their chief captain and the magistrates' attendants of the Jews seized Jesus and bound him, ¹³ and led him to Annas first. For he was father in law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas that had counselled the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. ¹⁵ Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest; and he entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest. ¹⁶ But Peter was standing outside the door. So

the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the maid who kept watch at the door. ¹⁷ The maid keeping watch at the door said to Peter: Are you also one of this man's disciples? He said: I am not! ¹⁸ Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals. For it was cold, and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself. ¹⁹ The high priest asked Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world. I often taught in the synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and have never spoken in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those that have heard me what I spoke to them. Behold, these know the things which I said. ²² And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying: Do you answer the high priest so? ²³ Jesus answered him: If I have spoken evil, testify of the evil, but if well, why do you hit me? ²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. ²⁵ Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said to him: Are you also one of his disci-

The fact He came in His Father's Name (Jn. 5:43) is quite normal and to be expected, but it in no way suggests He was one and the same as His Father.

18:10, 11 This incident was a contradiction of Jesus' stated principle that His servants did *not* fight, because His Kingdom is not yet (18:36). We can embarrass and shame Jesus even now by the contradiction between our lives and His life in the eyes of the world, to whom we are His representatives.

18:15 *Another disciple* – John, the author of the Gospel, doesn't push himself nor his own name in the preaching of the Gospel. Neither should we.

18:22 Jesus did not literally turn the other cheek and invite more abuse; instead He challenged His abusers.

ples? He denied and said: I am not!
 26 One of the servants of the high priest, being a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said: Did I not see you in the garden with him? 27 Peter denied again; and immediately the cock crew.

Jesus Before Pilate

28 They lead Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium; but it was early, and so they did not enter into the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled and might eat the Passover. 29 Pilate went out to them, and said: What accusation do you bring against this man? 30 They answered and said to him: If this man were not an evildoer, we should not have delivered him up to you. 31 Pilate replied to them: Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law. The Jews said to him: It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. 32 That the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spoke, signifying by what manner of death he should die. 33 Pilate therefore went into the Praetorium and

called Jesus, and said to him: Are you the King of the Jews? 34 Jesus answered: Do you say this of yourself, or did others tell it to you concerning me? 35 Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered you to me. What have you done? 36 Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from here. 37 Pilate replied to him: Are you a king then? Jesus answered: You say that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end I came into the world, that I should testify to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice. 38 Pilate said to him: What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them: I find no crime in him! 39 But you have a custom, that I should release to you one prisoner at the Passover. Will you have me release to you the King of the Jews? 40 Therefore they cried out: Not this

18:28 The legalistic mind is very careful not to break the letter of the Law whilst committing the awful sin of crucifying God's Son.

18:36 The Kingdom of Christ will come when He returns, at His second coming. One implication of that is that true Christians will not seek to enforce His principles and Kingdom upon this world in this time by using violence. There is no such thing as a 'just war'.

18:40 Barabbas is a symbol of us all. According to Jewish tradition at the time (*Pesach* 8.6) "They may slaughter the Passover lamb... for one whom they [the authorities] have promised to release from prison". The Passover amnesty freed a man justly condemned to death – on account of the death of the lamb. We can imagine the relief and joy and almost unbelief of Barabbas, as he watched or reflected upon the crucifixion of Jesus – that he who rightfully should have been there on the cross, was delivered from such a death because of the cross of Christ. The image of condemned prisoners being released due to the death of Messiah is an Old Testament figure for our redemption from slavery.

man but Barabbas! (Now Barabbas was a bandit).

CHAPTER 19 Apr. 23 Oct. 23

So Pilate had Jesus scourged. ² And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple garment. ³ And they came to him, and said: Hail, King of the Jews! And they struck him with their hands. ⁴ Pilate went out again to the Jews, and said: Look, I bring him out to you, so you may know that I find no crime in him. ⁵ Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate said to them: Behold the man! ⁶ When the chief priests and the servants saw him, they cried out: Crucify him! Crucify him! Pilate said to them: Take him yourselves and crucify him. For I find no crime in him. ⁷ The Jews answered him: We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. ⁸ When Pilate heard this he was even more afraid. ⁹ And he went back into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus: Where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ Pilate said to him: Why do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you and have the power to crucify you? ¹¹ Jesus answered him: You would have no power against me unless it was given to you from

above. So the man that delivered me to you has the greater sin. ¹² Upon this, Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, saying: If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone that makes himself a king speaks against Caesar! ¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour, and he said to the Jews: Behold, your King! ¹⁵ They cried out: Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Pilate said to them: Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar! ¹⁶ Therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified.

The Crucifixion

¹⁷ So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And there was written: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. ²⁰ This title many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near to the city; and it was written

19:11 Let's remember that all our abusers are ultimately in the hand of God. The power of evil men is ultimately from God, seeing that 'Satan' doesn't exist.

19:15 *No king* – The Old Testament clearly taught that God was Israel's King and they were therefore His Kingdom. Therefore by saying this, the Jews were declaring themselves no longer God's Kingdom.

in Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Do not write, The King of the Jews; but that: He claimed, I am King of the Jews. ²² Pilate answered: What I have written I have written. ²³ The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. ²⁴ They said to each other, Let us not tear it but cast lots for it, to determine whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled, which said: They divided my garments among them, and for my robe they cast lots. ²⁵ These things the soldiers did. There was standing by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he said to his mother: Woman, behold your son! ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple: Behold, your mother! And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ²⁸ After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now finished, so that the scripture

might be accomplished, said: I thirst. ²⁹ Nearby was a vessel full of vinegar. So they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon a hyssop stick, and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said: It is finished! And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. ³¹ The Jews, because it was the preparation day, and so that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the Sabbath (for the day of that Sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs be broken so that they might be taken away. ³² Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other that was crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ However one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out of his side. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. ³⁶ For these things happened so that the scripture might be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken. ³⁷ And again another scripture says:

19:20 *Written in Hebrew, in Latin, in Greek* – This explains the slight differences between the Gospel records in the descriptions of the title on the cross.

19:26 Jesus would've motioned with His eyes towards John – Mary was to see John now as her son. But tragically and so painfully, when Mary first heard the words, she would likely have understood them to mean 'Look at me here'. If we find our lives tragic, then think of Jesus crucified, with men gambling over His one valuable possession, i.e. His coat, which probably His mother had made – and she was watching it all.

19:29 Hyssop isn't very long, therefore Jesus was not lifted up very high above the earth, contrary to the impression given by Catholic crosses and architecture.

19:36 We are the body of Christ, His bones (Eph. 5:30).

They shall look on him whom they pierced.

The Burial of Jesus

³⁸ And after these things Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus (but secretly for fear of the Jews), asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. Therefore he came and took his body away. ³⁹ And there came also Nicodemus, he who came to him at the first by night; but now he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds {⁴⁵ kg.} weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as it is the custom of the Jews to bury. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb wherein no one had lain. ⁴² There, because of the Jews' preparation day, they laid Jesus (for the tomb was nearby).

CHAPTER 20 Apr. 24 Oct. 24

Mary Magdalene Meets the Risen Jesus

Now on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been tak-

en away from the tomb. ² She ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them: They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him! ³ Peter with the other disciple therefore went out and went to the tomb. ⁴ They ran there together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the tomb. ⁵ Stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not enter. ⁶ Simon Peter arrived behind him and entered into the tomb, and he saw the linen cloths lying there, ⁷ and the napkin that had been upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple also entered, he who had arrived first to the tomb; and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own home. ¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping. So, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting there, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ And they said to her: Woman, why do you weep? She said

19:38 Only close relatives could ask for the corpse of the crucified. Beholding the cross motivated Joseph to 'come out' openly for Jesus, feeling as part of His family.

19:39 This is a huge amount, more than the Caesars were buried with. The cross motivated Nicodemus to spend his wealth to honour Christ.

20:7 After Jesus rose, it seems the first thing He did was to fold up His graveclothes. We sense a great calm about Him – the peace which comes to all those who have identified with His death and resurrection through baptism and living in Him.

20:13 Sometimes we can be so distracted by our immediate situation, sorrow or bitterness, that we fail to see the glorious answer and resolution of God is there right before our eyes.

to them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned herself around and saw Jesus standing there; but did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her: Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? She, supposing him to be the gardener, said to him: Sir, if you have taken him from here, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away. ¹⁶ Jesus said to her: Mary. She turned and said to him: Rabboni! Which is to say, teacher. ¹⁷ Jesus said to her: Don't keep touching me; for I am not right now going to ascend to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them: I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples: I have seen the Lord! And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ When it was evening, on that day, the first day of the week, and for fear

of the Jews, the doors were locked where the disciples were; and Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them: Peace to you. ²⁰ And when he had said this, he showed to them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus again said to them: Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, even so send I you. ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them: Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him: We have seen the Lord! But he said to them: Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them, and said: Peace to you. ²⁷ Then he said to Tho-

20:17 *Touch me not* – The Greek means ‘Don’t keep grabbing hold of me’; she thought He was about to go to Heaven any moment and was trying to keep hold of Him so He didn’t; but He comforted her that she needn’t worry, He was not right then at that moment planning on ascending to Heaven.

20:17 *My Father...Your Father... My God... Your God* – Jesus didn’t want His exalted status post His resurrection to become a barrier between Him and His followers. He calls God “my God” even *after* His resurrection. This destroys the Trinitarian argument that Jesus was only less than God during His mortal life. No. Even *after* His resurrection He emphasizes that God is still “my God” and that He has an analogous relationship with God as God and Father as we can have also with the same God. He is our pattern to follow, rather than something to be gazed at like an icon.

20:20 *Were glad* – The Biblical record doesn’t use superlative language to record events such as the resurrection and crucifixion of the Lord. This is the mark of Divine inspiration.

mas: Reach here your finger and see my hands, and reach here your hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless but believing. ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to him: My Lord and my God. ²⁹ Jesus said to him: Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed. ³⁰ Many other signs Jesus did in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name.

CHAPTER 21 Apr. 24 Oct. 24

The Risen Jesus Appears in Galilee

After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and he manifested himself in this way: ² There was together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee and another two of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them: I am going fishing. They said to him: We will go with you. They went out and entered into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴ But when day was breaking, Jesus

stood on the beach. The disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus called to them: Boys, have you something to eat? They answered him: No. ⁶ And he said to them: Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find. There they cast their net; and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord! So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat about him (for he was naked) and threw himself into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from the land, only about 1⁰⁰ meters from shore), dragging the net full of fishes. ⁹ So when they reached the shore, they got out of the boat; and saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them: Bring some of the fish which you have now taken. ¹¹ Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹² Jesus said to them: Come. Break your fast. And none of the disciples did inquire of him: Who are you? Knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus took the bread and gave it to

20:27 The *finger* fitted the nail marks in His hands; the *hand* fitted the gash in His side made by the spear.

21:5 *Children* – The Greek word is a kind of slang, dynamically equivalent of “Fellas!” or “Guys!”. Jesus was at such pains to show the disciples that although He has been exalted, He is very much with them, quite aware of colloquial language, and comfortable using it. This isn’t only yet another nail in the coffin of Trinitarianism; it comforts us, that our Lord is so with us and understanding of us.

21:11 The net wasn’t broken – showing that in being “fishers of men”, somehow our resources will not fail. 153 is the numerical value of the phrase “Sons of God”.

them, and the fish likewise. ¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after he had risen from the dead.

Jesus Challenges Peter

¹⁵ So when they had broken their fast, Jesus said to Simon: Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him: Yes, Lord. You know that I love you. He said to him: Feed my lambs. ¹⁶ He said to him, a second time: Simon, son of John, do you love me? He said to him: Yes, Lord. You know that I love you. He said to him: Tend my sheep. ¹⁷ He said to him the third time: Simon, son of John, do you love me? Peter was grieved because he asked him a third time: Do you love me? And he said to him: Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you. Jesus said to him: Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Truly, truly, I say to you: When you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry

you where you do not wish to go. ¹⁹ Now this he spoke, signifying by what manner of death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said to him: Follow me. ²⁰ Peter, turning about, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following- he who had leaned back on his breast at the supper and asked: Lord, who is he that betrays you? ²¹ Peter therefore seeing him, said to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do? ²² Jesus said to him: If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? You follow me. ²³ This saying therefore went forth among the brothers, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he should not die, but: If I will that he remains till I come, what is that to you? ²⁴ This is the disciple that testifies of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true. ²⁵ And there are many other things which Jesus did, which if each one of them should be written down, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.

21:15 *These* – The pile of huge fish lying there? Do we love our occupations, our working life, more than the Lord?

21:17 The three questions, asked again by a fire, were to undo Peter's three denials. Our love for Jesus personally is revealed in our care for His sheep.

21:22 We are so easily distracted from following the Lord by our focus upon the discipleship of others. If they follow Him, if they shall be saved, how they follow Him... so easily distracts from the call to us to personally follow Him and not take our focus off Him.

ACTS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 25 Oct. 25

The former account I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began to do and to teach, ² until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandments through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ To whom, after his suffering, he also showed by many convincing proofs that he was alive, being seen by them for forty days, and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ And, being assembled together with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me: ⁵ For John indeed baptized with water, but soon you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit. ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked him: Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? ⁷ And he said to them: It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father has set within his own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be

my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the remotest part of the earth.

The Ascension of Jesus

⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were watching, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were looking earnestly into heaven as he went, two men stood by them in white clothing, ¹¹ who also said: You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall return in like manner as you saw him going into heaven. ¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near to Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. ¹³ And when they arrived, they went into the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ These all with one accord continued earnestly in prayer with

1:1 *Former account* – The Gospel of Luke. This was the record of what Jesus “began” to do. Jesus didn’t stop His activity when He ascended to Heaven – the book of Acts is the account of how He *continues* to work with His people on earth, and that work continues to this day.

1:7 Even after His resurrection, Jesus didn’t know the exact time of His return; only God knows (Mk. 13:32). This shows that Jesus wasn’t only ‘less than God’ during His mortal life; even after His resurrection, God the Father is still greater than and different to Jesus. Trinitarian theology is totally mistaken.

1:10 *Two men* – Angels.

1:11 *In like manner* – Jesus will literally return to earth, perhaps to the Mount of Olives from which He ascended (v. 12).

the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

A Replacement for Judas

¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons) and said: ¹⁶ Brothers, it was necessary that the Scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to those that took Jesus. ¹⁷ For he was numbered among us and received his part in this ministry. ¹⁸ Now this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. ¹⁹ And it became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem, so much so that in their language that field was called Akeldama, that is, The field of blood. ²⁰ For it is written in the book of Psalms: Let his habitation be made desolate and let no one dwell therein, and his office let another take. ²¹ Therefore, of the men that have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John, to the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness

with us of his resurrection. ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus; and Matthias. ²⁴ And they prayed, and said: Lord, you who knows the hearts of all men, show us which of these two is the one whom you have chosen ²⁵ to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place. ²⁶ And they cast lots for them; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 26 Oct. 26

The Holy Spirit is Given

And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues like fire, separating and resting upon each one of them personally. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them to speak. ⁵ Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem devout men, Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the crowds came together,

1:20 *Let another take* – Peter sets us an example of how to proceed in decision making. He looked at the Old Testament prophecies and principles, and then concretely did something. It was written in the Psalms that another would take the place of the betrayer – and so Peter got on and did something about that. Bible prophecy requires that we do our part in fulfilling it.

2:4 *Languages* – Some translations say “tongues”. Acts 2 shows that ‘speaking in tongues’ means ‘speaking in another language’ – a human language which was understood by the people hearing it. It doesn’t refer to speaking ‘mumbo jumbo’, unintelligible utterances. Therefore the listeners were amazed that they heard “each in his own native language” (v. 8), “in our language” (v. 11).

and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying: Look, are not all those who speak Galileans? ⁸ And how is it each of us heard in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our language the mighty works of God. ¹² And they were all amazed and were perplexed, saying to each other: What does this mean? ¹³ But others mocking said: They are filled with new wine! ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: You men of Judea and all that dwell in Jerusalem, let this be understood by you, and listen to my words. ¹⁵ These are not drunk as you suppose, seeing it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is the fulfilment of that which has been spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ And it shall be in the last days, says God, I will pour

out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ Yes, and in those days will I pour out My Spirit on My servants and on My handmaids, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapour of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the day of the Lord comes, that great and notable day. ²¹ And it shall be that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter Preaches About Jesus From the Old Testament

²² You men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God, by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in the midst of you, even as you yourselves know. ²³ Him, being delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you, by the hand of men outside the Law, did crucify and slay; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosened the pangs of death;

2:17 *The last days* – This phrase refers to both the ‘last days’ of the Jewish state in the run up to the AD70 destruction of the temple, and it can also refer to the ‘last days’ around the return of Christ to earth. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit will be used to re-establish God’s Kingdom on earth – they are “the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5); they aren’t possessed today. They will be given to us when Jesus returns.

2:22 *A man* – Even after His ascension to Heaven, Peter and Paul still refer to Jesus as a “man” (1 Tim. 2:5).

2:23 *Men outside the Law* – The Romans, who were not under the Law of Moses. We cannot get others to do our ‘dirty work’ for us and still be innocent. We are judged according to our intentions more than our literal actions.

because it was not possible that he should be held by it. ²⁵ For David said concerning him: I saw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. ²⁶ Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced, moreover my flesh also shall dwell in hope; ²⁷ because You will not leave my soul in the grave, neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ²⁸ You made known to me the ways of life, you shall make me full of gladness with Your countenance. ²⁹ Brothers, I may say to you freely about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body he would set one upon his throne; ³¹ he foreseeing this, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left in the grave, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus did God raise up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. ³⁴ For

David did not ascend into Heaven, but he himself said: The Lord said to my Lord, sit on My right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ³⁶ Therefore, let all the house of Israel know for certain, that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

3000 People are Baptized

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart; and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles: Brothers, what shall we do? ³⁸ And Peter said to them: Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to him. ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and encouraged them, saying: Save yourselves from this crooked generation. ⁴¹ They that received his word were baptized, and there were added in that day about three thousand people. ⁴² And they continued earnestly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship in the break-

2:27 *Hades* – Translated “hell” in some Bibles. ‘Hell’ or *hades* is simply the grave. Jesus went to the grave for three days and was resurrected by God from it. Therefore *hades* / hell / the grave isn’t a place of eternal punishment for wicked people.

2:34 David didn’t go to Heaven when he died; instead his hope was in the coming of the Messiah, his great descendant, Jesus – who would raise David from the dead. The Biblical hope is the resurrection from the dead when Jesus returns, and eternal life in God’s promised Kingdom on earth. The idea of a soul going to Heaven on death isn’t Biblical.

2:36 God made Jesus Lord – showing His difference to and superiority over Jesus.

2:41 Baptism is the natural sign that we have accepted the word of the Gospel.

2:42 The Greek can be read as “Fellowship in the breaking of bread”. Believing what

ing of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And fear came upon everyone; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all that believed were together and had all things common. ⁴⁵ And they sold their possessions and goods, and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, continuing earnestly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to them daily those who were being saved.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 27 Oct. 27

Peter and John Cure a Lame Man

Now Peter and John were going into the temple at the hour of prayer, at the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for alms. ⁴ And Peter, looking straight at him (as did John) said: Look at us. ⁵ And he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said: Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that I give you. In the name

of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk! ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankle-bones received strength. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk; and he entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ And they recognised him, that it was he that sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. ¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's, astounded. ¹² And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people: You men of Israel, why do you marvel at this man? Or why fasten you your eyes on us, as though by our own power or reverence towards God we had made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and rejected before the presence of Pilate, when he had determined to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the holy and righteous one, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and killed the prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And by faith in

the apostles did, praying together and breaking bread together are all signs of our fellowship. Fellowship isn't limited to just breaking bread together.

3:10 The Holy Spirit gifts were possessed in the first century church to back up the verbal preaching of the Gospel. The healings were in public places and uncontested; in contrast to the many claims to 'healing' made today. The miraculous gifts were withdrawn and will be poured out at Christ's return.

3:16 *By faith* – The faith of Peter and John. The healed man didn't seem to have any

his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through him, has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Peter Appeals for People to Repent

¹⁷ And now, brothers, I know that in ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But the things which God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Therefore, repent and be converted, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you, Jesus; ²¹ whom the heaven must receive until the time of the restoration of all things, of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, that have been since the world began. ²² Moses indeed said: A prophet like me shall the Lord God raise up for you from among your brothers; you shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be, that every soul that

shall not listen to that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. ²⁴ Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham: And in your descendant shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ²⁶ To you first, God, having raised up His servant, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you away from your sins.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 27 Oct. 27

Jewish Opposition to the Gospel

And as they spoke to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came upon them, ² being greatly annoyed because they taught the people, and proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and jailed them until the next day; for it was now evening. ⁴ But many of those that heard the word believed, and the number of

faith or understanding. Modern 'healings' demand faith from the person being healed; but the Holy Spirit gifts enabled people to be healed who had no faith or understanding. Those kinds of gifts aren't possessed today.

3:19 This could mean that when the Jewish people repent, then God will send Jesus back to earth.

3:21 The Kingdom of God on earth will be a "restoration". Israel in the past were God's Kingdom – God was their King (Ex. 19:6); but that Kingdom was overturned by God until His Son comes again (Ez. 21:25-27). The restoration of Israel and the return of Christ are paralleled in Acts 1:6-11.

3:22 *From among your brothers* – The humanity of the Lord Jesus is emphasized. He was "from among" us.

3:26 The blessing promised to Abraham was the blessing of forgiveness of sins. By baptism into Christ, those blessings become ours. In this way, the Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8,27-29).

the men came to be about five thousand. ⁵ And it came to pass that the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; ⁶ and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander and as many as were of the family of the high priest. ⁷ And when they had set them in their midst, they enquired: By what power, or in what name, have you done this? ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: You rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in him does this man stand here before you healed. ¹¹ He is the stone that was rejected by you the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And in no other is there salvation; for neither is there any other

name that is given among men under heaven, wherein we must be saved. ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they realised that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they took advice with one another, saying: ¹⁶ What shall we do to these men? For indeed a notable miracle has been done through them. It is obvious to all that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it! ¹⁷ But that it spread no further among the people, let us warn them, that from this time forward they are not to speak to anyone in this name. ¹⁸ And they called them, and ordered them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered and said to them: Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to

4:12 Non-Christian religions therefore cannot be a way to salvation. We can be saved only “in” that name... “wherein” we shall be saved. This only becomes possible if we are baptized *into* Christ, *in* His Name.

4:13 *Unlearned* – Greek ‘a-grammatos’, ‘without grammar’; *Ignorant* – Greek ‘idiotes’. The early preachers and leaders of the church appeared as idiots, as men without even basic education. But God used their witness to confound the mighty of this world. Erudition and education aren’t qualifications for preaching the Gospel; we should never feel we’re not good enough, but just do what we can and let ourselves be used by God.

4:16 Even the enemies of Christianity couldn’t deny that the miracles done by the Holy Spirit were indeed real. Modern claims to possessing Holy Spirit gifts are debatable; whilst God hears prayer, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit aren’t available today. What is claimed to have been done by Pentecostals simply doesn’t compare with the usage of the miraculous Spirit gifts in the first century.

4:19 We must be obedient to state laws, until such time as they contradict the law of God and of Jesus. This is especially true of military service.

God, you must judge; ²⁰ for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. ²¹ And they, when they had threatened them further, let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people. For all men glorified God for what was done. ²² For the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was done. ²³ And being let go, they came to their friends, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And they, when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said: O Lord, you that made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that are in them, ²⁵ who by the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of our father David your servant, did say: Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples imagine vain things? ²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ. ²⁷ For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel foreordained to happen. ²⁹ And now Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants to speak Your

word with all boldness, ³⁰ while You stretch out Your hand to heal, that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy servant Jesus. ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit; and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Powerful Preaching by the Apostles

³² And the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them said that anything of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. ³³ And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For neither were there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid them at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each, according to anyone's need. ³⁶ And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (we say Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race, ³⁷ having a field, sold it; and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

4:30 *Your holy servant* – Jesus after His resurrection and ascension to Heaven is still God's servant and therefore less than God (Jn. 13:16).

4:31 The Holy Spirit refers to God's power set apart for specific purposes. God gave it to people to do specific things – they were 'filled' – but then had to be filled again to do other tasks and fulfil other purposes.

4:37 Levites weren't supposed to own property, according to the Law of Moses. But they 'got around' this by owning property outside Israel, e.g. in Cyprus. But when

CHAPTER 5 Apr.28 Oct. 28***Ananias and Sapphira***

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ² and with his wife's knowledge kept back part of the proceeds, and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ And Peter said: Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴ While it remained, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your power? How is it you have conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God. ⁵ And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came upon all that heard it. ⁶ And the young men arose and wrapped him up, and they carried him out and buried him. ⁷ And it was about the space of three hours after when his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. ⁸ And Peter said to her: Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And she said: Yes,

for so much. ⁹ But Peter said to her: How is it you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door; and they shall carry you out. ¹⁰ And she fell down immediately at his feet and breathed her last; and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her next to her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things. ¹² And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders done among the people; and they were all gathering together in Solomon's porch.

The Apostles Arrested

¹³ None of the rest dared join them, although the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And many more believers were added to the Lord, crowds of men and women. ¹⁵ So much so, that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall on some

Barnabas converted to Christ, he realized that all such 'getting around' God's laws is wrong; simple, loving obedience from the heart is what God wants.

5:3 Ananias could control whether or not 'Satan' filled his heart, and was condemned for not doing so. If we think that a being called 'Satan' irresistibly influences us to sin, filling us with the desire to sin against our will, then we are making the same fatal mistake as Ananias.

5:4 The sin was conceived within the mind of Ananias – sin begins within (Mk. 7:19-23). Yet v. 3 says that 'Satan', the adversary, filled the mind of Ananias. The real enemy or adversary is our own mind, from where sin is conceived.

5:7 Appearing zealous, spiritual and generous when we aren't in our hearts is a terrible sin, and will be judged very hardily by God.

5:14 This growth in acceptance of the Gospel happened immediately after God had killed Ananias and Sapphira for the sin of hypocrisy (v. 11). The 'harder side of God', the fact He is serious about His demands upon us, is actually an attraction for genuine people, rather than a repulsion.

of them. ¹⁶ And there also gathered crowds from the cities round about Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those that were vexed with unclean spirits; and every one of them was healed. ¹⁷ But the high priest rose up and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and they were filled with jealousy, ¹⁸ and arrested the apostles and put them in prison. ¹⁹ But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said: ²⁰ You go and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. ²¹ And when they heard this, in the morning they entered into the temple and taught. But the high priest came and they that were with him, and called the council together and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²² But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, saying: ²³ We found the prison shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors, but when we had them opened, we found no one within. ²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the upshot of all this would be. ²⁵ And there came someone that told them:

Behold, the men whom you put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people. ²⁶ Then went the captain with the officers and brought them, but without violence. For they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. ²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying: ²⁸ We strictly ordered you not to teach in this name, and yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered and said: We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him on a tree. ³¹ Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. ³² And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those that obey Him.

Gamaliel's Advice

³³ But they, when they heard this, were cut to the heart and decided to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honour by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.

5:26 *Feared the people* – The crowd were so fickle. They initially believed Jesus, cheering Him as He entered Jerusalem; then they turned against Him and shouted “Crucify Him!”. And now they are again supportive of His cause. God wants stable, loyal hearts and not commitment which is blown about so easily because it has no root in His word.

5:30 *You slew* – The Jews got the Romans to do it, because they were not under the Mosaic Law (2:23). But God of course sees through such behaviour; we are responsible for our intentions, even if we get others to do the deeds for us.

³⁵ And he said to them: You men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, there rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the census, and drew away some of the people after him. He also perished and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered abroad. ³⁸ And now I say to you, keep away from these men and leave them alone. For if this counsel or this work is of men, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might be found to be fighting against God. ⁴⁰ They took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not cease to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 28 Oct. 28

Administrative Problems

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring amongst the Greek speaking Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples to them, and said: It is not fitting that we should forsake the teaching of the word of God and instead handle finances. ³ Therefore, brothers, choose from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will continue earnestly in prayer and in the service of the word. ⁵ And the decision pleased the whole crowd; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ They set them before the apostles, and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them. ⁷ And the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly

5:41 It's very hard to truly rejoice at every connection we see between our sufferings and those of Jesus. But this is the essence of life "in Christ".

5:42 The early preaching of the Gospel was in homes (as in 2:46); just as the ministry of Jesus focused upon homes. House churches and family groups are often the ways in which God chooses to work.

6:2 *The word of God* – The [teaching of] the word of God (see v. 4). Sometimes we have to read in an ellipsis into the phrases we read in the Bible. People 2000 years ago had a different style than we have today.

6:4 Prayer was of such huge importance in the early church, and it should be with us too.

6:7 The unity achieved between the Jewish and Gentile believers in the church attracted yet more people to join. Jesus predicted that our unity would convert the world

in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

Stephen is Arrested

⁸ And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰ And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹ Then they secretly induced men to say: We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God. ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and came upon him and seized him, and brought him into the council, ¹³ and set up false witnesses, who said: This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. ¹⁴ For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us. ¹⁵ And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as if it had been the face of an angel.

CHAPTER 7 Apr. 29 Oct. 29

Stephen's Defence

And the high priest said: Are these things so? ² And he said: Brothers and fathers, listen. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³ and said to him: Leave your land and your kindred, and go into the land which I shall show you. ⁴ Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran, and from there, when his father was dead, God sent him into this land, wherein you now dwell. ⁵ And He gave him no inheritance in it, no, not enough to set his foot on it, and He promised that He would give it to him in possession and to his seed after him, when he had no child. ⁶ And God spoke in this way, that his seed should live in a strange land, and that they would bring them into bondage and treat them badly for four hundred years. ⁷ And the nation to which they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God, and after that shall they come out and serve Me in this place. ⁸ And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begat Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob the twelve patriarchs. ⁹ And

(Jn. 17:23). Our disunity will discourage people from joining Christ; because initially, the church of Jesus is all that people see of Jesus.

7:2 *Brothers* – Stephen was willing to use this term about unbelievers. Neither he nor the early church were obsessed with ‘separation’ in an external sense from the unbelieving world.

7:2 Stephen’s point is that God had a relationship with Abraham when Abraham didn’t even live in the land of Israel; and without any temple building. That relationship was based around the promises God gave him, of eternal inheritance of the land in the Kingdom of God, due to the work of his “seed”, or descendant, who was to be Jesus.

the patriarchs, moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, ¹⁰ and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom before Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt, and all his house. ¹¹ Now there came a famine over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance. ¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers the first time. ¹³ And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's race became manifest to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ And Joseph sent and called to himself Jacob his father and all his extended family, seventy five people. ¹⁵ And Jacob went down into Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. ¹⁶ And they were carried back to Shechem, and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem. ¹⁷ But as the time of the fulfilment of the promise which God made to Abraham drew near, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸ until there arose another king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ¹⁹ The same dealt craftily with our race and ill-treated our fa-

thers, casting out their babies so that they might not live. ²⁰ At this time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair; and he was nourished three months in his father's house. ²¹ And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up and nourished him as her own son. ²² And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and works. ²³ But when he was nearly forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers the children of Israel. ²⁴ And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, striking the Egyptian. ²⁵ And he supposed that his brothers understood that God by his hand was giving them deliverance; but they did not understand. ²⁶ And the following day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying: Gentlemen, you are brothers! Why do you injure each other? ²⁷ But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying: Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? ²⁸ Would you kill me, as you killed the Egyptian yesterday? ²⁹ And Moses fled at this saying and went to live in the land of Mid-

7:9 The Jewish elders rejected the Saviour – Stephen was hoping that his audience would see the similarity with what they had done to Jesus.

7:20, 21 The repetition of the word “nourished” shows how Moses was under two distinctly different influences as he grew up – those of God, and of the world; of Israel and of Egypt. We, and our children, have the same tension; it took Moses a long time to shake off the influence of Egypt and decide openly for God.

7:25 Again Stephen hopes that his audience will perceive that Moses as Israel's Saviour wasn't initially understood by them and was rejected – and this was how they had treated Jesus.

7:29 Moses fled partly from fear, but partly in faith, because he didn't fear the wrath

ian, where he begat two sons. ³⁰ And when forty years were fulfilled, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹ And when Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, there came the voice of the Lord: ³² I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob. And Moses trembled and dared not look. ³³ And the Lord said to him: Take off the shoes from your feet; for the place upon which you stand is holy ground. ³⁴ I have surely seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them; and now, come, I will send you into Egypt. ³⁵ This Moses whom they refused, saying: Who made you a ruler and a judge? Him God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the angel that appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶ This man led them out, having done wonders and signs in Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷ This is that Moses, who said to the children of Israel: A prophet like me shall God raise up to you from among your brothers. ³⁸ This is he that was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him in Mount Sinai and with our

fathers, who received living words to give to us. ³⁹ Our fathers would not be obedient to him, but thrust him from them and turned back in their hearts to Egypt, ⁴⁰ saying to Aaron: Make us gods that shall go before us. As for this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him. ⁴¹ And they made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their hands. ⁴² But God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven. As it is written in the book of the prophets: Did you offer to me slain beasts and sacrifices for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? ⁴³ You took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Remphan, figures which you made to worship; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. ⁴⁴ Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony in the wilderness, even as He who spoke to Moses appointed, that he should make it according to the figure that he had seen. ⁴⁵ Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought into the land with Joshua when they received possession of the nations that God thrust out before the presence of our fathers, to the days of David; ⁴⁶ who found favour in the sight of God and asked to find a habitation for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was

of Pharaoh (Heb. 11:27). Our motives are so often mixed, as it seems Moses' were at this time.

7:43 Israel carried two tabernacles through the wilderness – that of God, and that of their idols. If the exodus through the Red Sea is symbolic of our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), then the wilderness journey speaks of our journey after baptism towards the Kingdom of God. We must carry only one tabernacle with us, one worship system – that of God.

Solomon who built Him a house. ⁴⁸ However the Most High dwells not in houses made with hands. As said the prophet: ⁴⁹ The Heaven is My throne and the earth a footstool for My feet; what manner of house will you build Me? says the Lord; or what is the place of My rest? ⁵⁰ Did not My hand make all these things? ⁵¹ You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers. ⁵³ You who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and did not keep it! ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart and they ground their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up earnestly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and

he said: ⁵⁶ Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord. ⁵⁸ And they threw him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ And they stoned Stephen as he called upon the Lord, saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. ⁶⁰ And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice: Lord! Do not charge them with this sin. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER 8 Apr. 30 Oct. 30

Saul Persecutes the Church

And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem, and except the apostles, they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ² And devout men buried Stephen and made great

7:48 We don't need to go into a church or religious building in order to worship God. God wishes to live in our hearts [i.e. our minds], and where two or three are gathered together in His worship (Mt. 18:20).

7:56 The New Testament often describes Jesus as *sitting* at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). But He still feels passionately for us, and as He saw Stephen dying, He *stood* – in mediation before God's throne for Stephen.

7:59, 60 The last words of Stephen are very similar to those of Jesus just before He died. The crucifixion is therefore not something to merely look at and admire from a distance, as an icon or picture; it's something which speaks to *us* personally and directly. We should be transformed by it; He there becomes a pattern for me here and now, today.

7:60 *Fell asleep* – For the believer, death is but an unconscious sleep. The next we will know will be the resurrection when Jesus returns.

8:2 They were “devout” because they were willing to risk shame and abuse for the sake of identifying with a Christian brother. We sometimes have to be brave in this way too.

lamentation over him. ³ But Saul treated the church shamefully, entering into every house, dragging out men and women and putting them into prison. ⁴ Therefore those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ And Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶ And the crowds, when they heard and saw the signs which he did, gave heed with one accord to the things that were spoken by Philip. ⁷ For from many of those that had unclean spirits, the unclean spirits came out, crying with a loud voice; and many that were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ And there was much joy in that city.

Simon the Sorcerer

⁹ But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who previously used sorcery in that city and amazed the people of Samaria, boasting that he himself was somebody great. ¹⁰ To him they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying: This man has that power of God which is called Great. ¹¹ And they gave heed to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he was preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and

women were baptized. ¹³ And Simon also himself believed, and being baptized, he continued with Philip; and seeing signs and great miracles done, he was amazed. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet it had not fallen upon them. These had only been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying: ¹⁹ Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ But Peter said to him: May your silver perish with you, because you have thought to obtain the gift of God with money. ²¹ You have neither part nor share in this matter because your heart is not right before God. ²² Therefore, repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord, that perhaps the thought of your heart shall be forgiven you. ²³ For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and held captive by iniquity. ²⁴ And Simon answered and said: Pray for me to the

8:3 Paul's conversion is a pattern for us all (1 Tim. 1:16); our position before baptism was as bad, in essence, as Paul's. For this is how serious sin is.

8:12 Baptism follows naturally and immediately after believing the Gospel. Infants can't be baptized because they're not capable of believing the Gospel.

8:13 Simon's motivation probably appeared suspect from the start (v. 18). But we can't judge the motives of others, we must baptize all those who profess belief in the Gospel.

Lord, that none of the things which you have spoken come upon me. ²⁵ Therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Philip and the Ethiopian Official

²⁶ But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying: Arise and go toward the south, to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. The same is desert. ²⁷ And he arose and went, and a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ And he was returning, and sitting in his chariot, was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ And the Spirit said to Philip: Go near and join this chariot. ³⁰ And Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said: Do you understand what you read? ³¹ And he said: How can I, unless someone guides me? And

he begged Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so he did not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can declare his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth. ³⁴ And the eunuch said to Philip: I beg you, of whom does the prophet speak? Of himself, or of somebody else? ³⁵ And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ And as they went along the road, they came upon some water; and the eunuch said: Look, water! What is stopping me from being baptized? ³⁷ And Philip said: If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. ³⁸ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹ And

8:24 *Pray for me* – But Peter had told him to pray himself to God (v. 22). We often balk at the direct relationship with God which He asks of us. We'd rather someone else did it for us, just as Israel didn't want God speaking direct to them, but asked Moses to listen to His voice and tell them what He said.

8:31 People cannot hear the Gospel without a preacher (Rom. 10:14). There are people out there waiting for us to explain the Bible to them. Let's go to them.

8:33 *Generation* – His children. The Eunuch couldn't have children, and so he was interested to read this prophecy about Jesus in Isaiah 53, which predicted He would die without having children. We each see in Jesus some direct similarity or point of contact with our life experience, and this attracts us to Him.

8:36 The initiative for baptism came from the person wishing to be baptized. The idea of infant sprinkling is wrong.

8:37 There was a simple statement of faith before the person was baptized; he was mature enough to understand, and was baptized as an adult not a child.

8:38,39 *Went down into... came up out of the water* – Nobody crosses a desert without water. They surely had a few drops of water to sprinkle with, if that's what baptism is.

when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus; and passing through that area, he preached the gospel to all the towns, until he came to Caesarea.

CHAPTER 9 May 1 Oct. 31

The Conversion of Saul

But Saul, yet breathing threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,² and asked from him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.³ And as he journeyed, it came to pass, that he drew near to Damascus; and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven.⁴ And he fell upon the earth and heard a voice saying to him: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?⁵ And he said: Who are you, Lord? And he said: I am Jesus, whom you persecute.⁶ But rise and enter into the city, and you shall be told what you must do.⁷ And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.⁸ And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were

opened he saw nothing, and they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.⁹ And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision: Ananias. And he said: I am here, Lord.¹¹ And the Lord said to him: Arise and go to the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus. For he prays,¹² and he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight.¹³ But Ananias answered: Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to your saints at Jerusalem,¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon your name.¹⁵ But the Lord said to him: Go your way. For he is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.¹⁷ And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him, said: Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road upon which you travelled, has sent me, that you may receive

But it isn't. Baptism means a complete dipping in water, which is what we see done here.

9:3 Paul asks us to see his conversion as typical of that of us all (1 Tim. 1:16). The blinding light of Christ has also shined in the darkness of *our* hearts (2 Cor. 4:6).

9:5 *Whom you persecute* – Jesus is His church; we are baptized into the body of Christ. What is done to us is done to Him.

9:15 God calls the most unexpected people to Him; it's not for us to judge whom He might call.

your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized. ¹⁹ And he took food and was strengthened, and was several days with the disciples that were at Damascus.

Saul Zealously Preaches the Gospel

²⁰ And immediately in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. ²¹ And all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is this not he that in Jerusalem made havoc of those that called on this name? And he had come here for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. ²² But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the real Christ. ²³ And when many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel together to kill him. ²⁴ But their plot became known to Saul; and they watched the gates day and night that they might kill him. ²⁵ But his disciples took him by night and lowered him down the wall in a basket. ²⁶ And when he came to Jerusalem, he decided to attach himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid

of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, ²⁹ preaching boldly in the name of the Lord; and he spoke and disputed against the Greek speaking Jews, and they that were seeking to kill him. ³⁰ And when the brothers knew it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him to Tarsus. ³¹ So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace, being built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

Peter Cures People

³² And it came to pass, as Peter went throughout all regions, he came also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda. ³³ And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bed-ridden for eight years, for he was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him: Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. ³⁵ And all that dwelt at

9:18 Baptism is the assumed immediate first step to be taken by someone who believes in Christ and has repented.

9:20 People typically expect a forgiven person to be quiet for some time before they openly serve God. But God's forgiveness is immediate; He is quick and eager to forgive and work with people, and we should be likewise.

9:27 We must be open minded to how God may be working. We must allow people the chance of repentance, be prepared to accept that they really have changed, and that God is willing to use them. It may be that we have to persuade other believers of this, just as Barnabas did. Ananias also had to learn the same lesson.

Lydda and in Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. ³⁶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds. ³⁷ And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ And as Lydda was near to Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him: Come to us without delay. ³⁹ And Peter rose and went with them. And when he had arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood by him, weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made, while she was with them. ⁴⁰ But Peter sent them out, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning to the body, he said: Tabitha, rise. And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he

presented her alive. ⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ And it came to pass, that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon a tanner.

CHAPTER 10 May 2 Nov. 1

Peter and Cornelius

Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Regiment, ² a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much charity to the Jewish people and prayed to God always. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God, who came to him and said: Cornelius. ⁴ And he, fastening his eyes upon him and being afraid, said: What is it, Lord? And he said to him: Your prayers and your charity have gone up as a memorial before God. ⁵ And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter. ⁶ He lodges with someone called Simon, a tan-

9:40, 41 This incident of healing a woman called Tabitha has many similarities with the way Jesus healed another female called Talitha (Mk. 5:41,42). Peter remembered the actions, body language, attitudes and words of Jesus which he had witnessed during His ministry – and replicated them in *his* life. This is what we should do – read the Gospels and absorb the spirit of Christ, and apply it in our lives, so that *we* act like *Him*.

9:43 Tanners were despised by Jews because they dealt with blood and the skins of unclean animals, and had to live separately from society, on the edge of towns and villages. It was just these types of people who were attracted to and accepted Christianity. It's the same today, in essence.

10:1 Being a soldier isn't a good choice for a Christian, but there's no evidence Cornelius left his job after his conversion (see too Lk. 3:14).

10:5 Peter was in Joppa, the very place where Jonah had failed to understand his call to preach to the Gentiles. God arranges circumstances so that we have the chance to learn from the mistakes of others; He reminds us of them, as Peter must have been reminded of Jonah by being in Joppa.

ner, whose house is by the sea side. ⁷ And when the angel that spoke to him had departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of them that served him continually. ⁸ And having related all things to them, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹ Now the next day, as they were on their journey, and drew near to the city, about the sixth hour, Peter went upon the housetop to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and desired to eat, but while they made the food ready, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ And he saw the heaven open and a certain vessel descending, as if it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth, ¹² wherein were all manner of fourfooted animals, and creeping things of the earth and birds of the sky. ¹³ And there came a voice to him: Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. ¹⁴ But Peter said: Not so, Lord. For I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean. ¹⁵ And a voice came to him again the second time: What God has cleansed, do not call common. ¹⁶ And this was done three times; and immediately the vessel was received up into heaven. ¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about

the meaning of the vision, the men that had been sent by Cornelius, having made enquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, ¹⁸ and called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodging there. ¹⁹ And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said to him: Look, three men seek you. ²⁰ So, rise and get downstairs and go with them, without doubting. For I have sent them. ²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said: I am the one you seek. Why have you come? ²² And they said: Cornelius a centurion, a righteous man and one that fears God, and who is praised by all the nation of the Jews, was instructed by a holy angel of God to summon you to his house and to hear words from you. ²³ So he called them in and lodged them. And the next day he arose and went with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And the next day they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relatives and his near friends. ²⁵ And when it happened that Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and did

10:6 Tanners were a low class profession, who were so despised they had to live out of town, e.g. on the beach. Cornelius was humble enough to accept teaching and baptism from someone of a lower social class.

10:13 The unclean animals which Peter was to "kill and eat" [possibly a reference to sacrificing them] represented the Gentiles. Paul speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles as an acceptable offering to God (Rom. 15:16). Yet Jesus had previously told Peter to go into all the world and baptize people from all nations into Christ (Mk. 16:15,16). Peter had been very slow to understand this; just as we are slow to realize the extent to which we too are to preach the Gospel to all people.

10:15 The idea that Christians can only eat 'clean' food is therefore wrong. We aren't any longer under the Law of Moses.

homage to him. ²⁶ But Peter raised him up, saying: Stand up. I myself am also a man. ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many gathered together. ²⁸ And he said to them: You yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come to one of another nation; and yet to me God has shown that I should not call anyone common or unclean. ²⁹ Therefore also I came without objection, when I was sent for. Therefore, I ask with what intent did you send for me. ³⁰ And Cornelius said: Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house, and a man stood before me in bright apparel, ³¹ and said: Cornelius, your prayer is heard and your charitable acts are held in remembrance in the sight of God. ³² Therefore, send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter. He lodges in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Therefore, now we are all here in the presence of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord to say. ³⁴ And Peter opened

his mouth and said: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; ³⁵ but in every nation, he that fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him. ³⁶ The word which He sent to the children of Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he being Lord of all!), ³⁷ that message you yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached- ³⁸ about Jesus of Nazareth. How God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the Devil. For God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. Whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰ Him God raised up on the third day, and gave him to be revealed, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses that were chosen before by God, to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he ordered us to preach to the people, and to testify that this is he who is ordained by God to be the judge of the living and

10:31 Good works alone will not justify us to God; we need to have the knowledge of the Gospel and baptism into Christ. The greatest thing we can give someone is the knowledge of God and Jesus – this is far more than any material gift.

10:36 *Lord of all* – Now Peter appreciated the significance of the little word “all” – it included not just all Jews, but all peoples. We too are often taught by God the huge implications of terms and phrases we are over familiar with.

10:40,41 God didn’t show the resurrected Jesus to everyone, but to just a few people, who would then go and testify this fact to the rest of the world. God always loves to work through people – rather like how Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes, but insisted on distributing them to the crowd through the hands of the disciples. God is also eager to use *you* today as His witness in this world.

the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness- that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then said Peter: ⁴⁷ Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these who have received the Holy Spirit just as we? ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

CHAPTER 11 May 3 Nov. 2

Peter Explains his Conversion of Cornelius to the Jewish Brothers

Now the apostles and the brothers that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² And when Peter had arrived in Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision criticized him, saying: ³ You went in to men uncircumcised and ate with them! ⁴ But Peter began to explain it all to them in order. ⁵ I was in the city of

Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came down even to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I saw the fourfooted beasts of the earth and wild beasts and creeping things and birds of the sky. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me: Rise, Peter. Kill and eat. ⁸ But I said: Not so, Lord. For nothing common or unclean has ever entered into my mouth. ⁹ But a voice answered the second time out of heaven: What God has cleansed, do not make common. ¹⁰ And this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And then three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent from Caesarea to me. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying: Send to Joppa and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, ¹⁴ who shall speak to you words, whereby you shall be saved, you and all your household. ¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the

11:3 Considering that Jesus had clearly commanded to go and preach to the Gentiles (Mk. 16:15,16), the early believers [who were all Jews] were very slow to grasp the fact that in Christ, Jew and Gentile now meant nothing. We too are at times very slow to grasp the most basic teachings of Jesus, because our culture and background is so against those teachings.

11:14 *Whereby* – Faith and salvation are dependent to some degree upon the preaching of the word to people (1 Cor. 15:2,11). This is why sharing God's word with others is so important, and why we should respect those who preached the Gospel to us.

Lord, how he said that John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ If then God gave to these the same gift as He also gave to us, when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could oppose God? ¹⁸ And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying: Then to the Gentiles also has God granted repentance to life.

The Church in Antioch

¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they reached Antioch, spoke to the Gentiles also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. ²² And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas as far as Antioch. ²³ Who, when he had arrived and had seen the grace of God, was glad; and he encouraged them all, that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the

Lord. ²⁴ For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; and many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ And he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul. ²⁶ And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that for a whole year they were gathered together with the church and taught many people; and there, in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians. ²⁷ Now in these days there came down prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ And one of them, named Agabus, stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world. This took place in the days of Claudius. ²⁹ And the disciples, every man according to his ability, decided to send relief to the believers that lived in Judea. ³⁰ Which also they did, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

CHAPTER 12 May 3 Nov. 2

Peter is Delivered from Prison

About that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ² And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. And those were the days of unleavened bread. ⁴ And

11:19, 20 Bad experiences often work out so that the Gospel is spread wider (Phil. 1:12). Perhaps, in this case, if the Jewish believers had gone out into the Gentile world with the Gospel, they wouldn't have needed this persecution?

11:23 *Purpose of heart... cleave* – Belief and baptism are a beginning, but we must focus our hearts [i.e. our minds] on the Lord – “cleave” is the language of a person leaving their parents and ‘cleaving’ to their partner in marriage (Gen. 2:24). We are married to Jesus by baptism, He becomes the focus of our lives.

12:3, 4 There are several similarities with the situation at a previous Passover when

when he had taken him, he put him in prison and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵ Therefore Peter was kept in the prison; but earnest prayer was offered to God for him by the church. ⁶ And when Herod was about to bring him out, that same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and guards before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷ And an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying: Rise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. ⁸ And the angel said to him: Dress yourself and put on your sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Wrap your cloak around you and follow me. ⁹ And he went out and followed; and he did not perceive that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ And when they were past the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city. This opened to them of its own accord; and they

went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel departed from him. ¹¹ And when Peter came to himself, he said: Now I know of a truth, that the Lord has sent his angel and delivered me out of the hand of Herod and from all that the Jews were expecting. ¹² And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark. There many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³ And when he knocked at the door of the gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ And when she recognised Peter's voice, she did not open the gate, but in joy ran inside and told everyone that Peter stood before the gate. ¹⁵ And they said to her: You are mad. But she confidently affirmed that it was so. And they said: It is his angel. ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ But he, motioning with the hand to hold their peace, declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said: Tell these things to James and to the brothers. And he

Jesus was killed. We should always be looking for points of contact between His sufferings and our own experience.

12:10 The Angel actually went with Peter through every street he ever walked; it's just that as he walked those two streets, he could see the Angel. We each have a guardian Angel who is constantly with us. If only we could see the Angel, we would feel so much differently about our lives and situations.

12:12 Holding a prayer meeting all night indicates the intense focus of mind which these early believers had. But when their prayer meeting was interrupted with the news that the prayers had been answered – they just didn't believe it and even mocked the idea. We too can pray without real expectation that the answer will come, and may come sooner and more powerfully than we could ever imagine.

12:15 The Christians believed that we each have a guardian, representative Angel.

departed and went to another place. ¹⁸ Now as soon as it was day, there was no small anxiety among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ And when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

The Death of Herod

²⁰ Now Herod was highly displeased with those at Tyre and Sidon. They came with one accord to him and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was fed from the king's country. ²¹ And upon a set day, Herod dressed himself in royal apparel and sat on the throne and delivered an oration to them. ²² And the people shouted: The voice of a god and not of a man. ²³ And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ²⁴ But the word of God grew and multiplied. ²⁵ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had completed their service, taking with them John whose surname was Mark.

CHAPTER 13 May 4 Nov. 3

The First Missionary Journey

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² And as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work unto which I have called them. ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ And when they were at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; they had also John to assist them. ⁶ And when they had gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus, ⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same summoned Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who is also called

12:23 God is so sensitive to pride – He hates it.

13:1 Niger – probably a black brother, who was an elder in the church on the same level as Paul.

13:2 *As they ministered* – It is in the course of daily service to God that He invites us further in His service. The calls to service don't come dramatically out of the blue, they are within a context of what we already are doing for God.

13:9 Paul means "the little one". There's no record of any specific name change, but it seems that as he began his missionary preaching, Saul changed his name to "the little one". Humility is vital if we are to preach the Gospel. Arrogant, proud evangelists are

Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him, ¹⁰ and said: You son of the Devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and all villainy, will you not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ And now, the hand of the Lord is upon you and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. ¹³ Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John left them and returned to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia; and they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. ¹⁵ And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent for them, saying: Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement for the people, speak. ¹⁶ And Paul stood up and beckoning with the hand, said: Men of Israel and you that fear God, listen.

Paul's Sermon at Antioch

¹⁷ The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm He led them out of it. ¹⁸ For about the time of forty years, as a nursing father He carried them in the wilderness. ¹⁹ And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years. ²⁰ And after these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. ²¹ And afterwards they asked for a king; and God gave to them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for the space of forty years. ²² And when He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, to whom also He bare witness and said: I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who shall do all My will. ²³ Of this man's seed has God according to His promise raised up to Israel a Saviour, Jesus; ²⁴ after John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. ²⁵ And as John was fulfilling his ministry, he said: Who do

an abomination to God. Saul, Israel's first king, was only acceptable to God whilst he was "little in his own eyes" (1 Sam. 15:17). Paul seems to have thought on this carefully, and taken the implications to heart.

13:11 This is exactly what happened to Paul on the Damascus road. He wanted others to share his conversion path.

13:18 *Nursing-father* – We see here the gentleness of God as He lead His people through the wilderness. After baptism we pass through the wilderness of life towards God's Kingdom... and God is so gentle in His leading.

13:21 God was Israel's King, they were His Kingdom. So it grieved God that they wanted a human king, to be like the nations around them. But He made a concession to their weakness, and gave them a king. We should not be unbending, but also willing to make concessions to others' weakness, even as God does to us.

you suppose I am? I am not he! But look, there comes one after me the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to untie. ²⁶ Brothers, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us is the word of this salvation sent. ²⁷ For they that dwell in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him. ²⁸ And though they found no cause of death in him, they asked Pilate to have him slain. ²⁹ And when they had fulfilled all things that were written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from the dead. ³¹ And he was seen for many days by those that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. ³² We bring you good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled the same to our children, in that He resurrected Jesus. As also it is written in the second Psalm: You are My Son, this day have I begotten you. ³⁴ And as for the fact that He raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken in this way: I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. ³⁵ Because

He said also in another Psalm: You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ³⁶ For David, after he had in his own generation served the will of God, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption. ³⁷ But he whom God raised up saw no corruption. ³⁸ Therefore, be it known to you, brothers, that through this man is proclaimed to you the remission of sins. ³⁹ And through him, everyone that believes is declared righteous in all things in which the law of Moses could not declare you righteous. ⁴⁰ Therefore beware, lest that which is spoken in the prophets comes upon you: ⁴¹ Behold you despisers, wonder and perish. For I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no way believe, even if someone declares it to you.

Paul Turns to the Gentiles

⁴² And as they went out, they pleaded that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³ Now when the meeting of the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ And the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God.

13:25 To untie the sandals of a man was an idiom which meant ‘to be his messenger or herald’. John in this sense *did* untie the sandals of Jesus by preaching of His coming; but he said that he was unworthy to do that. Humility is vital for the preacher.

13:39 *Declared righteous* – If we are in Christ, and believe in God’s grace, then He counts us *as if* we are righteous, although we are not. We are clothed in His white garments at our baptism into Him. Keeping the Law of Moses [including the Sabbaths, food laws and feasts] doesn’t make us righteous; faith in Christ does.

13:45 Jealousy is a word and idea which keeps occurring in the Gospels and Acts.

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul and blasphemed. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, and said: It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing you thrust it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For so has the Lord commanded us: I have set you for a light of the Gentiles, that you should bring salvation to the uttermost part of the earth. ⁴⁸ And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ And the word of the Lord was spread about throughout all the region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews incited the religious women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. ⁵¹ But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and came to Iconium. ⁵² And the dis-

ciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 14 May 5 Nov. 4
Opposition to the Work of Preaching

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³ Therefore they stayed there for a long time speaking boldly in the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the crowd of the city was divided; part held with the Jews and part with the apostles. ⁵ And when there was an attempt by the Gentiles and the Jews, with their rulers, to treat them shamefully and to stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding region. ⁷ And there they preached the gos-

Opposition to us comes so often because people are jealous that we have something which they don't have – even though they say they don't want or need it.

13:46 *Judge yourselves* – The only people who will be condemned at the last day are those who have effectively condemned themselves. God's judgment is only a confirmation of peoples' own judgment of themselves.

13:47 Paul here quotes a prophecy about Jesus as the light of the world, and applies it to himself. All that is true of Jesus is to be true of us. If we imagine how He would be in our situation, then we have our life's mission. He Himself taught that He personally was "the light of the world", and yet He said that we also are "the light of the world".

13:52 After such opposition, they were joyful! This is the unique ability of Christians, to perceive victory in defeat [the cross is the greatest example], to bring good out of bad.

14:1 *In such a way* – Their style of preaching resulted in the conversions. God has delegated the salvation of others into our hands; how far it prospers depends to some extent upon our efforts and attention to style.

pel. ⁸ Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled since birth and had never walked. ⁹ The same listened to Paul speaking. Paul looked at him intently and perceiving that he had faith to be made whole, ¹⁰ said with a loud voice: Stand upright on your feet! And he leaped up and walked. ¹¹ And when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying in the language of Lycaonia: The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men! ¹² And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ And the priest of Jupiter, whose temple was before the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and would have done sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴ But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their clothes and ran in among the crowd, crying out and saying: ¹⁵ Sirs, why do you these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶ Who in the generations gone by allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways; ¹⁷ and yet He did not leave Himself

without witness, in that He did good, and gave you rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness. ¹⁸ Even with these words the people were scarcely restrained from offering sacrifice to them. ¹⁹ But there came Jews from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰ But as the disciples stood around him, he rose up and entered into the city, and the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. ²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. ²⁴ And they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ And from there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had

14:7 Again, persecution, opposition and slander campaigns against God's people only resulted in the Gospel being spread yet further

14:17 The natural creation, e.g. the rain and seasons, is in fact a witness from God which thoughtful people will perceive.

14:22 *Tribulations* – We cannot expect Christianity to be an easy ride. Our salvation is through many traumas in this life, and God won't always preserve us from them, but rather He works through them so that we might come to His Kingdom when Jesus returns.

fulfilled. ²⁷ And when they had come and had gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done through them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they stayed no little time with the disciples.

CHAPTER 15 May 5 Nov. 4

Controversy about Circumcision

But some men came down from Judea and taught the brothers: Unless you are circumcised after the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. ² And Paul and Barnabas argued and debated with them; consequently Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders to resolve this question. ³ Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the believers. ⁴ And when they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all things

that God had done through them. ⁵ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying: It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses. ⁶ And the apostles and the elders gathered together to consider this matter. ⁷ And when there had been much debate, Peter rose up and said to them: Brothers, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, did bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did to us. ⁹ And He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Therefore, why do you now put God to the test, putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as them. ¹² And all the crowd kept silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul relating what signs and wonders

14:27 God opens doors to those who knock (Lk. 11:9). Maybe there had been Gentiles who had been begging for acceptance by God in His Messiah / Son, and so God worked through the persecution of the Jewish Christians, and in the life of Paul, to ensure that this happened.

15:1 There is always a desire amongst some Christians to seek justification by some form of works, often connected with obedience to the Law of Moses; the New Testament letters show how Paul strongly resisted this.

15:4 They felt they were being used by God, rather than giving the impression they had done their work in their own strength. Likewise in v. 7 Peter says that his preaching was merely being a mouthpiece for God.

15:10 The yoke we have is that of Jesus (Mt. 11:29,30). We can't have two yokes upon us. We either accept salvation by faith in Christ, or we attempt to bring about our own salvation by obedience to the Mosaic Law. We can't seek justification, therefore, by taking upon ourselves the yoke of Sabbath keeping and legal obedience.

God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³ And after they finished speaking, James replied, saying: Brothers. Listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵ And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written: ¹⁶ After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins of it, and I will raise it up; ¹⁷ so that the residue of mankind may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, ¹⁸ said the Lord, who makes these things known from of old. ¹⁹ Therefore my judgment is that we do not trouble those from among the Gentiles that turn to God, ²⁰ but that we write to them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood. ²¹ For Moses from generations of old has in every city those that preach him, he being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

The Compromise Reached About the Gentile Converts

²² Then it seemed good to the apos-

ties and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas called Barsabbas and Silas, leading men among the brothers. ²³ With them they sent the following letter: The apostles and the elders, brothers, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. ²⁴ Forasmuch as we have heard that some who went out from us have disturbed you with words, subverting you, to whom we gave no commandment, ²⁵ it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to select men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men that have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ Therefore, we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from fornication. From which if you keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Farewell. ³⁰ So they, when they were

15:13 *Brothers* – Note how many times this word occurs in this chapter. In resolving disagreements within the church, it's important to keep reminding ourselves that we are brothers and sisters in Christ, of the same indivisible family that was brought into being by the death of our Lord and Master. Once someone is baptized into Christ, we can never say they have left Him – once someone is a brother or sister, they are for the rest of our lives. For we cannot say they have left Christ and the family of God.

15:14 By being baptized into “His Name”, we become a people for His Name.

15:20 This was a concession to the weakness of the Jewish Christians; sometimes to make peace within a church, we have to make concessions.

15:28 *Holy Spirit and to us* – God through His power at work confirmed the conclusions which the brothers had come to.

sent off, went to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the encouragement. ³² And Judas and Silas, being themselves also prophets, encouraged and strengthened the believers with many words. ³³ And after they had spent some time there, they were sent off in peace by the brothers back to those that had sent them. ³⁴ But it seemed good to Silas to stay there. ³⁵ And Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Another Missionary Journey

³⁶ And after some days Paul said to Barnabas: Let us return now and visit the believers in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they fare. ³⁷ And Barnabas wanted to take with them John also, who was called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone

with them to the work. ³⁹ They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus; ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

CHAPTER 16 May 6 Nov. 5

And he went also to Derbe and to Lystra; and a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess that believed; but his father was a Greek. ² The same was well reported of by the believers that were at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which had been determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. ⁵ So the churches were strengthened

15:36 If we bring someone to Christ, they are our lifelong responsibility – our spiritual child in Christ.

15:39 This doesn't justify division within the church, nor does it mean that personal disagreement is inevitable. This incident indicates that Paul wasn't perfect; and it comforts us that we are all human, and will never find the perfect church anywhere.

16:3 Paul often writes in his letter that circumcision is meaningless (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:19). But he was sensitive to the feelings of the Jews. There are times when we must try to take down the barriers which there are between us and our audience. We must at times give in on non-essentials.

16:5 The decree of chapter 15 was a series of concessions aimed at producing unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The unity achieved by these concessions meant that more people were attracted to the faith – because our unity is our greatest witness (Jn. 17:21-23). The churches increased “daily” because presumably they baptized people each day – they saw the crucial importance of it, and didn't leave it until the weekends or some convenient time of year.

in the faith, and increased in number daily. ⁶ And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they came to the border of Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing, urging him and saying: Come into Macedonia and help us! ¹⁰ And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Preaching and an Earthquake in Philippi

¹¹ Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a straight course to Samothrace and the day following to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony; and we stayed in this city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by a river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women that had gathered. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to give heed

to the things which were spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she urged us, saying: If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay. So she persuaded us. ¹⁶ And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain slave girl met us, who had a spirit by which she predicted the future and who brought her masters much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ The same following after Paul and us was crying out, saying: These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation! ¹⁸ And this she did for many days. But Paul, being greatly disturbed by it, turned and said to the spirit: I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very moment. ¹⁹ But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone, they laid hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers, ²⁰ and when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said: These men, being Jews, are disturbing our city, ²¹ and advocate customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans. ²² And the crowd rose up together against them; and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³ And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they threw them into

16:15 Again it is assumed that people who believe are immediately baptized. If we seriously believe, we must be baptized as Jesus commands (Mk. 16:16).

16:17 Mentally ill people often have great spiritual perception – hence the especial efforts of Jesus to cure them [the language of ‘unclean spirits’ and ‘demons’ refer to mentally ill people].

prison, ordering the jailor to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in shackles. ²⁵ But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God; and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying: Do not harm yourself! For we are all here. ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and brought them out and said: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said: Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved, you and your household. ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him, and to all that were in his household. ³³ And at that

hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ And he brought them into his house, set food before them, and rejoiced greatly with all his family, having believed in God. ³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent their officers, saying: Let those men go. ³⁶ And the jailor reported the words to Paul, saying: The magistrates have sent word to let you go. Therefore come out and go in peace. ³⁷ But Paul said to them: They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned men that are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison, and now they want to throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and bring us out. ³⁸ And the officers reported these words to the magistrates; and they feared when they heard that they were Romans. ³⁹ And they came and pleaded with them, and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city. ⁴⁰ And they went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the believers, they comforted them and departed.

16:25 Joy in the face of persecution and suffering is a theme of Acts.

16:33 The Acts record emphasizes how “immediately” people were baptized, the same day they heard and believed the Gospel. The content of the Gospel wouldn't therefore have been presented in a very complicated nor lengthy manner. The vital importance of baptism is shown by how the family were baptized in the middle of the night, after an earthquake had struck, and with the prisoners able to escape. But they put God first; and all other things fell into place.

16:37 Why didn't Paul declare his Roman citizenship earlier, so as to avoid a beating? Whatever the reason, there was a reason, and it was connected with the furtherance of the Gospel. There are times when we can take an easier way and it's no sin; but the cause of the Gospel is better served by taking the harder way.

16:40 Paul and Silas comforted others! Despite having had so much distress themselves.

CHAPTER 17 May 6 Nov. 6***Paul Preaches in Thessalonica***

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul, as his custom was, went in to them for three Sabbath days and reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary that the Christ suffer and rise from the dead, saying: This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ. ⁴ And some of them were persuaded, and joined Paul and Silas, as did many of the devout Greeks; and not a few of the chief women. ⁵ But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, taking along some wicked men from the market place and having assembled a mob, set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the people. ⁶ And when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brothers before the rulers of the city, crying: These that have turned the world upside down have come here also. ⁷ Jason has received them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king. ⁸ And

they agitated the crowd and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. ⁹ And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰ And the brother immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night to Berea; who when they arrived there, went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore, many of them believed, including Greek women of high standing and many Greek men. ¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there, likewise stirring up and inciting the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵ But they that escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving instructions for Silas and Timothy (that they should come to him with all speed), they departed.

Paul Preaches in Athens

¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them

17:7 There was no other religion in the area which produced such profound unity between Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor. Today too, God calls very different people to faith in His Son, just as the disciples were a very diverse group. This means that the potential for both unity and division is very high in the church.

17:11 The Bereans are our example – to not just accept what we are taught, but to daily, systematically “search the Scriptures”. We should be in daily contact with the Bible.

17:12 *Therefore* – People believed *because* they searched the Scriptures daily (v. 11). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

17:16 We should also have hearts that bleed for the lostness and ignorance of this world.

at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with Jews and the religious persons, and in the marketplace every day with those that met him. ¹⁸ And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also encountered him. And some said: What will this babbler say? Others: He seems to be a preacher of strange gods! Because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying: May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by you? ²⁰ For you bring certain strange things to our ears. Therefore, we would like to know what these things mean. ²¹ (Now all the Athenians and the strangers living there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing). ²² And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said: You men of Athens, I perceive you are very religious in all things. ²³ For as I walked along, I observed the objects of your worship; and I found an altar with this inscription: To the unknown god. Whom you worship in ignorance, Him I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God that made the world and all things therein, He, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples

made with hands. ²⁵ Neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life and breath and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one, every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times set for them and the bounds of their habitation, ²⁷ that they should seek God; so that they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For in Him we live and move and have our being- as some even of your own poets have said: For we are also his offspring. ²⁹ Being then the offspring of God, we should not think that the Divine is like gold, or silver, or stone, something crafted by art and the imagination of man. ³⁰ Therefore, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands men that they should all everywhere repent. ³¹ Inasmuch as He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained; of which He has given assurance to all men, in that He has raised him from the dead. ³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said: We will hear you concerning this yet again. ³³ Thus Paul went out from among them. ³⁴ But some people joined him and believed, among

17:23 We should walk through this world observant and sensitive, and use whatever we see around us as a springboard into sharing the Gospel with people. Likewise in v. 28 Paul quotes one of their poets to them, rather like we may quote a line from a popular song, in order to get over the content of the Gospel.

17:31 Doctrine has meaning in practice. If we believe that Jesus is returning and there will be a judgment day – then we ought to repent now rather than then!

17:34 There is emphasis throughout Acts 16 and 17 on how women believed; religion

whom was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

CHAPTER 18 May 7 Nov. 6

Paul Preaches at Corinth

After these things he departed from Athens and went to Corinth. ² And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome; and he went to them. ³ And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they worked together, for by trade they were tentmakers. ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Gentiles. ⁵ But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them: Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles. ⁷ And he departed from there, and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house was attached to the

synagogue. ⁸ And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his family; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. ⁹ And during the night in a vision, the Lord said to Paul: Do not be afraid, but speak out and do not keep silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one shall attack or harm you. For I have many people in this city. ¹¹ And he lived there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. ¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, ¹³ saying: This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law. ¹⁴ But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of criminal villainy, O you Jews, it would be logical that I should bear with you. ¹⁵ But if they are questions about words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves. I refuse to be a judge of these matters. ¹⁶ And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷ And they all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things. ¹⁸ And Paul,

was largely a hobby for men, but Christianity was very much a woman's religion because of the unusual meaning and value it attached to all people, including women.

18:6 As explained throughout Ezekiel 33:2-7, if we do not witness to people and they die in ignorance, then we must bear the responsibility for their loss of salvation.

18:8 Baptism always follows belief. Infant baptism can't be right because the infant cannot understand or believe the Gospel.

18:10 Somehow, everything will work out all right for us if our focus is upon bringing people to be part of God's people.

18:12 When this happened, Paul must have kept remembering the promise of verse 10, trying to reassure himself that God will not break His promises.

having stayed after this for many days, took his leave of the believers, and with Priscilla and Aquila sailed to Syria, having shorn his head in Cenchrea. For he had made a vow.¹⁹ And they came to Ephesus; and he left them there, but he entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.²⁰ And when they asked him to stay a longer time, he did not consent²¹ but took his leave of them, saying: I will return again to you if God wills. He then set sail from Ephesus.²² And when he had landed at Caesarea, he went and greeted the church, and then went down to Antioch.²³ And having spent some time there, he departed and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, in that order, strengthening all the disciples.

The Conversion of Apollos

²⁴ Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures.²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, although he knew only the baptism of John.²⁶ And he began to speak boldly in

the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.²⁷ And when he decided to go into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he helped them who through grace had believed.²⁸ For he powerfully refuted the Jews publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

CHAPTER 19 May 7 Nov. 6

Rebaptizing Some of John the Baptist's Converts

And it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus and found some disciples.² And he said to them: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to him: No. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.³ And he said: Into what then were you baptized? And they said: Into John's baptism.⁴ And Paul said: John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in him that should come after him, that is, on Jesus.⁵ And when

18:26 *More accurately* – There are unbelievers and there are misbelievers. We mustn't assume that everyone outside our circle of understanding is the enemy, not of God etc. There are misbelievers, who need correction and more teaching, but we cannot judge their standing with God.

18:27 We believe "through grace". Salvation is of grace; we believe not only because we read the Bible and want to believe, but because God opened our hearts to believe (Acts 16:14; Ps. 119:18). If this factor wasn't at work, then salvation would be by our own strength of will and understanding. Those factors are significant, but the "grace" element must never be lost sight of. It's this which will keep us humble.

19:5 This could be used as an example of re-baptism. But the people who had been baptized by John were baptized before Jesus had died and resurrected – Christian

they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ And they were in all about twelve men.

Paul Preaches at Ephesus

⁸ And he entered into the synagogue and spoke boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the crowd, he departed from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ And this continued for the space of two years, so that all those who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Gentiles. ¹¹ And God did special miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs

or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and their mental illnesses were cured. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had manic illnesses, saying: I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul proclaims. ¹⁴ And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, who did this. ¹⁵ And the maniac answered and said to them: Jesus I know and Paul I know, but who are you? ¹⁶ Then the man who had the mania jumped on them and subdued and overpowered all of them, so they fled out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷ And this became known to all that dwelt at Ephesus, both Jews and Gentiles; and fear fell upon them all. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸ Many also of those that had believed came, confessing and declaring their sinful

baptism is into the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the command to be baptized was only given by Jesus after His resurrection. Re-baptism must be a personal choice. If we were baptized by sprinkling or as an infant, then that's not real baptism. Re-baptism after we more accurately understand the things about Jesus is a very personal decision.

19:18 *Those that had believed* – After seeing what happened to the sons of Sceva, it would appear that some who had ‘believed’ went up to a higher level of commitment. This would seem to imply that despite having ‘believed’, perhaps with the same level of shallow conviction as some ‘believed’ in the teaching of Jesus during His ministry, their faith wasn’t so deep. They were taken up to an altogether higher level of commitment, resulting in ‘confessing and declaring’, and quitting their involvement with magic. There are levels up the ladder of faith and commitment. The language here seems to be intended to connect with the description of baptism in Mt. 3:6, where converts confessed and shewed their deeds *at baptism*. The way the Ephesians made their statement “before all men” again recalls the concept of baptism as a public declaration. Yet the Ephesians did all this *after* they had believed. It would seem that we are being invited to consider this as a re-conversion; and we can all go through such a process.

deeds. ¹⁹ And not a few of those that practised magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. ²¹ When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go up to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying: After I have been there, I must also see Rome. ²² And having sent into Macedonia two of those that assisted him, Timothy and Erastus, he stayed in Asia for a while. ²³ And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ He gathered them together, with the workmen of similar occupation, and said: Sirs, you know that by this business we have our wealth, ²⁶ and you see and hear, that not only at Ephesus but throughout most of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and led astray many people, saying that they are no gods that are made with hands. ²⁷ And not only is there a danger that this our trade will come into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana will be made

of no account, and that she whom all Asia and the world worships should even be deposed from her magnificence. ²⁸ And when they heard this, they were filled with anger and cried out, saying: Great is Diana of Ephesus! ²⁹ And the city was filled with confusion; and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel. ³⁰ But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. ³¹ And some also of the Asiarchs, being his friends, sent word to him, pleading that he not venture into the theatre. ³² Therefore, some cried one thing and some another. For the assembly was in confusion and most did not know why they had come together. ³³ And they brought Alexander out of the crowd, the Jews putting him forward; and Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made a defence to the people; ³⁴ but when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out: Great is Diana of the Ephesians! ³⁵ And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: You men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper of the great Diana and of the

19:21 Paul had great spiritual ambition; he was determined to take the Gospel as far as he could, even to Rome. Within the limitations of our lives and situations, we can have the same spirit.

19:23 Christianity was called “the Way” because it is a way of life in practice; but there is also an allusion to how the Angel-cherubim keep the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). Our life in Christ is a walking along the “way” to eternal life, watched over by the Angels.

image which fell down from Jupiter?³⁶ Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash.³⁷ For you have brought here these men, who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.³⁸ Therefore, if Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them accuse one another.³⁹ But if you seek anything about other matters, it shall be settled in the regular assembly.⁴⁰ For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.⁴¹ And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

CHAPTER 20 May 8 Nov. 7

Paul at Troas

And after the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.² And when he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came into Greece.³ There he spent three months; but as he was about to set sail for Syria, he was informed that the Jews planned to ambush him, so he decided to return through Macedonia.⁴ Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus from Berea, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy;

and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus.⁵ These had gone ahead earlier, and were waiting for us at Troas.⁶ And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread; and in five days came to those at Troas, where we stayed seven days.⁷ And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart the next day; and prolonged his speech until midnight.⁸ And there were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.⁹ And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep, and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.¹⁰ But Paul went down and bent over him, and embracing him, said: Don't be alarmed. For his life is in him.¹¹ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.¹² And they brought the lad alive and were greatly comforted.

Paul's Sermon at Miletus

¹³ But going ahead to the ship we set sail for Assos, there intending to pick up Paul. For so had he arranged, he intending to go by land.¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and came to Mitylene.¹⁵ And sailing from there, the following day we arrived off Kios, the next day we

20:7 This could suggest that the early believers did the 'breaking of bread' service weekly. But there is no clear Biblical command about which day to do it on, nor exactly how often to do it.

crossed over to Samos and the day after we came to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, that he might not have to spend time in Asia. For he was in a hurry, hoping to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them: You know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all lowliness of mind, and with tears and with trials which befell me by the plots of the Jews. ²⁰ You know how I did not hesitate to declare to you anything that was helpful, and taught you in public, and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Gentiles repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. ²³ Except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city, saying that

imprisonments and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my race, and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom of God will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I did not hesitate to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departing, fierce wolves shall enter in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ And from among you, men shall arise speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore be alert, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn every

20:20 *House to house* – Again we see the emphasis upon the home as the basis for organization of believers and spreading of the Gospel.

20:23 The Holy Spirit told Paul that he would suffer if he went to Jerusalem; but he also felt bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem (see v. 22 and 19:21; 21:4,11). Sometimes it seems God gives us contradictory guidance; this is so that we can work through the choices and come to a decision from the right motives, even if sometimes it doesn't always matter what the decision is. In some matters it's the process, not the product; the journey, not the destination... which is important.

20:26 Paul felt so truly and absolutely forgiven that he could say that he was “pure from the blood of all men”. Yet as he said that, he must surely have had the blood of Stephen on his mind, trickling out along the Palestinian dust, as the clothes of the men who murdered Stephen lay at Paul's feet as a testimony that *he* was responsible for it. But he knew his forgiveness. He could confidently state that he was pure from that blood. Righteousness had been imputed, the sin covered – because he was in Christ.

20:31 *Three years... night and day with tears* – This is a huge statement. It reflects how major was and is the danger of false teaching and abuse entering the church. It

one night and day with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those that are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one's silver, or gold, or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I gave you an example, that so labouring you should help the weak, and to remember the words that the Lord Jesus spoke, saying: It is more blessed to give than to receive. ³⁶ And when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they all wept freely, embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ being sorrowful most of all because of his statement, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

CHAPTER 21 May 9 Nov. 8

The Journey to Jerusalem

And when we had parted from them and set sail, we came by a straight course to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ² And having found a ship

crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we had come in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left we sailed to Syria and landed at Tyre, for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ And having found the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and these said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not set foot in Jerusalem. ⁵ When our time was up, we departed and went on our way, and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, until we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. ⁶ And we went on board the ship, and they returned home. ⁷ And when we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais; and we greeted the believers and stayed with them one day. ⁸ And the next day we departed, and went to Caesarea, and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. ¹⁰ And as we stayed there some days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. ¹¹ And coming to us and taking Paul's belt, he bound his own feet

shouldn't therefore surprise us to conclude that 'Christianity' as a human religion is corrupted; but God has preserved His word the Bible, so that those who truly seek Him can still find Him.

20:32 The word of God's grace has the power to build us up and lead us to the Kingdom. This isn't to say that Bible reading alone guarantees salvation; but if we perceive within the Bible the word of grace, *this* will inevitably and naturally transform us into Kingdom people.

21:5 Women and children were often counted as non-persons in 1st century Mediterranean society. But Jesus gave special value to them, and the critics of Christianity mocked it as a religion largely comprised of women and children.

21:9 To 'prophesy' means to speak forth God's word, not just to predict the future. Women as well as men (:10) prophesied in the early church.

and hands, and said: Thus said the Holy Spirit: So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this belt, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. ¹² And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered: What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁴ And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying: The will of the Lord be done. ¹⁵ And after these days we took up our baggage and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ And there went with us also some of the disciples from Caesarea, bringing with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we should lodge. ¹⁷ And when we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly.

Paul in Jerusalem

¹⁸ And the following day Paul went with us to James; and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ And when he had greeted them, he related one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said to him: You saw, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law. ²¹ And they have been informed concerning you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to our customs. ²² What then? They will certainly hear you have come. ²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ These take and purify yourself along with them, and

21:12, 13 This incident is very similar to how Peter and the disciples tried to discourage Jesus from journeying up to Jerusalem to die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-24). We too can discern points of contact between the recorded experiences and feelings of Jesus, and our situations which we pass through in life. In this sense, He is ‘with us’ through the medium of His word.

21:20 Acts 8:1 records that the entire membership of the Jerusalem ecclesia was scattered; the way we read of them numbering thousands by the time of Acts 21:20 suggests that to avoid persecution those who remained reconciled themselves with the temple, becoming a sect of Judaism, presumably with the tithe and temple tax going to the temple rather than to the ecclesia. These “thousands” of Acts 21 were probably largely converted since the persecution that arose after the death of Stephen. The original Jerusalem ecclesia had gone and preached to the Gentiles (Acts 11:19,20), which wasn’t what the later Jerusalem ecclesia supported. Early Christianity went wrong at two ends – the Jewish Christians merged back with Judaism to avoid opposition from the Jews, and the Gentile Christians tended to merge back with paganism to avoid persecution from the Roman empire.

21:21 Paul did indeed write in his letters that circumcision is of no spiritual meaning for the believer in Christ, regardless of whether we are Jews or Gentiles (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:19). But sometimes the way of Christian wisdom is to not insist upon principle, but to go along with the weakness or limited understanding of others.

pay their expenses, that they may shave their heads; and all shall know that there is no truth in the things of which they have been informed concerning you, but you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles that have believed, we wrote, giving judgment that they should keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. ²⁶ Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, declaring the fulfilment of the days of purification, until the offering was offered for every one of them. ²⁷ And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the crowd and laid hands on him, ²⁸ crying out: Men of Israel, help! This is the man that teaches all men everywhere against the people and the law, and this place, and moreover he brought Gentiles also into the temple and has defiled this holy place. ²⁹ For they had previously seen with him in the city Trophimus the Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple. ³⁰ And all the city was moved, and the people ran together, laid hold on Paul and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. ³¹ And as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the chief captain of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. ³² And he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and they, when they saw the chief

captain and the soldiers, stopped beating Paul. ³³ Then the chief captain came near, laid hold of him and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴ And some among the mob shouted one thing, some another; and when he could not know the certainty because of the uproar, he commanded him to be brought into the fortress of Antonia. ³⁵ When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. ³⁶ For the mob followed after, crying out: Away with him! ³⁷ And as Paul was about to be brought into the fortress, he said to the chief captain: May I say something to you? And he said: Do you know Greek? ³⁸ Are you not that Egyptian, who some time ago stirred up sedition and led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were terrorists? ³⁹ But Paul said: I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I beg you, please let me speak to the people. ⁴⁰ And when he had given him leave, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with the hand to the people; and when there was made a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying:

CHAPTER 22 May 9 Nov. 8

Paul's Defence to the Jerusalem Jews

Brothers and fathers, hear the defence which I now make to you. ² And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they were even more quiet;

and he said: ³ I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, instructed according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, even as you all are this day. ⁴ And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ as also the high priest does bear me witness, and all the council of the elders. From whom also I received letters to the brothers and journeyed to Damascus, to bring them also that were there to Jerusalem in bonds to be punished. ⁶ And it came to pass, that as I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? ⁸ And I answered: Who are you Lord? And he said to me: I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. ⁹ And they that were with me saw indeed the light, but they did not understand the voice of him that spoke to me. ¹⁰ And I said: What shall I do Lord? And the Lord

said to me: Arise and go into Damascus, and there you shall be told all things which are appointed for you to do. ¹¹ And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand by those that were with me, I came into Damascus. ¹² And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, ¹³ came to me; and standing by me, he said to me: Brother Saul, receive your sight. And in that very moment I looked upon him. ¹⁴ And he said: The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth. ¹⁵ For you shall be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you delay? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that when I had returned to Jerusalem and while I prayed in the temple, I fell into a trance, ¹⁸ and saw him saying to me: Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not welcome your testimony concerning me. ¹⁹ And I said: Lord,

22:2 If we communicate with people in their language, literally or metaphorically, i.e. in the terms they understand and are familiar with, then they will listen the more carefully.

22:13 Paul was called “brother” even before his baptism, and even after his baptism, he refers to the Jews as his “brethren” (v. 5). Of course, he knew all about the higher status and meaning of brotherhood in Christ; but he wasn’t so pedantic as to not call the Jews his “brethren”. He clearly didn’t have any of the guilt-by-association paranoia which has led many believers to be so separate from the world that they can’t effectively witness to it.

22:16 There should be no delay to baptism – it is for the forgiveness of our sins. This is why baptism is a complete immersion in water – to symbolize the washing away of sin. “Calling [up]on [yourself] His name” (Greek) is what we do at baptism – we become His.

they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those that believed in you;²⁰ and when the blood of Stephen your witness was shed, I also was standing by and approved, and guarded the robes of those that slew him.²¹ And he said to me: Depart! For I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.

Paul Uses his Roman Citizenship

²² And they listened until this word, and then they lifted up their voice and said: Away with such a fellow from the earth! For it is not fitting that he should live.²³ And as they cried out and threw off their cloaks and threw dust into the air,²⁴ the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the fortress, bidding that he should be examined by scourging, that he might know for what cause they so shouted against him.²⁵ And when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion that stood by: Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?²⁶ And when the centurion

heard it, he went to the chief captain and told him, saying: What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman.²⁷ And the chief captain came and said to him: Tell me, are you a Roman? And he said: Yes.²⁸ And the chief captain answered: With a great sum of money I obtained this citizenship. And Paul said: But I am Roman born.²⁹ Then those that were about to torture him withdrew from him immediately; and the chief captain also was afraid when he knew that he was a Roman, because he had bound him.³⁰ But the next day, desiring to know with certainty why he was accused by the Jews, he released him and commanded the chief priests and all the council to come together, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

CHAPTER 23 May 10 Nov. 9

Paul's Defence Before the High Priest

And Paul looked straight at the council, and said: Brothers, I have lived before God in all good

22:26 Paul was a Roman citizen. But he invites all of us to see ourselves as a citizen of a Heavenly state (Phil. 3:20); he downplayed his Roman citizenship in his own mind, because he was so conscious of being a citizen of God's Kingdom. We too should allow the wonder of our citizenship in Christ to lead us to despise all worldly advantage which we may have.

23:1 Can we say this? But the Lord Jesus Himself informs us that Paul kicked against the pricks of his own conscience *before* his conversion (Acts 9:5). Maybe Paul perceived his 'life' to have begun at his conversion? We have a conscience which in God's eyes is cleansed of sin, knowing that our sin has been overcome once and for all, and that we have access to this through baptism. Our hearts were purified by that faith (Acts 15:9); we were cleansed from the conscience of sins (Heb. 9:14); all things became pure to us (Tit. 1:15; Rom. 14:20). This is a good conscience, Biblically defined. When Paul said he had a pure conscience before God, they smote him for blasphemy because there is an association between a clear conscience and perfection (Heb. 9:9; 10:14). A clear conscience therefore means an awareness that in God's eyes, we have

conscience until this day. ² And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him: God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law? ⁴ And they that stood by said: Do you revile God's high priest? ⁵ And Paul said: I did not recognize, brothers, that he was high priest. For it is written, you shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people. ⁶ But when Paul noticed that one part was Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council: Brothers, I am a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee! Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. ⁷ And when he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees believe in both. ⁹ And there arose a great clamour; and some of the scribes of the Pharisees stood up and argued,

saying: We find no evil in this man. What if a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel? ¹⁰ And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the fortress. ¹¹ And the following night the Lord stood by him, and said: Take courage, for as you have testified concerning me in Jerusalem, so also you must testify in Rome.

The Plan to Kill Paul

¹² And when it was day, the Jews banded together and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ And more than forty persons participated in this conspiracy. ¹⁴ And they came to the chief priests and the elders, and said: We have bound ourselves under a great curse, to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now then, you with the council petition the chief captain to bring him down to

no sin. Whilst we may still have twinges of guilt, and sins to confess, from God's viewpoint the slate is clean, and has been since our baptism. It is impossible to believe this without responding – we are purged in our conscience so that we might serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

23:5 This can be read as Paul claiming that he didn't recognize this high priest, as Christ was his high priest, therefore his cursing was justified.

23:6 The hope of the Gospel is that when Jesus returns, we who are in Christ by faith and baptism shall be resurrected from the dead and live eternally. Going to Heaven at death isn't taught in the Bible; the focus is upon the return of Christ to earth and the literal resurrection of the dead to live eternally in God's Kingdom on earth.

23:6 Paul says "I *am* a Pharisee", not "I was a Pharisee and now repudiate their false doctrines and crucifixion of Jesus". He didn't have any sense of being guilty by association with them. Rather he sought to be 'all things to all people', to the Jews he became as a Jew, in order that he might win people to Christ (1 Cor. 9:20,21).

you, as though you would judge his case more exactly; and we, before he comes near, will be ready to slay him. ¹⁶ But Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, and he went and entered into the fortress and told Paul. ¹⁷ And Paul summoned one of the centurions, and said: Take this young man to the chief captain; for he has something to tell him. ¹⁸ So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said: Paul the prisoner summoned me, and asked me to bring this young man, who has something to say to you. ¹⁹ And the chief captain took him by the hand, and taking him aside asked him privately: What is it you have to tell me? ²⁰ He said: The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. ²¹ But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink until they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for your consent to their request. ²² So the chief captain let the young man go, ordering him: Tell no one you have told these things to me. ²³ And he summoned two of the centurions and said: Make ready two hundred soldiers to go as far as Caesarea, and seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen, at the third hour of the night. ²⁴ And provide mounts for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Felix the governor. ²⁵ And he wrote a letter after this form: ²⁶ Claudius Lysias to the most excellent gover-

nor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, when I intervened with soldiers and rescued him, having learnt that he was a Roman. ²⁸ And desiring to know the cause why they accused him, I brought him down to their council. ²⁹ I found him to be accused about questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or imprisonment. ³⁰ And when it was told that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you, ordering his accusers also to speak against him before you. ³¹ So the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³² But the next day they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the fortress. ³³ And they, when they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, presented Paul also before him. ³⁴ And when he had read it, he asked of what province he was; and when he understood that he was of Cilicia, he said: ³⁵ I will hear you fully when your accusers also have come; and he commanded him to be kept in Herod's palace.

CHAPTER 24 May 10 Nov. 9

Paul Before Felix

And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus; and these gave evidence to the governor against Paul. ² And when he was called, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: Seeing that by you we enjoy much peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation

by your foresight, ³ we accept it in all ways and in all places, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness. ⁴ But, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. ⁵ For we have found this man to be a plague, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, ⁶ who moreover tried to profane the temple. We laid hold on him, and we would have judged him according to our law. ⁷ But the chief captain Lysias came and with great violence took him out of our hands, ⁸ commanding his accusers to come before you. You will be able, by examining him yourself, to gain knowledge of all these things of which we accuse him. ⁹ And the Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were so. ¹⁰ And when the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul answered: Inasmuch as I do know you have been for many years a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defence. ¹¹ You can verify that it was no more than twelve days ago that I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² And nei-

ther in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city did they find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd. ¹³ Neither can they prove to you the things of which they now accuse me. ¹⁴ But this I confess to you, that after the Way, which they call a sect, I serve the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; ¹⁵ having hope toward God, which these people also look for, that there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust. ¹⁶ Herein I also exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men always. ¹⁷ Now after some years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation. ¹⁸ Whilst doing this, they found me purified in the temple, with no crowd, nor with uproar; but there were certain Jews from Asia, ¹⁹ who should have been here before you and to make the accusation, if they had something against me. ²⁰ Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, ²¹ except it be for one statement that I cried standing among them: Concerning the resurrection

24:5 The true church of God was called a “sect”, they were [falsely] accused of being divisive just because they followed Christ rather than existing human tradition (28:22). The same happens today.

24:15 The unjust will be resurrected, judged, and then die again and remain dead for ever – “the second death” (Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14). The punishment for sinners will be at the resurrection – not immediately after death. For death is unconsciousness; and there is no such thing as an ‘immortal soul’ which must go somewhere, either good or bad, immediately after death.

24:16 We need to realize keenly the self-discipline and self-sacrifice which following the man Jesus requires of us. Paul ‘exercised’ himself in his spiritual life, the Greek word *asko* being the source of the English word ascetic.

of the dead I am called in question before you this day. ²² But Felix, having more accurate knowledge concerning the Way, adjourned the proceedings, saying: When Lysias the chief captain shall come, I will decide your case. ²³ Then he gave orders to the centurion, that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty; and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. ²⁴ But after some days, Felix came with Drusilla his wife, who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and listened to him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ And as he reasoned about righteousness, self control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid, and answered: Go away for now. When I have a convenient time I will call for you. ²⁶ He hoped meanwhile that money would be given to him by Paul. Therefore, he sent for him more often and conversed with him. ²⁷ But after two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and desiring to gain favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

CHAPTER 25 May 11 Nov. 10

Paul Appeals to Caesar

Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² And the chief priests and the prin-

cipal men of the Jews presented the charges against Paul; and they petitioned him, ³ asking a favour against Paul, that he would summon him to Jerusalem; for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. ⁴ However Festus answered that Paul should be kept in custody at Caesarea, and that he intended to go there soon. ⁵ Therefore, said he, let those that have authority among you come with me, and if there is anything amiss in the man, let them accuse him. ⁶ And when he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went to Caesarea; and the next day he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. ⁷ And when he had arrived, the Jews that had come from Jerusalem stood round him, bringing against him many and grievous charges which they could not prove; ⁸ while Paul said in his defence: Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I sinned at all. ⁹ But Festus, desiring to gain favour with the Jews, answered Paul and said: Will you go up to Jerusalem and there be judged of these things before me? ¹⁰ But Paul said: I am standing before Caesar's judgment seat, where I should be judged. To the Jews have I done no wrong, as you also very well

24:25 The very fact of judgment to come is in itself a demand for righteousness and temperance. Felix realized this and trembled, in anticipation of rejection at the judgment. As the Lord had explained in Jn. 5, when a man hears the word of the Gospel, he hears the call to go to judgment. And if he rejects it, he rejects himself from the Lord's presence in the future. Likewise Acts 17:31 reasons that the very existence of the future judgment seat and the Lord ordained as judge of living and dead is a command to repent.

know. ¹¹ If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying, but if none of these things are true of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar. ¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered: You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar shall you go. ¹³ Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the King and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the King, saying: There is a certain man left as a prisoner by Felix, ¹⁵ about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for sentence against him. ¹⁶ To whom I answered that it is not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone, before the accused has the accusers face to face, and has had opportunity to make his defence concerning the matter charged against him. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they gathered here, I did not delay, and the next day sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought; ¹⁸ concerning whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed. ¹⁹ Rather they

had certain questions against him of their own religion and of one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. ²⁰ And I, being perplexed how to inquire concerning these things, asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and there be judged of these matters. ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded him to be kept until I should send him to Caesar. ²² And Agrippa said to Festus: I also would like to hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, you shall hear him. ²³ So the next day, when Agrippa had arrived and Bernice, with great pomp, they entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city; and at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ And Festus said: King Agrippa and all men who are here present with us, you see this man, about whom all the crowd of the Jews made appeal to me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying that he should not live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and as he appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶ But I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore, I have brought him before you all, and especially before you

25:11 Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? Maybe it was simply because he so wanted to go to Rome in order to spread Christianity at the very heart of the Roman empire. Maybe he was spiritually ambitious enough to think that he might be able to testify the Gospel to Caesar himself – and even convert him? After all, Paul prayed that King Agrippa would become a Christian (26:29).

25:26, 27 Being sent to the highest level of judgment seat in Rome, yet with no valid charges against him – was bizarre. Paul alludes to this when he wrote to the ecclesia in Rome (who surely knew the situation with Paul's case) that in Christ, there is now no-

King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, without specifying the charges against him.

CHAPTER 26 May 11 Nov. 10

Paul's Defence Before Agrippa

And Agrippa said to Paul: You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defence. ² I think myself happy, king Agrippa, that I am to make my defence before you this day concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews; ³ especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews. Therefore, I beg that you hear me patiently. ⁴ My manner of life from my youth, which was from the

beginning among my own nation and at Jerusalem, do all the Jews know; ⁵ having knowledge of me from the first (if they are willing to admit it) that after the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; ⁷ to which our twelve tribes earnestly serve night and day, hoping to attain the promises. And concerning this hope I am accused by the Jews, O king! ⁸ Why would any of you think it incredible that God raises the dead? ⁹ I truly thought that I should do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And this I did in Jerusalem, and I shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my vote against

body to condemn us (Rom. 8:34). His letter from Rome to the Colossians has a similar message (Col. 1:22): "...to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable (Gk. 'free from accusation') in his sight". This freedom from accusation explains why none of our bad deeds will be mentioned to us then. One wonders if Paul's hearing in Acts 25 is described as it is in order to help us imagine this; he has no accusers, and therefore can be acquitted. We are in that same situation. We have been forgiven; there is no case against us before the judgment seat of Christ.

26:4 If Paul grew up in Jerusalem from his youth, he would surely have met Jesus and seen the miracles which He performed in Jerusalem at the feasts. He may even have seen the crucifixion.

26:6-8 The hope of resurrection from the dead is the hope which the Jewish fathers had. The promise that Abraham would personally inherit the land of Canaan and live there for ever required a resurrection of Abraham from the dead. The core of the Christian hope was taught to the Jewish fathers through the promises made to Abraham and David (Gal. 3:8). The New Testament Gospel of the Kingdom of God is in perfect harmony with the message of the Old Testament – see vv. 22,23.

26:8, 9 Note the connection between these verses. Paul is saying that the greatest proof that Christ had risen from the dead was the change in character which had occurred within him. This was "the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10); and it works within us too. The death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth aren't just facts we know; if they are truly believed, there is within them the power of ultimate transformation.

them. ¹¹ And in all the synagogues I often punished them, trying to force them to blaspheme, and being furiously enraged at them, I persecuted them even in foreign cities. ¹² Thus I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ but at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining around me and those that journeyed with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the cattle prod. ¹⁵ And I said: Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said: I am Jesus whom you persecute. ¹⁶ But arise, and stand upon your feet. For to this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a servant and a witness both of the things in which you have seen me, and of the things which I will reveal to you. ¹⁷ Delivering you from the people of the Jews and from the Gentiles, to whom I send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; to the end they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in

me. ¹⁹ Therefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; ²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to their repentance. ²¹ For this cause the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²² Therefore, having obtained the help that is from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should happen: ²³ That the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles. ²⁴ And as he thus made his defence, Festus said with a loud voice: Paul, you are mad. Your much learning is turning you mad. ²⁵ But Paul said: I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak words of truth and soberness. ²⁶ For the king knows of these things, to whom also I speak freely. For I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him. For this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe. ²⁸ And Agrippa said to Paul: You al-

26:11 Paul's progressive appreciation of his own sinfulness is reflected in how he describes what he did in persecuting Christians in ever more terrible terms, the older he gets. He describes his victims as "men and women" whom he "arrested" (Acts 8:3; 22:4), then he admits he threatened and murdered them (Acts 9:3), then he persecuted "the way" unto death (Acts 22:4); then he speaks of them as "those who believe" (Acts 22:19) and finally, in a crescendo of shame with himself, he speaks of how he furiously persecuted, like a wild animal, unto the death, "many of the saints", not only in Palestine but also "to foreign [Gentile] cities" (Acts 26:10,11). He came to be every more confident of his salvation, as he came to realize the more his own sinfulness. And this is surely a pattern for us all.

most persuade me to become a Christian. ²⁹ And Paul said: I will pray to God, that whether in a little time or a longer time, not you only, but also all that hear me this day might become as I am (apart from these chains). ³⁰ And the king rose up and the governor and Bernice and they that sat with them. ³¹ And when they had withdrawn, they spoke to each other, saying: This man does nothing worthy of death or of imprisonment. ³² And Agrippa said to Festus: This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar.

CHAPTER 27 May 12 Nov. 11

Paul's Journey to Rome

And when it was determined that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the Augustan Regiment. ² And embarking in a ship from Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the places on the coast of Asia, we put to sea; Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. ³ And the next day we landed at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go to his friends and refresh himself. ⁴ And putting to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵ And when we had sailed across the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. ⁶ And there the centurion found a ship from Alexandria sailing for Italy; and he put us

onboard. ⁷ And when we had sailed slowly many days and had come with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the lee of Crete, opposite Salmone. ⁸ Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea. ⁹ Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them ¹⁰ and said to them: Gentlemen, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives. ¹¹ But the centurion gave more heed to the master and to the owner of the ship, than to those things which were spoken by Paul. ¹² And because the harbour was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbour of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and to winter there. ¹³ And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close inshore.

The Shipwreck

¹⁴ But after a short time there beat down a tempestuous wind, which is called Euraquilo. ¹⁵ And when the ship was caught, and could not face the wind, we gave way to it, and were driven along. ¹⁶ And running under the lee of a small island called Clauda, we were able, with difficulty,

27:2 "Adramyttium" means 'the house of death'. The whole journey can be understood as an allegory of our journey in Christ until the daybreak of God's Kingdom.

to secure the skiff. ¹⁷ And when they had hoisted it up, they used supports to undergird the ship; and fearing that they would be cast upon the Syrtis sandbar, they lowered the sail and so were driven by the wind. ¹⁸ The next day as we were being violently tossed by the storm, they began to jettison the cargo. ¹⁹ And the third day with their own hands they threw overboard the tackle of the ship. ²⁰ And when neither sun nor stars shone upon us for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was now taken away. ²¹ And after they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood in the midst of them and said: Gentlemen, you should have listened to me, and not have set sail from Crete and gained this injury and loss. ²² And now I encourage you to be of good courage. For there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. ²³ For this night there stood by me an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, ²⁴ saying: Fear not Paul. You must stand before Caesar; and God has granted you the lives of all those who sail with you. ²⁵ Therefore gentlemen, be of good

courage. For I believe God, that it shall be even as it has been spoken to me. ²⁶ But we must be cast upon a certain island. ²⁷ But when the fourteenth night had arrived, as we were driven to and fro in the sea of Adria, about midnight, the sailors sensed that they were drawing near to some land. ²⁸ And they sounded and found thirty meters; and after a little space, they sounded again and found twenty five meters. ²⁹ And fearing that we should run aground on the rocks, they let go four anchors from the stern and wished for daylight. ³⁰ And as the sailors were seeking to abandon the ship and had lowered the skiff into the sea, under pretence that they would lay out anchors from the foreship, ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers: Except these stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. ³² Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. ³³ And while the day was dawning, Paul pleaded with them all to take some food, saying: This day is the fourteenth day that you wait and continue fasting, having eaten nothing. ³⁴ Therefore, I beg you to take some food. For this is for your health; for

27:24 It often happens that those associated with us are blessed because of us, even if they are unbelievers. Especially is this true of our children and partners (1 Cor. 7:14).

27:31 The legalists in the early church taught that unless believers kept the circumcision laws, “you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). The very same Greek phrase is used by Paul when he calls out in urgency during the storm: “Except these stay in the ship, *you* cannot be saved”. Surely Luke’s record is making a connection; the legalists taught that it was time to quit the rest of the community unless they got their way, for the sake of their eternal future; and Paul responds by teaching that our salvation depends upon us *pulling together* against the desperate situation we find ourselves in. We should never walk out on our brethren or the body of Christ. Severed from Him, we can do and be “nothing” (Jn. 15:5); and He is His body, the church.

27:34 Paul is quoting here from Christ’s words of encouragement to the disciples that

not a hair shall perish from the head of any of you. ³⁵ And when he had said this and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ And in all we were two hundred and seventy six persons on the ship. ³⁸ And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea. ³⁹ And when it was day, they did not recognise the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, and they took counsel whether they could drive the ship upon it. ⁴⁰ And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea, at the same time loosing the bands of the rudders; and hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves. ⁴² And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prison-

ers, lest any of them should swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stopped them from their purpose, and commanded that they who could swim should throw themselves overboard first and get to land; ⁴⁴ and then the rest, some on planks and some on other things from the ship. And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safely to land.

CHAPTER 28 May 13 Nov. 12

Paul on Malta

And when we had escaped, then we knew that the island was called Malta. ² And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. ³ But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself onto his hand. ⁴ And when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand,

in the tribulation of the last days, they would survive (Lk. 21:18). The storm can therefore be seen as an allegory of our passing through the latter day tribulation.

27:35 The way Paul broke bread in v.35 is an echo of the way Christ did it. We get the impression that Paul was slowly, deliberately copying the example of how Jesus broke bread in the upper room. So it is as if Paul is seeing himself as typical of Christ, and those in the ship with him as typical of Christ's followers. Paul twice encouraged them "be of good cheer" (vv.22,25) as they huddled together breaking bread – also quoting the very words of the Lord Jesus, in the same context (Jn. 16:33); and remember that Jesus also said those words when the disciples were struggling in another great storm (Mk. 6:50). The way the Angel appeared to Paul at night to strengthen him (v.23) also echoes the experience of Christ in the Garden. If Jesus is a living reality for us, if we are constantly reflecting upon His words, actions and experiences as they are recorded in the Gospels, then we will start to act in the same way. His Spirit will become ours; He will live in us and we in Him.

28:3 Paul, a relatively old man afflicted by a "thorn in the flesh", was the one out there gathering firewood – a wonderful example of service.

they said to each other: No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped from the sea, yet Justice has not permitted to live. ⁵ However he shook off the creature into the fire and was unharmed. ⁶ But they expected that he would have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly; but when they had waited a long time in expectation and saw nothing amiss came to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. ⁷ Now in the neighbourhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. ⁸ And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. Paul came in to him and prayed, and laying his hands on him, healed him. ⁹ And when this was done, the rest also that had diseases in the island came and were cured. ¹⁰ They also honoured us with many honours; and when we sailed away, they put on board such things as we needed.

Paul in Rome

¹¹ And after three months we set sail in a ship of Alexandria which had wintered on the island, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. ¹² And landing at Syracuse, we stayed there three days; ¹³ and from there, we circled

round and arrived at Rhegium; and after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴ where we found believers and were encouraged to stay with them seven days. And so we came towards Rome. ¹⁵ And from there the brothers, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns. Whom when Paul saw, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ And when we entered into Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, with the soldier that guarded him. ¹⁷ And it came to pass, that after three days he called together those that were the leaders of the Jews; and when they came together, he said to them: Brothers, though I had done nothing against the people, or the customs of our fathers, I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ¹⁸ Who, when they had examined me, desired to set me free, because there was no cause for putting me to death. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar. Not that I had something of which to accuse my nation. ²⁰ Therefore, for this reason did I request you see me and speak with me. For because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. ²¹ And they said to him: We neither

28:20 The true Christian hope is “the hope of Israel”, based upon the promises made to Abraham which include the essence of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8).

28:21 The Jewish synagogue system ‘disfellowshipped’ people and then acted as if they didn’t even exist; this would explain why nothing had been said about Paul. Some extreme Protestant groups behave similarly, but such behaviour shows a complete lack of appreciation of the value of the human person – even those with whom we disagree.

received letters from Judea concerning you, nor did any of the brothers come here and report or speak any evil of you. ²² But we desire to hear of you what you think. For as concerning this sect, it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against. ²³ And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number. To whom he expounded the matter, testifying of the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴ And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. ²⁵ So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed; after Paul had made this final statement: The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying: ²⁶ Go to this

people and say, By hearing you shall hear and shall in no way understand, and seeing you shall see and shall in no way perceive. ²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart; and should repent, and I should heal them. ²⁸ Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles; and they will hear. ²⁹ When he had said these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves. ³⁰ And he stayed two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and welcomed all that visited him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, no one forbidding him.

28:25 *The Holy Spirit spoke... through Isaiah* – The Bible writers were inspired by God, through the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16).

28:31 Paul preached 'boldly', but he had asked others to pray for him, that he would preach boldly (Eph. 6:19). We all find it hard to be bold in witness; Paul even asked others to pray for him, that he would be more bold; and the inspired record shows us that these prayers were heard, and Paul's desire was granted. We probably need to pray for the same boldness.

ROMANS

CHAPTER 1 Jan.27 Jul. 28

Greetings and Introduction

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ concerning His Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we received grace and apostleship, to obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake. ⁶ Among whom are you also called to be Jesus Christ's. ⁷ To all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is proclaimed throughout the whole world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers ¹⁰ making request, if by any means now at length I may

succeed by the will of God to come to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to strengthen you. ¹² That is: that I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ And I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that oftentimes I intended to come to you (but have so far been hindered), that I might have some fruit in you also, even as in the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel. For it is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believes- to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith to faith. As it is written: But the righteous shall live by faith.

Humanity Without Excuse

¹⁸ For the anger of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness.

1:3 Jesus was the literal descendant of David; He therefore didn't pre-exist as a person before His birth. Otherwise the promises to David about Jesus would have been meaningless – they spoke about a future descendant, who would be both God's Son and David's Son.

1:10 Paul kept praying that he could visit Rome; but he also did all he could humanly so that this would happen. This is surely why he appealed to Caesar to have his case heard, even though this wasn't necessary and he would have been acquitted at the more local court (Acts 26:32).

1:16 Without the Gospel we cannot be saved. This is why there is no salvation in non-Christian religions; and why we must preach the Gospel as far as we can.

¹⁹ Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it to them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made- even His everlasting power and Divinity- that they may be without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honour Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted animals, and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the created rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this cause God gave them up to vile passions. Their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature. ²⁷ And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in

their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness and receiving in themselves that reward of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not appropriate, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; ³⁰ whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, proud, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful. ³² Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also give approval to them that practise them.

CHAPTER 2 Jan. 27 Jul. 28

The Just Judgment of God

Therefore you are without excuse, **T**O man, whoever you are that judge; for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself! For you that judge practise the same things. ² And we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those that practise such things. ³ And do you

1:24 *Gave them up* – As in verses 26 and 28. God confirmed them in the downward spiral they chose. He confirms people in the mental attitudes, the mindsets, which they choose.

1:26 *Against nature* – Lesbianism / homosexuality isn't therefore natural. It's a perversion, what God calls in v. 27 an "error" which He will punish.

1:32 We should not only try not to sin, but also not 'approve' sin when we encounter it. This principle affects what we watch, view and read. The list of sins in verses 29-31 are what much modern 'entertainment' is all about.

2:1 If we point a finger at another, we have three fingers pointing back at ourselves.

think (O man who judges those that practise such things and yet you do the same) that you shall escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But after your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up for yourself anger in the day of anger and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who will render to every man according to his works. ⁷ To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption- eternal life. ⁸ But to them that are factious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, anger and indignation- ⁹ tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that works evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek. ¹⁰ But glory and honour and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no respect of persons with

God. ¹² For as many as have sinned outside of law shall also perish without the law; and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law. ¹³ For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles that do not have the law, do by nature the things of the law, these not having the law, are the law to themselves- ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them ¹⁶ in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.

The Hypocrisy of the Jews

¹⁷ But if you bear the name of a Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

2:8 Things like anger are the masters of many people. They think they are expressing their freedom by being angry; but the anger is in fact their master, and they are enslaved to it.

2:11 Just as God doesn't distinguish between Jews and non-Jews, so we shouldn't 'respect persons'. As partakers of His grace, we shouldn't judge people on the basis of their social status, skin colour, ethnicity etc.

2:12 Knowledge brings responsibility to judgment. Those who never knew God's law will remain dead like the animals (Ps. 49:20). Those who knew God's law will be resurrected and judged as to how far they responded to it.

2:13 The difference between hearing and doing is illustrated by the parable of the two builders; the one who built quickly upon the sand was the person who only hears the word of God; building slowly upon the rock is like hearing *and* doing. As we read the Bible, there's a terrible temptation to merely read, to hear, but not to let this translate into action.

2:14 Romans was written to believers in Rome, who comprised both Jews and Gentiles. The "Gentiles" in this verse seem to refer to Gentile Christians. Likewise the 'uncircumcised' in v. 26 refers to the uncircumcised Christians in the church at Rome.

¹⁹ and are confident you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light to those that are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth- ²¹ you therefore that teach another, don't you teach yourself? You that preach a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You that say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You that dread idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law actually dishonour God through your transgression of the law. ²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written. ²⁵ For circumcision indeed profits, if you be a doer of the law; but if you be a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ If therefore the uncircumcision keep the ordinances of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? ²⁷ And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge you- who with the letter and circumcision are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of

the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.

CHAPTER 3 Jan. 28 Jul. 29

Both Jews and Gentiles Are All Sinners

What advantage then has the Jew? Or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much every way! First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ For what if some were without faith? Shall their lack of faith make of no effect the faithfulness of God? ⁴ God forbid. Yes, let God be found true, but every man a liar. As it is written: You must be justified in Your words and must prevail when You come before judgment. ⁵ But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who visits with anger? (I speak after the manner of men). ⁶ God forbid. For then how shall God judge the world? ⁷ But if the truth of God through my lie abounded to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may come? (As some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just). ⁹ What then? Are we better than they? No, in no way. For we before laid to the

2:29 It's an amazing thought that a righteous God praises sinful humans like us. He does this on the basis that we are covered in Christ's righteousness and therefore can be presented faultless before Him (Col. 1:22; Jude 24).

3:3 There is no excuse to reject belief in God because of the unbelief and misbehaviour of His people, be they Jews or Christians.

3:9 We are no "better" than condemned sinners. We are different to them in that we have believed in God's grace and salvation. But we should never think we are "better" than unbelievers; such spiritual arrogance is an awful sin in God's sight.

charge both of Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one. ¹¹ There are none that understand. There are none that seek God. ¹² They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that does good, no, not so much as one. ¹³ Their throat is an open tomb, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, ¹⁴ whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. ¹⁵ Their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ destruction and misery are in their ways ¹⁷ and the way of peace have they not known; ¹⁸ there is no fear of God before their eyes. ¹⁹ Now we know that whatever things the law said, it speaks to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. ²⁰ Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

A Righteousness Obtained by Faith

²¹ But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been mani-

festated, being witnessed by the law and the prophets- ²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all them that believe. For there is no distinction. ²³ For all have sinned, and all fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ but are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to show His righteousness in the passing over of the sins done previously, in the forbearance of God, ²⁶ for the showing of His righteousness at this present time; that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. ²⁷ Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith! ²⁸ We reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith. ³¹ Do we then make the law of no effect through faith? God forbid. No, we establish the law.

3:19 *The world* – The Jewish world, who were under the Law of Moses.

3:20 *For through the law comes...* – This is why those who never knew God's law will not be resurrected to judgment; they aren't responsible to Him (2:12).

3:27 The fact that we are saved by faith rather than works, and that the law of God hasn't been kept fully by any of us, is so that we shall be humble; giving glory to God's grace alone. Humility and not glorying in our own achievements is so very important to God.

3:28 As keeping the Mosaic Law is irrelevant for salvation, it is quite wrong to insist that Christians keep the Sabbath or Jewish feasts in order to be saved.

3:31 *Establish* – The principles of the law weren't wrong; the essence and spirit of it are confirmed in Christ.

CHAPTER 4 Jan. 28 Jul. 29***Abraham as Our Role Model***

What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ What did the scripture say: And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. ⁴ Now to him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. ⁵ But to him that works not, but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. ⁶ Even as David pronounces blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, saying: ⁷ Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not count sin. ⁹ Is this blessing then pronounced upon the circumcision, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, to Abraham his faith was counted as righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it counted? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision?

Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was in uncircumcision, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they be in uncircumcision, that righteousness might be counted to them also. ¹² And the father of circumcision to those who are not only of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had whilst he was uncircumcised. ¹³ For the promise to Abraham and his seed, that he should be heir of the world, did not come through the law- but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if they that are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of no power. ¹⁵ For the law works anger; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. ¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed. Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the

4:7 *Blessed are they* – The Psalm being quoted is David’s reflections about his sin with Bathsheba, and he is reflecting how he personally is blessed with the blessing of forgiveness by grace – seeing there was no sacrifice prescribed to cover the sins of adultery and murder which he had committed. The change of pronoun from “he” [referring to David personally] to “they” shows that David’s situation is typical of that of us all. He was ‘every man’; his forgiveness and salvation by grace, and his humble response in praise and zeal to God and people, becomes our pattern.

4:12 Abraham’s faith is our pattern; his faith was in the promises which were made to him. Those promises are effectively the same as the good news of the Kingdom which we also must believe – eternal life, inheritance of the earth, the blessing of forgiveness, and God as his personal God. In this sense the Christian Gospel was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8).

4:13 The promises to Abraham were that he would inherit “the land” of Canaan; but here they are extended to include the whole planet.

father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, A father of many nations have I made you) before Him whom he believed, God, who gives life to the dead, and called things that are not, as though they were. ¹⁸ Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to what had been spoken: So shall your seed be. ¹⁹ And without being weakened in faith when he considered his own body, now as good as dead (he being about one hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; ²⁰ but instead, looking to the promise of God, he did not waver through unbelief, but grew strong through faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and became fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. ²² Therefore also it was counted to him for righteousness. ²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was counted to him; ²⁴ but for our sake also, to whom it shall be counted, who believe in Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. ²⁵ Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification.

CHAPTER 5 Jan. 29 Jul. 30

The Problem of Sin

Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; ² through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and in which we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous man! Perhaps for the good man some one would even dare to die. ⁸ But God commends His own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the anger of God through him. ¹⁰ For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the

4:17 This is why the Bible often speaks of things which don't yet exist as if they do; God in that sense is outside of linear time as we know it. Therefore we read of the believers and also of Jesus as if they existed at the beginning of the world, even though literally they didn't.

4:19 Abraham was impotent yet he still believed that somehow he would produce a child.

5:1 We are counted as if we are righteous even though we are not – because we believe in God's gracious offer to count as righteous all those who believe in Christ and are baptized into Him. This isn't mere theology – it gives the baptized believer a real and felt peace with God, which is the most valuable thing we can have in this life. If God accepts us, all else is of little importance.

5:10 The steps of logic here are so powerful. If so much was achieved through Christ's death, how much more through His resurrection? If so much grace was shown to us

death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. ¹¹ And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Adam and Christ

¹² So through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, for that all sinned. ¹³ For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law! ¹⁴ Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. ¹⁵ But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. ¹⁶ This gift is unlike the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment came because of one man to condemnation; but the free gift came out of many trespasses to justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned on account of the one man; much more

shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life on account of the one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ So then. As through one act of sin the judgment came to all men to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came to all men to justification of life. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one man shall the many be made righteous. ²⁰ Now the law was added to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, ²¹ so that as sin reigned with the result of death, even so might grace reign through righteousness with the result of eternal life— through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER 6 Jan. 29 Jul. 30

The Meaning of Baptism into Christ

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live in it? ³ Or are you ignorant of the fact that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized

before we were born and whilst we were still living the sinful life – how much more now that we are repentant believers? If God gave us His Son, to die in shame and nakedness for us – it's not hard for Him to give us anything else, including eternal life.

5:17 *Reign in life* – We will be king-priests in the future Kingdom of God which Jesus will establish on earth when He returns (Rev. 5:10).

5:19 *The one man* – Adam

6:3 Paul didn't just decide to write about baptism in Romans 6; the classic exposition of baptism which we find there is within a context. And it's not an appeal for people to be baptized – it's written to baptized believers, appealing for them to live out in practice the "in Christ" status which they had been given as a result of their baptisms.

into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him through a baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection. ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin. ⁷ For he that has died is set free from sin. ⁸ But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. ⁹ Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death that he died, he died to sin once, but the life that he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ Even so count yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

A Change of Masters- From Sin to Christ

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts of it. ¹³ Neither

present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you- for you are not under law, but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid! ¹⁶ Do you not know, that to whom you present yourselves as slaves to obedience, his slaves you are whom you obey? Whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that whereas you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching which was delivered to you. ¹⁸ And being made free from sin, you became slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your human nature; but as you presented your limbs as slaves of uncleanness and iniquity, now present your limbs as slaves of righteousness unto holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. ²¹ What fruit had you at that time in the things of

If we really feel the result of our baptism, we will not “continue in sin”. Martin Luther used to overcome temptation by taking a chalk and writing *baptizatus sum* – ‘I am baptized’. We simply cannot continue in servitude to sin.

6:5 Going under the water is like death or burial; death to the old life. Coming up out of the water is like resurrection with Christ, giving the sure hope of resurrection to eternal life when He returns to earth.

6:11 *Count yourselves* – We are not fully ‘dead to sin’, but God counts us as if we died with Christ and rose with Him, and He is now ‘dead to sin’. It’s hard, but we must try to have the same positive view of ourselves in Christ as God has of us.

6:18 We changed masters at baptism, from sin to righteousness. In this sense we are never totally ‘free’. The life of sin, doing what we want, isn’t freedom – it’s slavery to sin. So we are either slaves of sin or of God. But in His service we find freedom – this is the wonderful paradox.

which you are now ashamed? For the result of those things is death. ²² But now being made free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit unto holiness- and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 7 Jan. 30 Jul. 31

Freedom From the Law of Moses

Or are you ignorant brothers (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives? ² For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. ³ So then if, while the husband lives, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man. ⁴ Therefore my brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; so that you should be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful pas-

sions, which were through the law, worked in our limbs to bring forth fruit to death. ⁶ But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter. ⁷ What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid! However, I had not known sin, except through the law. For I had not known coveting, except the law had said: You shall not covet. ⁸ But sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment, worked in me all manner of coveting. For apart from the law, sin is dead and powerless. ⁹ And I once was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which was intended to life, this I found to be to death. ¹¹ For sin, grabbing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me, and through it- slew me. ¹² Thus the law is holy and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. ¹³ Did then that which is good become death to me? God forbid! But sin was shown to be sin, by the way it worked death in me through that which is good; and thus through the commandment, sin became shown as indeed exceedingly sinful.

7:3, 4 The law is dead; we are free from it and therefore don't need to keep things like the Sabbath, feasts or food laws.

7:4 We are married to Jesus, and have 'fruit' by Him – acts and attitudes of righteousness.

7:11 Sin is personified – spoken of as a person although it is an abstract idea. Sometimes that 'person' is called 'Satan', the adversary. However, Paul's exposition of sin here in Romans makes no mention of a personal, cosmic being called 'Satan'. This is a pagan idea.

Paul's Struggle with Sin

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold unto sin.

¹⁵ For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate.

¹⁶ But if I do what I would rather not do, then I agree that the law is good.

¹⁷ So now it is not I that do it, but the sin which dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For the will to do good is present with me; but to actually do what is good is not present.

¹⁹ For the good which I would like to do I do not do, but the evil which I would not do, that I practice. ²⁰ But if do what I would not wish to do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. ²¹ So I find then a principle, that evil is present, although I wish to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God after the inward man;

²³ but I see a different law in my limbs, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my limbs. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body

of this death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

CHAPTER 8 Jan. 30 Jul. 31***Flesh and Spirit***

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for a sin offering, condemned sin, in the flesh. ⁴ That the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. ⁵ For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind of the flesh is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to

7:17 Sin within is the real problem we face, not an external Satan figure. Paul emphasizes here that he sins because of an internal principle within him (verses 18,20,23). We sin because we have within us an internal source of temptation to sin. Because sin comes from within (Mark 7:15-23) we must struggle for control of our thinking and to develop a spiritual mind. This is the essence of practical Christianity.

7:24 Paul felt “wretched” and yet elsewhere he shows his confidence that he will be saved and live for ever when Jesus returns. We can take comfort from his words here, when we feel that we are making little progress in the spiritual struggle against sin.

8:1 We must give these wonderful words their true weight and not skim read them. If we are “in Christ” by faith and baptism into Him, then we will not be condemned at the day of judgment. This is a good news almost too good to be believed by many.

8:3 The identity of Jesus with human nature and sinners is clearly taught here. He wasn't God in person, for God is Spirit and not flesh. Jesus condemned sin, in the flesh – because He had our nature yet didn't sin, He overcame sin.

the law of God, neither indeed can it be. ⁸ And they that are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies- through His Spirit that dwells in you. ¹² So then brothers, we are debtors- but not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. ¹³ For if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live.

The Wonder of Being God's Children

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit,

that we are children of God. ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him. ¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation awaits the revealing of God's children. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as children and the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope were we saved; but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, then we with patience wait for it.

8:11 If we are spiritually minded now, if Christ's thinking dwells within us, then this is the basis upon which we will be resurrected to eternal life when Christ returns.

8:15 We have been adopted, and yet we await full adoption as God's children when Jesus returns (v. 23). This is an example of the 'Now but not yet' paradox – we in one sense are saved, in another sense we await the physical revelation of that salvation when Christ returns.

8:17 The symbolism of baptism, dying and resurrecting with Christ (6:3-5), is lived out in our lives; insofar as we share in His sufferings, we will share in the joy and power of His new life, both now and at the resurrection of the body.

8:23 *Bodies* – Note the emphasis upon the salvation of the body in this chapter. The idea of an immortal soul going to Heaven isn't Biblical. Instead, we hope for the resurrection of the body, just as Christ rose literally from the dead.

Amazing Encouragement

²⁶ And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ And he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. ²⁸ And we know that to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose—all things work together for good. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many other children. ³⁰ And whom He foreordained, those He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified, and who He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He that spared not His own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's chosen ones? It is God that justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that

condemns? It is Christ Jesus that died, yes rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God; who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Even as it is written: For your sake we are killed all the day long, we were deemed sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 9 Jan. 31 Aug. 1**God's Love for Israel**

I speak the truth in Christ, I do not lie, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for the sake of my brothers,

8:27 Jesus intercedes for us in Heaven (v. 34). We should remember this when we offer prayers to God in Jesus' Name.

8:34 The judge and counsel for the defence are on our side; and in Christ, no accusation can be brought against us. And so in the court of Divine justice, we are acquitted. This reality is so wonderful that all earthly problems (verses 35-39) should mean little to us.

9:3 Paul is alluding to how Moses offered his place in God's 'book of life' – i.e. his eternal salvation – in order that Israel might be saved. This is an amazing level of love – to be prepared to offer up your place in eternity for the sake of others. Paul says he "could wish" this – because he had learnt from the fact that God had refused Moses' offer. God doesn't work on the basis of *substitution*; He saves people because

my kinsmen according to the flesh; ⁴ who are Israelites, whose is the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God and the promises. ⁵ Whose are the fathers and of whom is Christ, as concerning the flesh, who is over all. God be praised forever! Amen. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has come to nothing. For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel. ⁷ Neither, because they are Abraham's seed are they all children, but: In Isaac shall your seed be called. ⁸ That is: it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: According to this season will I come and Sarah shall have a son.

Predestination and Foreknowledge

¹⁰ And not only so, but Rebecca also having conceived by one, by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose

of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him that calls), ¹² it was said to her: The elder shall serve the younger. ¹³ Even as it is written: Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid! ¹⁵ For He said to Moses: I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ¹⁶ So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. ¹⁷ For the scripture says of Pharaoh: For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My Name might be published abroad in all the earth. ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens who He wishes. ¹⁹ Then you will say to me: Why does He still find fault? For who withstands His will? ²⁰ No, O man; who are you to answer back to God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it: Why did you make me thus? ²¹ Or

of their freewill identification with Messiah, i.e. Jesus, as the *representative* of God to man and man to God.

9:5 The fact that Christ was ethnically Jewish shows He was the literal descendant of Abraham and David, the special descendant whom they had been promised. He therefore didn't exist before His birth, and was not God Himself; even though His status and glory is very great.

9:18 It is written in Exodus many times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; and also, that *God* hardened his heart. So God confirms people in the attitudes and positions which they themselves choose from their own freewill.

9:20 The questions we ask about the justice of God aren't appropriate for us to ask. We will only be concerned about them if we have failed to accept Bible teaching about our low status – for we are just dust, or clay, which God is working with. If we accept this is all we are, questions about His justice, let alone implied criticisms of Him, are inappropriate. Bible characters have argued with God and been angry with God, but ultimately the 'answer' is simply that it is not for us to know these answers, because we are but dust. It's like a small child insisting that the workings of a car are explained

has not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel to honour, and another to dishonour? ²² And so what if God is willing to show His anger and to make His power known, enduring with longsuffering vessels of anger prepared for destruction; ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He beforehand prepared for glory, ²⁴ even us, whom He also called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As He said also in Hosea: I will call them My people, who were not My people; and she that was not beloved shall be called beloved. ²⁶ And it shall be, that in the place where it was said to them: You are not My people, there shall they be called children of the living God. ²⁷ And Isaiah cried out concerning Israel: Even if the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is only the remnant that shall be saved. ²⁸ For the Lord will execute His word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short. ²⁹ And, as Isaiah has said before: Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom and had been made like Gomorrah. ³⁰ What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is

of faith. ³¹ But Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. ³² Therefore because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works, they stumbled at the stone of stumbling. ³³ Even as it is written: Look, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and he that believes in him shall not be put to shame.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 1 Aug. 2

The Role of the Gospel in Saving Israel

Brothers, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for Israel, that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law regarding righteousness to everyone that believes. ⁵ For Moses writes, that the man that does the righteousness which is of the law shall live thereby. ⁶ But the righteousness which is of faith says thus: Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what did it say? The word is near you, in your mouth

to them. They wouldn't understand even if they were told, the concepts are far beyond them.

9:27 God has always worked with a "remnant", a minority. The majority are usually wrong when it comes to spiritual matters.

10:2 Zeal for God, a religious streak in our personality, isn't enough; we need true knowledge of Him to have a relationship with Him.

and in your heart. That is, the word of faith, which we preach. ⁹ Because if you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture says: Whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame. ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, for the same one who is Lord of all is rich to all that call upon him. ¹³ For whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. ¹⁴ How then shall they call on him in whom they do not have belief? And how shall they believe in him about whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, unless they are sent? Even as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things! ¹⁶ But they did not all obey the glad tidings. For Isaiah said: Lord, who has believed our report? ¹⁷ So belief

comes of hearing, and hearing by the word of God. ¹⁸ But I say: Did they not hear? Yes, truly, their sound went out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world. ¹⁹ But I say: Did Israel not know? First Moses said: I will provoke you to jealousy with those who are no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you. ²⁰ And Isaiah is very bold, and said: I was found by those that did not seek Me; I showed myself to those who were not asking for Me. ²¹ But to Israel He said: All the day long did I spread out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 1 Aug. 2

God's Plan for Israel

I say then, has God cast off His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God did not cast off His people, whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah? How he pleads with God against Israel: ³ Lord, they have killed Your proph-

10:14 God has delegated the work of witnessing and reaching people to us. If we don't preach to people, they won't hear the Gospel. Their eternity is in this sense in our hands. Each day we should try to share the Gospel with at least someone in some way.

10:17 Faith isn't just a feeling; it has a definite basis, in the word of Christ and of God. This is why Bible reading is so important.

11:2 *Against Israel* – Elijah didn't specifically ask God to destroy Israel. He simply told God of what he felt Israel had done to him. But God saw the real request and motive that was behind the words he prayed. God reads our prayers likewise – the Lord Jesus searches our minds and relays our spirit to God, as He intercedes for us in prayer (8:26,27). This is a comfort to those who feel they can't find the right words in prayer; and a warning, that we can't impress God with words, for He sees to the real feelings that are behind them, and understands these feelings as our prayer.

11:3 We also can feel alone; when in fact there are more true believers around than we might realize. Elijah felt he was alone because he considered himself better than those

ets, they have destroyed Your altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. ⁴ But what was the answer of God to him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed their knee to Baal. ⁵ Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant, according to the calling of grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. ⁷ What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The chosen obtained it, but the rest were hardened. ⁸ According as it is written: God gave them a spirit of stupour, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day. ⁹ And David said: Let their table be made a snare and a trap and a stumblingblock and a recompense unto them. ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bend their back forever. ¹¹ I say then, did they stumble that they might fall? God forbid! But by their fall, salvation came to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. ¹² Now if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? ¹³ But I speak to you who are Gentiles- inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy them that are my flesh, and

may save some of them. ¹⁵ For if the casting away of them is the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ¹⁶ And if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and did become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree- ¹⁸ do not boast over the broken branches, for you are but branches too. For if you boast, remember that it is not you that support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then: Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in. ²⁰ Well. Because of their unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by your faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. ²¹ For if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare you. ²² Behold then the goodness and severity of God: Towards those that fell, severity; but toward you, God's goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also shall be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, shall be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of that which is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good

other 7000 – he didn't consider them as genuine believers when in fact they were. We can make the same mistake; spiritual elitism leads us to despair and isolation, because we cut ourselves off from the fellowship of others.

11:5 God has 'elected' or chosen some people and not others; and this feature of His working is because salvation has to be by His grace and not of our works.

11:22 'Once saved always saved' is simply not taught in the Bible; we must remain faithful to the end (Mt. 10:22).

olive tree, how much more appropriately shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

The Ultimate Salvation of Israel

²⁵ Brothers, I would not have you ignorant of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles is made up. ²⁶ And so all Israel shall be saved. Even as it is written: There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. ²⁷ And this is My covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins. ²⁸ As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as touching their calling, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, ³¹ even so have these also now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you, they may also now obtain mercy. ³² For God has shut up all to disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all. ³³ O

the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counsellor? ³⁵ Or who has given a gift to Him, that he might be repaid? ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him, are all things. To Him be the glory for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 2 Aug. 3

Life Together in the Body of Christ

Therefore I urge you brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your logical service. ² And do not conform to the mould of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may experience what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God. ³ For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, accordingly as God has dealt to each man a measure of faith. ⁴ For even as we have many members in

11:25 *The full number* – There is, it seems, a specific number of Gentiles who must be converted; and then the Jews will respond to the Gospel, at the return of Christ (:26). When the Gospel has gone into all the world, then shall the end come (Mt. 24:14). In this sense we can hasten the return of Christ by spreading the Gospel worldwide and encouraging Israel to repent.

11:32 *Upon all* – Both Jew and Gentile believers.

12:1 The Old Testament sacrifices were cut up into their body parts, and even the most internal organs offered to God. This speaks of how every part of our lives, especially our innermost being, should be offered to God.

12:3 Faith is in one sense a gift from God (Eph. 2:8). Realizing this will keep us from boasting against unbelievers or feeling superior to them.

12:4 We become members of Christ's body by baptism into His body (1 Cor. 12:13).

one body, and all the members do not have the same office, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and although different, still members one of another. ⁶ And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of our faith, ⁷ or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry. Or he that teaches, to his teaching, ⁸ or he that exhorts, to his exhorting; he that gives, let him do it with generosity. He that rules, with diligence. He that shows mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour to others. ¹¹ Be diligent, not lazy, fervent in spirit in your serving the Lord. ¹² Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing earnestly in prayer. ¹³ Responding to the necessities of the saints by sharing, accustomed to showing hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless them that persecute you; bless and curse not. ¹⁵ Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind one toward another.

Do not be arrogant, but condescend to those who are lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits. ¹⁷ Render to no one evil for evil. Take thought to do things honourably in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written: Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰ But if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head. ²¹ Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

CHAPTER 13 Feb 3. Aug. 4

Our Attitude to Governments and Rulers

Let every one of you be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no power but by God, and the powers that be have been ordained by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If you wish to live

Every one of us has some specific function within the body; let's not underestimate or ignore the part we are intended to play.

12:18 *As it depends on you* – We cannot always be at peace with others; Jesus and Paul weren't. But the frictions and separations must always be the choice of the other party, and not ours.

12:19 *Never avenge* – This is why litigation against others is so wrong. If we are badly treated, we are to believe in the future judgment of God – and leave Him to take vengeance.

13:2 We must compare this teaching with Peter's example in Acts 4:19; we can only submit to authorities until such a point as to do so further would lead us to be disobedient to God. Paul seems to take this as assumed and obvious, therefore he doesn't specifically state it.

without fear of the authorities- then do that which is good! And you shall have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil- be afraid! For he carries not the sword in vain. For he is a minister of God, an avenger of God's anger to him that does evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be in subjection, not only because of God's anger against sin, but also for the sake of your conscience. ⁶ For this cause you pay tribute also. For they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. ⁷ Render to all their dues. Tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. ⁸ Owe no one anything, apart from to love one another. For he that loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For this, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet- and if there be any other commandment- it is summed up in this word, namely: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ¹⁰ Love works no evil to his neighbour. Love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. ¹¹ And consider this too:

Knowing the time, that already it is time for you to awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer to us than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in strife and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

CHAPTER 14 Feb. 3 Aug. 4

Do Not Judge Others for Their Conscience

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not so as to just quarrel with him over opinions. ² One man has faith to eat all things, but he that is weak eats herbs. ³ Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats; for God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he

13:7 Tax evasion is clearly wrong for Christians.

13:10 Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses by dying on the cross (Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:44); but here Paul says that love fulfils the Law. The death of Jesus by crucifixion was therefore 'love to the end' (Jn. 13:1), the ultimate definition of love, in a very public, memorable and graphic display.

13:13 "The day" refers to the time of God's future Kingdom in v. 12. We should live now *as if* we are in the Kingdom. In this sense we 'have eternal life' in that we live right now the kind of life which we will eternally live.

14:1 The spiritually weak, in understanding and practice (e.g. regarding things like the Jewish food laws and the Sabbath, which this chapter goes on to talk about) should be welcomed and not rejected.

shall be made to stand up. For the Lord has power to make him stand.

⁵ One man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. ⁶ He that regards the day, regards it to the Lord, and he that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. ⁸ For whether we live, we live to the Lord. Or whether we die, we die to the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you set at nothing your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. ¹¹ For it is written: As I live, says the Lord, to Me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹² So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know, and I

am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself. Save that to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you walk no longer in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died. ¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not about what we eat and drink, but about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ For he that herein serves Christ is wellpleasing to God, and approved of by men. ¹⁹ So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another. ²⁰ Do not overthrow the work of God for the mere sake of food. All things indeed are clean, however it is evil for that man who makes another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble. ²² The faith which you have, keep between yourself and God. Happy is he that has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But he that doubts is condemned if he eats, because he eats not from faith. And whatever is not of faith is sin.

14:6 Since keeping the Sabbath is a matter of personal conscience, it is wrong to insist that a believer 'must' keep the Sabbath.

14:10 *All stand* – The Greek can mean 'made to stand up'. In verse 11 we read of a scene we can well imagine – at the day of judgment we will be on our knees, begging for mercy, realizing our unworthiness. But we will be made to stand up (v. 4), to receive God's gracious acceptance. So if this is what will happen to us, we should not condemn our brother now.

14:19 We need to examine our attitudes and positions, and watch our words, to ensure that we are trying to make peace rather than division.

CHAPTER 15 Feb. 4 Aug. 5***The Importance of Unity***

Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to encourage him. ³ For Christ also did not please himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached You fell upon me. ⁴ For whatever things were written previously were written for our education, that through patience and through the comfort of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another, according to Christ Jesus. ⁶ That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷ Therefore receive one another, even as Christ also received you each one, to the glory of God. ⁸ For I say that Christ has been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given to the fathers, ⁹ and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy. As it is written: Therefore will I give praise to You among the Gentiles,

and sing to Your Name. ¹⁰ And again He says: Rejoice, you Gentiles, with His people. ¹¹ And again: Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him. ¹² And again Isaiah said: There shall be the root of Jesse and he that arises to rule over the Gentiles. On him shall the Gentiles hope. ¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴ And I myself also am persuaded about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to encourage one another. ¹⁵ But I write the more boldly to you in some way, as if putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me by God, ¹⁶ that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's Plans for Rome

¹⁷ I have therefore my boasting in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God. ¹⁸ For I will not dare to speak

15:1 Jesus 'carried our infirmities' on the cross (Is. 53:4; Mt. 8:17). We are being asked to do for others what He did for us there. This makes the crucifixion far more than something to be gazed at from a distance. He there becomes the daily inspiration for us, here and now, in our lives. The spirit with which He met death is to be ours in life today.

15:5 *The same mind* – This doesn't mean we are to be identical. Unity isn't uniformity. We are each trying in our own way to have the same mind / attitude which Jesus had in His life. It's this which creates unity between us; we are of the *same* mind in that we are all trying to be of *His* mind.

15:8 The death of Christ ended the Old Covenant, i.e. the Law of Moses, but confirmed the New Covenant, the essence of which was contained in the promises to Abraham which had been made *before* the Law of Moses was given.

of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, ¹⁹ in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit. So that from Jerusalem and round about even to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. ²⁰ Yes, making it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation. ²¹ But, as it is written: They shall see, to whom no tidings of him came, and they who have not heard shall understand. ²² Therefore I was hindered these many times from coming to you. ²³ But now, there is no need for me in these regions, and having these many years a longing to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you during my journey, and to be helped on my way by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. ²⁵ At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶ For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they

owe it to them also to minister to them in material things. ²⁸ When therefore I have accomplished this, and have given to them this fruit, I will leave for Spain by way of Rome. ²⁹ And I know that, when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. ³⁰ Now I beseech you brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, ³¹ that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints. ³² That I may come to you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest. ³³ Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

CHAPTER 16 Feb. 4 Aug. 5

Various Commendations and Greetings

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae, ² that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and I ask that you assist her in whatever matter she may have need of you. For she herself also has been a helper of many and of my own self. ³ Greet Prisca and Aquila my fellow-workers in

15:20, 21 When the Gospel goes into all the world, then shall the end come (Mt. 24:14). Our focus also, therefore, ought to be upon introducing Christ to unbelievers / the unchurched.

15:30 Prayer isn't to be a formality; in a sense it's a struggle with God. Jacob wrestled with God in prayer, and was an example to us (Hos. 12:2-4). If we believe in the power of prayer, and are humble enough to recognize our own weakness in prayer, we will often ask others to pray for us – just as Paul does here.

16:1 *A servant* – Greek 'diakonos'. Women played an important part in the early Christian church, at a time when religion was largely a hobby for men.

Christ Jesus, ⁴ who for my life laid down their own necks. To whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles, ⁵ and greet the church that is in their house. Greet Epānetus my beloved, who is the firstfruits of Asia to Christ. ⁶ Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on you. ⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also have been in Christ before me. ⁸ Greet Ampliatus my beloved in the Lord. ⁹ Greet Urbanus our fellow-worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. ¹⁰ Greet Apelles the approved in Christ. Greet them that are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹ Greet Herodion my kinsman. Greet them of the household of Narcissus, that are in the Lord. ¹² Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Greet Persis the beloved, who laboured much in the Lord. ¹³ Greet Rufus the chosen in the Lord; and his mother, who also was as a mother to me. ¹⁴ Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the

believers that are with them. ¹⁵ Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister and Olympas, and all the saints that are with them. ¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. ¹⁷ Now I urge you brothers, mark those that are causing divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Turn away from these. ¹⁸ For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly, and by their smooth and fair speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. ¹⁹ For your obedience is known to all. I rejoice therefore over you, but I would have you to be wise regarding that which is good and simple concerning evil. ²⁰ And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²¹ Timothy my fellow-worker greets you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. ²² I Tertius, who write this epistle, greet you in the Lord. ²³ Gaius my host (and of the whole church) greets you. Erastus the treasurer of the city greets you;

16:5 The early churches met in homes; there is little archaeological evidence of specific church buildings until two hundred years after Jesus.

16:17 The book of Proverbs gave similar advice to the ‘ecclesia’ of Israel in the Old Testament. There are those within the community of believers from whom we may not formally separate, but from whom it is wiser to just stay away. Paul says that we should “mark” those who are always stirring up division and putting obstacles in the way of those wishing to walk towards the Kingdom; and just quietly keep away from them.

16:23 Erastus must have been a very wealthy man of high social profile. In this list, he is purposefully placed next to Quartus – a common slave name – who is simply described as a “brother”. The true church of Christ will be characterized by an amazing unity between persons of very different social, ethnic and personal background. Our unity should be enough to stop this world dead in its tracks and win it for Christ (Jn. 17:23).

and Quartus the brother. ²⁴ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. ²⁵ Now to him that is able to establish you according to the gospel I preach, which is the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal ²⁶ but now is manifested, and in accordance with the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known to all the nations to obedience of faith: ²⁷ To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.

1 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER 1 Feb. 20 Aug. 22

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ² to the church of God which is at Corinth, those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours. ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ That in everything you were enriched in him, in all utterance and all knowledge. ⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ Who shall also confirm you to the end, unreplicable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

An Appeal for Unity

¹⁰ Now I urge you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. ¹² By this I mean, that each one of you is saying: I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, except Crispus and Gaius. ¹⁵ Lest any of you should say you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶ And I baptized also the household of Stephanas. Besides these, I do not know whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ sent me not so much as to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no power.

1:4 To *always* be thanking God for what He has done for others is an indication of a very selfless spirit.

1:7 The purpose of the Holy Spirit gifts in the first century was to “confirm” the new believers (v. 6). Once the New Testament was completed, this was no longer required.

1:10,11 There were many serious moral and doctrinal problems in the church at Corinth. But Paul begins with the problem of their being divided. Division amongst believers is an awful sin which must be avoided at all costs.

1:14,15 Who physically baptizes us has no spiritual significance.

1:17 Paul doesn’t mean that baptism is unimportant – he has just said he did baptize some people, and the Acts record gives other examples. He means that the focus of the work the Lord had given him was to above all spread the Gospel; perhaps he left the follow up and baptizing of people to others.

God Uses the Weak Things

¹⁸ For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nothing. ²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know God, it was God's good pleasure through the apparent foolishness of the message preached to save them that believe- ²² seeing that Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek after wisdom. ²³ But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness. ²⁴ But to them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. ²⁶ Consider your calling, brothers; not many of you had worldly wisdom, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world, that He might put to shame those that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the

world, that He might put to shame the things that are strong. ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. ²⁹ So that no flesh should boast before God. ³⁰ But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who was made to us by God to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. ³¹ That, according to what is written: He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

CHAPTER 2 Feb. 20 Aug. 22

And I brothers, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴ And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; ⁵ so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

True Wisdom

⁶ We speak wisdom, however, among them that are mature. Yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of

1:28 God has chosen us; so we are in some way the low and despised in this world and the societies in which we live.

2:4 The power of persuasion is in the Gospel itself, especially in the message of the cross (v. 2). Converts are not won by the slickness of the presentation, but by the power of the message.

2:6 If the rulers of this world are "coming to nothing", we shouldn't place our hopes in politicians, but rather in the politics of God's coming Kingdom on earth at the return of Jesus.

this world, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even that which was hidden, which God foreordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which not one of the rulers of this world has known. For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But as it is written: Things which eye saw not and ear heard not and which did not enter into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for them that love Him, ¹⁰ God revealed them to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the things of God nobody knows, save the Spirit of God. ¹² But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, so that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God. ¹³ Which things also we speak about, but not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in words that the Spirit teaches, combining spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴ Now the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ But he that is spiritual judges all things; and he is ultimately judged by no man. ¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

CHAPTER 3 Feb. 21 Aug. 23

Spiritual Growth

And I, brothers, can not speak to you as spiritual people, but as carnal people, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not with solid food. For you were not yet able to bear it; no, not even now are you able. ³ For you are still carnal. For whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are you not carnal and do you not walk after the manner of men? ⁴ For when one says: I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos—are you not mere men? ⁵ Who then is Apollos? And who is Paul? Ministers through whom you believed, and each as the Lord gave to him. ⁶ I

2:9 God has "prepared" an individual place for us in eternity; we will each as it were have our own especially prepared room in God's eternal house (Jn. 14:1-3).

2:13 We combine spiritual things with spiritual by comparing the various parts of God's word, which was written by His Holy Spirit; and by making sense of God's Spirit working in our lives, combining this experience with the teaching of the words of His Spirit in the Bible.

2:14 It shouldn't surprise us, therefore, that many people just 'don't get' our message of Christ to them.

2:15 People *do* judge us; but our attitude should be that it means nothing to us, and in this sense we cannot be judged by them.

3:2 When we are baptize, we are born again (Jn. 3:3-5); in spiritual terms we are babies, and we grow spiritually from the milk of God's word, the basic teachings of the Gospel; but as we mature, we move on to the meat of His word. But the Corinthians hadn't matured.

planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters, but God that gives the increase. ⁸ Now he that plants and he that waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. ⁹ For we are God's fellow-workers. You are God's husbandry, God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another builds upon it. But let each man take care how he builds upon it! ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² But if anyone builds on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, ¹³ each man's work shall be revealed. For the day of judgment shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire itself shall test each man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work shall endure which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as having passed through

fire. ¹⁶ Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy; and such are you. ¹⁸ Let no one deceive himself. If anyone thinks that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: He takes the wise in their craftiness. ²⁰ And again: The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are vain. ²¹ Therefore, let no one boast in men. For all things are yours. ²² Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come- all are yours. ²³ And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

CHAPTER 4 Feb. 22 Aug. 24

Being Wise Stewards

Let a man regard us as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. ² In this, moreover, it is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful. ³ But with me it is a very small thing that I should

3:8 The labour we expend upon others will receive an eternal reward – unlike the labour we expend upon our secular lives, careers etc.

3:9 Paul likens God to a fellow worker on a building site or on a farm; this shows the humility of God in being prepared to work with us as we try to help others to His Kingdom.

3:15 If those we convert or try to build up in faith should fall away, we ourselves will still be saved, although we too must pass through the testing fire of the final judgment.

3:23 Christ even after His ascension is “God’s” and therefore not God Himself.

4:1 As taught in the parables of Jesus, we have each been given certain talents and blessings which we must use faithfully in God’s service. If we don’t use them, or use them for our own selfish advantage in this life, then we are not faithful stewards.

4:3 The fact we will be judged by God is so significant that it means that how mere people judge us in this life is irrelevant and should matter little to us.

be judged by you, or any man's judgment. I do not judge even myself. ⁴ For I know nothing against myself in my own conscience. Yet hereby I am not justified; but he that judges me is the Lord. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God. ⁶ Now these things, brothers, I have applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes. That from us you might learn not to go beyond the things which are written, so that none of you get puffed up, one against the other. ⁷ For who makes you to differ? And what have you that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Paul's Qualification to Teach the Corinthians

⁸ Already are you filled, already you have become rich, you have come

to reign without us. Yes, and I hope that you will indeed reign, that we also might reign with you. ⁹ For I think God has sent us the apostles last of all, as men doomed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You have glory, but we have dishonour. ¹¹ Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling-place; ¹² we toil, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless. Being persecuted, we endure. ¹³ Being defamed, we entreat. We are made as the garbage of the world, the scum of the earth, even until now. ¹⁴ I do not write these things to shame you, but to encourage you as my beloved children. ¹⁵ For though you have ten thousand would be teachers in Christ, yet you have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus it was me who begat you through the gospel. ¹⁶ I therefore

4:4 On one level, our conscience is important. But even if our conscience is clear about something, this doesn't mean that we are therefore right. We stand before God's judgment of us; at the last day, our conscience will not as it were jump out of us and stand there and judge us. We will be judged according to our response to the Word which Jesus spoke (Jn. 12:48); and in some matters our conscience is faulty.

4:5 True judgement involves considering a person's deepest motives. Seeing these are hidden, both to us as observers and often to the person themselves, we cannot judge / condemn others; we simply *must* leave this to God. This doesn't mean that we can't have an opinion – otherwise we would be unable to tell right from wrong. But we must not pre-judge God's ultimate judgment of a person.

4:10 The life decisions we make because of our knowledge of Christ will often make us appear foolish in the eyes of unbelieving people. But *do we* appear fools to them – or do we usually act just like they do?

4:15 Those we bring to Christ are our spiritual children, and we must always care for them as long as we live; and we should likewise respect those who brought us to Christ as our spiritual parents.

urge you to be imitators of me. ¹⁷ For this cause have I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who shall put you in remembrance of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ Now some are inflated with pride, as though I were not going to come to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and I will discover not the talk of those that are inflated with pride, but the power. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power. ²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

CHAPTER 5 Feb. 22 Aug. 24

A Case of Sexual Immorality

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such immorality as is not even among the Gentiles, that one of you has taken to himself his father's wife. ² Instead of grieving, you have become arrogant. Remove the one who has done this deed from among you. ³ For I truly, though absent in body but present in spirit, have al-

ready judged him that has done this thing, ⁴ I command you that in the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are gathered together (and my spirit is present with you when you do), with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ deliver such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast raises the whole lump of dough? ⁷ Purge out the old yeast so that you may be a new lump, even as you actually are. For our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, even Christ. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, neither with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread of sincerity and truth which has no yeast. ⁹ I wrote to you in my letter to have no association with fornicators. ¹⁰ I did not mean with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters. For you must go out of the world to do this. ¹¹ But as it is, I wrote to you not to keep association, if anyone that is named a brother be a fornicator, or

5:2 Local church discipline is occasionally required in cases of severe immorality such as this. But the aim is that through the process, they will be saved (v. 5). We should not cast people out just because of personal disagreement with them and never in anger, only in love and a desire to save both them and others.

5:5 The common understanding of 'Satan' breaks down here; for the adversary [perhaps local Roman authorities, in this case] plays a part in the salvation of people, under God's hand.

5:6 The leaven or yeast which negatively influenced others in the church wasn't merely the sexually perverted person; it also refers to "malice" (v. 8). The reason for church discipline in this case was protective – so that others wouldn't be badly influenced.

5:11 Eating together in the first century was a sign of acceptance and fellowship. Jesus ate with all kinds of sinners in order to bring them to Him; He didn't refuse to eat with people because they weren't up to His spiritual level.

covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner. With such a one have no association, not even to eat. ¹² For what have I to do with judging those that are without? Do you not judge those that are within? ¹³ But them that are without God judges. Put away the wicked man from among yourselves.

CHAPTER 6 Feb. 23 Aug. 25

Don't Take Believers to Law

Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbour, go to law before the unrighteous and not rather take it before the saints? ² Or do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³ Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? ⁴ If then you have to judge things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are of no account in the church. ⁵ I say this to move you to shame. What! Is there

not among you even one wise man who shall be able to decide between his brothers? ⁶ But as it is with you at the moment, brother goes to law with brother- and that before unbelievers! ⁷ No, already there is totally a defect in you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather take wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? ⁸ No, but you yourselves do wrong and defraud- and that your brothers. ⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God. ¹² All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All

6:1 We should therefore not take other believers to court; instead we should try to resolve the issues through the mediation of wise, humble people within the church – even those who may be counted as nothing amongst us.

6:7 We should suffer ourselves to be defrauded rather than take people to court; we live in an age of litigation and legal threatening as never before, and we mustn't be caught up in it.

6:8 To take a brother to court for defrauding you is in fact [in God's eyes] to defraud them; so you show yourself no better than them, and thus condemn yourself.

6:9 If we believe that the wicked will not be allowed into the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns, this should be comfort enough for us. This is the only judgment that matters, and so we shouldn't take them to human judgment in this life. By refraining from doing so, we show our faith in God's judgment which is to come (see 4:3,4).

6:11 *Washed... in the name* – A reference to baptism. We also have committed [in essence] the sins which we are tempted to take others to court over. But we were graciously forgiven through our baptism. Therefore we should be forgiving to them.

6:12 Christ hasn't given us a long list of things which we must do and those we must

things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. ¹³ Food for the belly and the belly for food, but God shall bring to nothing both it and them. But the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. ¹⁴ And God both raised up the Lord and will raise us up also through His power. ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? God forbid. ¹⁶ Or do you not know that he that is joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For the scripture says: The two shall become one flesh. ¹⁷ But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. ¹⁸ Flee fornication. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God? And you are not your own; ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. Glorify God therefore in your body and spirit, for they are God's.

CHAPTER 7 Feb. 24 Aug. 26

Paul Answers Questions About Singleness

Now concerning the things of which you wrote. It is good for a man not to touch a woman. ² But because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ³ Let the husband render to the wife her due and likewise also the wife to the husband. ⁴ The wife has no power over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise also the husband has no power over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Do not deprive one another, unless it is for an agreed time, so that you may give yourselves to prayer and then come together again, that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ But this I say by way of concession, not by commandment. ⁷ Yet I would that all men were even as I myself. However each man has his own gift from God, one after this manner and another after that. ⁸ But I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they live as I do. ⁹ But if they do not have

not do. The question isn't 'What can I get away with?' but rather 'What is the expedient / wise thing?'

6:16 The sexual act is designed to be used by God in an ongoing sense in order to make two people "one". To use it any other way is seriously sinful.

7:2 Paul often sets an ideal standard, and yet recognizes God's concessions to human weakness. Thus he advises the single life, but makes a concession to marriage; in marriage, there shouldn't be separation, but if there is, then remain single (v. 11).

7:5 We are tempted by our own internal libido, rather than a cosmic being. The internal desire for forbidden sexual relations is our real adversary / Satan.

7:7 Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God. Yet many single people so wish to be married, and some married so wish to be single again; thinking that they would serve God better in this case. But whatever state we are in, is a gift from God that we must use.

self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn. ¹⁰ But to the married I give this instruction; not I, but the Lord: That the wife should not leave her husband ¹¹ (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband) and the husband should not leave his wife. ¹² But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is content to dwell with him, let him not leave her. ¹³ And the woman that has an unbelieving husband and he is content to dwell with her, let her not leave her husband. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. ¹⁵ Yet if the unbelieving departs, let him depart. The brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases; but God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your

husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you shall save your wife? ¹⁷ Only as the Lord has distributed to each man, as God has called each, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has any been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing- but the keeping of the commandments of God is all important. ²⁰ Let each man abide in that calling wherein he was called. ²¹ Were you called while a slave? Do not worry, but if you can become free, do so. ²² For he that was called in the Lord being a slave, is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he that was called being free, is Christ's slave. ²³ You were bought with a price. Become not slaves of men. ²⁴ Brothers, let each man, wherein he was called, therein stay with God. ²⁵ Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of

7:12 *I, not the Lord* – All that Paul wrote was inspired by God's Spirit. Often, however, he is repeating the teaching which the Lord Jesus had already given (v. 10). However, now Paul tells us something which has been revealed additionally to him by the Spirit, and which is not to be found in the teaching of Jesus.

7:14 To some extent our unbelieving or immature family members are 'covered' in us. It's a motivation to remain faithful to God ourselves.

7:16 Whilst God through Jesus will save people, He has delegated this work to us. A believer can save another person; this is a great encouragement to 'stick it out' in marriage to an unbeliever, and in preaching the Gospel.

7:17 *In all the churches* – Paul's teaching to this one church was inspired by God and is therefore relevant and binding far wider than to that one church. His letters are therefore not merely historical documents, but the voice of God to all believers in all generations. We do of course live in a different place in time and geography, but the essence of God's teaching through him must be applied by us all.

7:20, 23 *If you can become free... become not slaves* – Maybe relevant to signing ourselves up for careers or employment which enslaves us and takes us away from the things of God.

the Lord; but I give my judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy. ²⁶ I think therefore that it is good by reason of the present distress that is upon us, that a man should remain as he is. ²⁷ Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸ But should you marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marry, she has not sinned. Yet such shall have tribulation in the flesh, and I would spare you.

Serving the Lord Without Distraction

²⁹ But this I say brothers, because the time is shortened, that from this time forward both those that have wives may be as though they had none; ³⁰ those that weep, as though they wept not, those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not, and those that buy, as though they possessed not. ³¹ And those that use the world, as not using it to the full. For the fashion of this world passes away. ³² But I would have you to be free of worries. He that is unmarried is careful for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. ³³ But he that is married is careful for the things of the world, how he may

please his wife, ³⁴ and is divided. Also the woman that is unmarried or betrothed is anxious about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. ³⁵ And this I say for your own profit. Not that I may cast a snare upon you, but so you may do what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction. ³⁶ But if anyone thinks that he behaves himself inappropriately toward his betrothed, if she be past the flower of her age, and if need so requires, let him do what he will. He sins not. Let them marry. ³⁷ But he that stands steadfast in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desires under control, and has determined this in his heart, to remain betrothed; he shall do well. ³⁸ So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. ³⁹ A wife is bound for as long as her husband lives; but if the husband dies she is free to be married to whoever she chooses. But only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I am certain that I also have the Spirit of God.

7:36 It appears that 7:26-40 are Paul's comments upon a very specific situation in Corinth – he is writing an answer to various things which the Corinthians had written to him about (v. 1). We are reading only his answers, without having seen the original questions.

7:39 Marriage is for life. At no other time in human history has this principle been under such attack as it is today. Marriage for believers is to be only “in the Lord” – to those who have been baptized into Him.

7:40 *I think* – the Greek can imply ‘I am certain that...’.

CHAPTER 8 Feb. 25 Aug. 27***Food Offered to Idols***

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols. We know that we all have knowledge; yet knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ² If anyone thinks that he knows anything, he does not know anything as he ought to know. ³ But if anyone loves God, the same is known by Him. ⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol has real existence and there is no God but one. ⁵ For though there are those called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords many, ⁶ yet to us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we are everything to Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ,

for the sake of whom are all things, and we exist for His sake. ⁷ However there is not in all men that knowledge, but some being used until now to the idol, eat things sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience being weak is defiled. ⁸ But food will not commend us to God. Neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. Nor, if we eat, are we the better. ⁹ But take heed, lest by any means this freedom of yours becomes a stumblingblock to the weak. ¹⁰ For if a man sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be encouraged to eat things sacrificed to idols? ¹¹ For through your knowledge he that is weak perishes, the brother for whose sake Christ died. ¹² And thus, sinning

8:1 We can use knowledge, including spiritual knowledge, wrongly – even if the knowledge is theoretically correct. If we live in love, our concern will be to edify or build up others, and we will use and apply our knowledge appropriately and sensitively.

8:3 The wonderful thing is that God knows us; not so much that we have some limited knowledge of Him.

8:4, 5 Contrary to the popular beliefs of the time, Paul teaches that idols don't exist. He speaks of the idols as 'demons' (10:21); the people believed in the existence of demons as demi-gods, and made idols to them on earth. The Corinthians were tempted to worship both God and also the demons / idols. Paul is clearly stating that demons don't exist; the language of 'demon possession' in the New Testament is simply using the language of the day for unexplained [often mental] illnesses.

8:6 The only God is God the Father. The false doctrine of the Trinity claims that the one God exists in three persons, one of which is "God the Father". But the Bible teaches that the one and only God is God the Father. Therefore Jesus is not God. His existence as a separate entity from God is made clear by this verse.

8:9 We are free to eat what we want; but our decisions must be overshadowed always by the concern as to what effect our example will have upon others less mature in the Faith. This is a principle we often need to apply in our decision making. 'I see nothing wrong with it... it's OK in my conscience' is a spiritually selfish attitude. Our examples have more influence upon others than we imagine. If our example causes another to stumble, then we have sinned against Christ and His death for that person is as if were wasted (vv. 12,13). So what may not be a personal sin for us becomes sinful if it causes others to stumble.

against the believers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³ Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh again, so that I do not cause my brother to stumble.

CHAPTER 9 Feb. 25 Aug. 27

Paul's View of a Paid Ministry

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my works in the Lord? ² If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³ My defence to them that examine me is this: ⁴ Have we no right to eat and to drink? ⁵ Have we no right to lead a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶ Or are Barnabas and I the only ones who have a right not to have to work for a living? ⁷ What soldier ever serves at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who feeds a flock and does not drink the milk of the flock? ⁸ Do I speak these things after the manner of men? Or did not the law say the same? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses: You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out

the corn. Is it for the oxen that God cares, ¹⁰ or did He say it entirely for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written. Because he that ploughs ought to plough in hope, and he that threshes, hopes to partake in the harvest. ¹¹ If we sowed to you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we shall reap your material things? ¹² If others have this rightful claim over you, do we not have more? Nevertheless we did not use this right, but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that they that labour in the temple get their food from the temple, and they that serve at the altar have their portion from that which is sacrificed on the altar? ¹⁴ Even so the Lord ordained that they that proclaim the gospel should live from the gospel. ¹⁵ But I have used none of these things, and I do not write these things that it may be so done in my case. For it is better for me to die, than that anyone should make my boasting void. ¹⁶ For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast about. For necessity is laid upon me. For woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel. ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if against my own will,

9:5 *A wife that is a believer* – Again Paul stresses that marriage should only be to a believer (7:39).

9:12 Here we have an example of how we can choose to live spiritual life on different levels. It wouldn't have been wrong for Paul to take a salary for his work, and he explains there is even Old Testament precedent for this – and even an unrecorded saying of Jesus which teaches it (v. 14). But he chose to take a higher level – and not take a salary. If we love God truly, we will want to try to serve Him on the highest possible level. We will not be minimalists, thinking what we can 'get away with'.

9:17 Paul is saying that a sign that he has been truly called to preach the Gospel is because this isn't something which came naturally to him; his silent years in Arabia after

then I have clearly had a stewardship entrusted to me. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel without charge, so as not to use to the full my right in the gospel.

All Things to All People

¹⁹ For though I was free from all, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. ²⁰ And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the law, I became as one under the law (though I am not under the law), that I might gain those that are under the law. ²¹ To them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. ²³ And I do all things for the

gospel's sake, that I may be a joint partaker of it. ²⁴ Do you not know that they that run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run like this, so that you may attain the prize. ²⁵ And every man that strives in the games exercises self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶ I therefore run, but not with uncertainty. So fight I, but not as a shadow boxer. ²⁷ But like an athlete I discipline my body and make it my slave; lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

CHAPTER 10 Feb. 26 Aug. 28

Israel in the Wilderness Are Our Warning

Brothers, I would not have you ignorant that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, ² and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in

his conversion were perhaps due to him struggling against the command to preach (Gal. 1:17). If we feel it's so hard and 'not me' to share the good news of Christ with others – then we are in good company.

9:18 A paradox – by not taking a wage or reward from men for our service [be it money or the reward of praise], then we will receive a reward from God.

9:20 Without being hypocritical, we too must engage with people on their terms – rather than baldly presenting the Gospel to them in our terms with no real interest in their response.

9:27 The mere fact of telling others the Gospel won't justify us; we can still be rejected by God if we fail to practice personal self-control.

10:2 Israel in slavery in Egypt represent us in the world, before baptism. When Israel went through the Red Sea, they had water on both sides of them and a cloud (also water) above them. In this sense they were surrounded with water – and so Paul saw it as a symbol of baptism. They came through the Red Sea and had to walk through the wilderness (our life in this world after baptism), feeding daily on manna (God's word, Jesus), until they came to the promised land (the Kingdom of God on earth when Jesus returns). Israel failed in the wilderness, they wanted to return to Egypt, and we must learn from their example.

the sea. ³ They did all eat the same spiritual food, ⁴ and did all drink the same spiritual drink. For they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock represented Christ. ⁵ However with most of them God was not well pleased; for their dead bodies were scattered over the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted. ⁷ Neither be you idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and so in one day twenty three thousand died. ⁹ Neither let us put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and perished by the serpents. ¹⁰ Neither let us grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the Destroyer angel. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written about for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him that thinks he stands be careful lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

Don't Participate in Idol Worship

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise people. Think upon what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Seeing that we, who are many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partaking of the one loaf. ¹⁸ Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹ What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I would not have you sharing communion with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? ²³ All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but his neighbour's good.

Don't Cause Others to Stumble

²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question

10:13 The test may actually be beyond our ability to bear; but God gives us a way of escape. Whenever we sin, we are therefore guilty and responsible; we can't justify our failure by 'situational ethics', whereby we reason that the situation left us with no choice but to sin. God promises that He will not allow this ever to happen. It's a great comfort as well as a challenge.

10:21 Demons are another name for idols – which don't exist, even though many think they do (8:4,5).

on the ground of conscience, ²⁶ for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it. ²⁷ If one of them that do not believe invites you to a feast and you are inclined to go, whatever is set before you eat, asking no question for conscience sake. ²⁸ But if anyone says to you: This has been offered in sacrifice to idols! Do not eat it for the sake of he that tells you, and for conscience sake. ²⁹ Conscience, I say, not your own, but the other's. One may ask: Why is my liberty judged by another's conscience? ³⁰ If I eat my food with thankfulness, why is evil spoken of me, for that for which I give thanks? ³¹ The principle is that whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do or do not- do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no occasions of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Gentiles, or to the church of God. ³³ Even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved.

CHAPTER 11 Feb. 27 Aug. 29

Headcoverings in the Church

Be imitators of me, even as I am of Christ. ² Now I praise you who remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, as I delivered them to you. ³ But I would have you

know, that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his head. ⁵ But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonours her head. For it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. ⁶ For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. ⁷ For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸ For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. ⁹ For neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man. ¹⁰ For this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, in the Lord, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman. ¹² For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves. Is it appropriate that a woman pray to God unveiled? ¹⁴ Does not nature itself teach you, that if a man has long hair it is a dishonour to him? ¹⁵ But if a

10:29, 30 *Why is my liberty...? why is evil spoken of me...?* – These appear to be Paul anticipating the kind of objections which people would raise to what he has just said (he has this same style in 15:35). We must be sensitive to the conscience of others, and not simply reason that *we* see nothing wrong in doing something.

11:1 Paul isn't someone to just be admired from a distance, as we may admire a painting; we really are to see him as our model, so that we might follow Christ better.

11:3 *The head of Christ is God* – Even now, *after* Jesus' mortal life, He is still subservient to God.

woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. For her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶ But if anyone seems to be contentious, let them know we have no such custom, neither do the churches of God.

The Breaking of Bread Service

¹⁷ But in giving you this instruction, I do not praise you- for you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. ¹⁹ For there must also be factions among you, that they that are approved may be revealed among you. ²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who do not have? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you! ²³ For I received

of the Lord that which I in turn delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: This is my body, which is for you. This do in remembrance of me. ²⁵ In the same manner also the cup, after supper, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷ Therefore whoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not discern the body of the Lord. ³⁰ For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep. ³¹ If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we

11:19 Our response to division in the church reveals whether we are approved of God or not.

11:23-29 This section can be usefully read just before we take the bread and wine at the breaking of bread service. We can break bread alone; and this is an appropriate Bible passage to read.

11:28, 29 A few moments of silence before we take the bread and wine are necessary – so that we can examine ourselves. As we reconstruct in our own imaginations the death of Christ, we naturally will examine ourselves, because our conscience will be touched.

11:31 'Judge' is being used in the sense of 'condemn'. We cannot avoid the day of judgment; but if we condemn ourselves in our self-examination today, realizing that we are not worthy, then, we will not be condemned. This will work out to be the greatest paradox of all existence.

11:32 *Condemned with the world* – Those rejected at the day of judgment will simply be sent back into the world to share the world's judgment. If in this life we prefer to

are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³ Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, that your coming together be not to condemnation. About the other things I will give instruction when I come.

CHAPTER 12 Feb. 28 Aug. 30
Various Gifts Within the Body of Christ

Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. ² You know that when you were Gentiles you were led away to those dumb idols, in whichever way you might have been led. ³ Therefore I make known to you, that no one speaking in the Spirit of God says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. ⁴ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are diversities of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of

activities, but the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ But to each individual is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit. ⁹ To another faith through the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings through the same one Spirit. ¹⁰ And to another workings of miracles, and to another prophecy and to another discerning of spirits; to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these gifts are energized by one and the same Spirit, apportioned to each man according as he is willing to receive it. ¹² For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though being many, are one body; so also is Christ. ¹³ For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.

be with the world rather than with Jesus and His people, then we will be sent back into the world when He returns.

12:3 There were people who claimed to have the Holy Spirit gifts who in fact didn't, and who were willing to curse Jesus as the pagans demanded they did. The problem of false claims to Holy Spirit possession continues with us today.

12:10 Only some people in the first century were given the gift of speaking in tongues [foreign languages]. See too v. 30. Those who claim that 'speaking in tongues' is experienced by every truly converted believer are therefore wrong.

12:13 We become parts of the body of Christ by being baptized into His body. This is why baptism is so important; and it means that everyone who's truly baptized is part of the body of Christ, and we therefore should not be divided from others in the body (v. 25); and we cannot say that we have no need of others in the body of Christ (v. 21). The bread which we break at the breaking of bread is a symbol of the body of Christ; we are one loaf (10:17). We should therefore welcome at the breaking of bread all those who have been validly baptized into Christ. Seeing there is only one body of Christ,

The Body of Christ

¹⁴ For the body is not one member but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say: Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say: Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body- that would not make it not a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where is the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where is the smelling? ¹⁸ But now has God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased Him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where is the body? ²⁰ But now they are many members, but one body. ²¹ Therefore the eye cannot say to the hand: I have no need of you; nor the head to the feet: I have no need of you. ²² No, on the contrary, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. ²³ And those parts of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our unattractive parts have more abundant covering; ²⁴ whereas our more attractive parts have no need of this. But God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the

same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and each individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then those who do miracles, then the gifts of healing, helping, administration and various kinds of languages. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with languages? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

CHAPTER 13 Feb. 28 Aug. 30***The Supremacy of Love***

If I speak with all the languages of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become like sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and if I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. ⁴ Love suffers long, and is kind. Love

one loaf, one bread, we are effectively breaking bread with them anyway even if we (wrongly) refuse to break bread with them.

12:22 The quiet or weak members of the body of Christ are very valuable – and we should recognize this.

13:1 Speaking with tongues is therefore not a guarantee of salvation.

13:4 Love here is personified as a person. We should ‘be’ love; love is the foremost characteristic, the essence, of the Christian life.

envies not. It is not arrogant or rude, is not puffed up, ⁵ does not behave itself inappropriately, is not self seeking, is not easily provoked, keeps no record of evil done, ⁶ rejoices not in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ carries all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails; but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away. Whether there be speaking in foreign languages, this shall cease. Whether there be the gift of knowledge, it shall be done away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when that which is perfect comes, then that which is in part shall be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child. Now that I am a man, I have put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known. ¹³ But now abides faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

CHAPTER 14 Mar. 1 Aug. 31

Pursue love, and in this pursuit therefore earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that of prophecy. ² For he that speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. For no one understands, but in the Spirit he speaks mysteries. ³ But he that prophesies speaks to men, words of edification, exhortation and consolation. ⁴ He that speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he that prophesies edifies the church. ⁵ Now I would wish that you all speak with tongues, but especially I wish that you should prophesy; for greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues, unless he interpret, that the church may receive edification. ⁶ But now, brothers, if I came to you speaking with tongues, without speaking to you either by way of revelation, or of knowledge, or of prophesying, or of teaching- what shall I profit you? ⁷ Even things without life which give a voice, whether pipe or harp, if they give not a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what

13:6 *Rejoices not in unrighteousness* – Much ‘entertainment’ invites us to do just this; to enjoy viewing and hearing unrighteous things and take pleasure from them, although we are not literally doing those things. We are not to rejoice in sinful things but to focus our minds upon spiritual things.

13:8 Paul here prophesies that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit would pass away. They will be given again when Jesus returns (Heb. 6:5).

14:2 The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in foreign languages, as happened in Acts 2. Paul is here describing, and criticizing, what was happening in the church at Corinth.

14:6 To speak in a foreign language for the sake of it, just to show off, wouldn’t help anyone; they’d need someone with the gift of translating to translate back to their own language. The essence of what Paul is saying in this chapter is: ‘Don’t show off. Use whatever gifts you’ve been given to practically upbuild others, rather than abusing them to exalt yourself, to show off before others, to appear different and cool in the eyes of men’.

is piped or harped? ⁸ For if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle, who shall prepare himself for war? ⁹ So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech easily understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, surely, many languages in the world and none is without meaning. ¹¹ If then I do not know the meaning of the voice, I shall be to him that speaks a barbarian and he that speaks will be a barbarian to me. ¹² So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to excel in edifying the church.

Commands Governing the Use of Tongues

¹³ Therefore let him that speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also. ¹⁶ Else if you bless with the spirit, how shall he that is in the place of the unlearned say the Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he does not understand what you say? ¹⁷ For you truly give thanks well, but the other is not

edified. ¹⁸ I thank God, I speak with tongues more than you all. ¹⁹ However in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. ²⁰ Brothers, be not children in your thinking. Yet in malice be babes; but in thinking be men. ²¹ In the law it is written: By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak to this people, and not even thus will they hear Me, says the Lord. ²² Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe but to the unbelieving; but prophesying is for a sign, not to the unbelieving but to those that believe. ²³ If therefore the whole church be assembled together and all speak with tongues, and there come in unlearned or unbelieving people, will they not say that you are mad? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reproved by all, he is judged by all. ²⁵ The secrets of his heart are revealed, and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed. ²⁶ What is it then, brothers? As it is, when you come together, each one has a Psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. But let all things be done to edify. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in

14:10 ‘Tongues’ refers to “languages in the world”, i.e. not ‘mumbo-jumbo’ but intelligible speech, as happened in Acts 2.

14:19 Whilst these commands refer to the use of the gift of languages [“tongues”] in a first century church, we can grasp the principle – talk to people on their level, in a way and style which is spiritually helpful to them, rather than talking on your own level to them, insensitive to their needs. The Lord Jesus taught the people God’s word as they were able to understand, not as He was able to expound (Mk. 4:33).

a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three; and even then in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ And let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern them. ³⁰ But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence. ³¹ For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be exhorted. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. ³⁴ Let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also said the law. ³⁵ And if they would learn anything, let them ask their men at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church. ³⁶ What? Was it from you that the word of God went out? Or came it to you alone? ³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandment of the Lord. ³⁸ But if anyone is ignorant,

let him be ignorant. ³⁹ Therefore my brothers, desire earnestly to prophesy and forbid not to speak with tongues. ⁴⁰ But let all things be done decently and in order.

CHAPTER 15 Mar. 2 Sep. 1

A Summary of the Gospel

Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, wherein also you stand. ² By which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which also I received: That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he rose on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to above five hundred believers at once, of whom the greater part remain until now (but some have fallen asleep); ⁷ then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ And last of all, as to the abnormally born, he appeared to me also. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, who is unworthy to be called an apostle,

14:27 There were unlikely to be more than two or three language groups in the church audience, who didn't know any of the other languages being used.

14:28 This isn't obeyed in those churches which claim that 'tongues' are involuntary utterances.

14:32 Those who truly have the gift of prophecy will be in control of themselves and not out of their minds.

14:34 This command is specifically in the context of the use of tongues and prophecy; many churches today who claim to experience tongues simply disregard this.

14:37 Truly spiritual people will accept Paul's commands here and not short cut or ignore them.

15:2 Holding on to the true understanding of the Gospel is required for salvation. It is no bad thing to regularly remind ourselves of the basic teachings of the Gospel.

because I persecuted the church of God.¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than all of them. Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.¹¹ Whether I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The Crucial Importance of Christ's Resurrection

¹² Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. ¹⁵ Yes, we are found false witnesses of God. Because we witnessed of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised—¹⁶ for if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith

is vain, you are still in your sins; ¹⁸ and therefore also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all people the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. ²¹ For since by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ's, at his coming. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. ²⁷ For He put all things in subjection under his feet. But when He said all things are put in subjection, it is evident that He is excepted who did subject all things to him. ²⁸ And when all things have been subjected

15:10 The idea of labour not being in vain recurs in v. 58. The connection teaches that Paul's zealous labour in response to grace is not just to be admired from a distance; he is to be taken as our example.

15:11 Peoples' faith is dependent to some extent upon the preacher; we can bring people to faith or leave them without faith and hope because we didn't preach to them (Rom. 10:14).

15:20 *Firstfruits* – Jesus was the first person to rise from the dead and be given eternal life. When we are resurrected and given eternal life, we will be like the rest of the harvest. If Christ was the “firstfruits”, then men like Enoch and Elijah, indeed nobody before the time of Christ, was given eternal life at the end of their mortal lives.

15:22 *Shall all be made live* – All those “in Christ” by baptism into His death and resurrection.

15:28 Christ will be eternally subject to God, and will give His Kingdom to God (v. 24). Christ wasn't just less than God during His mortal life; He will eternally be like this. Trinitarian theology can't satisfactorily answer this.

to him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things to him, that God may be all in all. ²⁹ Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are people baptized for them? ³⁰ Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? ³¹ I protest by that boasting in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord: I die daily. ³² If after the manner of men I fought with beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. ³³ Be not deceived. Evil companionships corrupt good moral habits. ³⁴ Awake to soberness righteously, and do not sin. For some among you have no knowledge of God. I speak this to move you to shame.

The Process of Resurrection

³⁵ But someone will say: How are

the dead resurrected? And with what type of body do they come forth? ³⁶ You foolish one, what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And what you sow is not the plant body that shall later be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body just as it pleases Him; and to each seed a body of its own. ³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one and the glory of the earthly is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars, for one star differs from another star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown

15:29 Paul doesn't support the idea of 'baptism for the dead' – he's saying that it's inconsistent for people to do this in Corinth if they also deny the resurrection; because baptism symbolizes death (as we go under the water) and resurrection, as we come up out of the water (Rom. 6:3-5).

15:32 The colossal importance of the resurrection of the body at the return of Christ is effectively downplayed by those who wrongly believe in a 'soul' going to reward in Heaven at death. For us, we should live our lives in the context of knowing that we shall rise again, be judged, and by God's grace live eternally in His Kingdom.

15:33 We may think we can be friends with bad people without being corrupted; but let us give Paul's words their full weight.

15:38 We will be given a new body at the resurrection – we will live eternally in a bodily form. All existence in the Bible is bodily existence. But there will be a connection between who we are now, and who we will eternally be – when we die, our character is like a seed which is sown, to rise again in resurrection. The personality and character we develop in this life are therefore of huge and eternal importance.

15:41 There will be different levels of reward in the Kingdom, just as one star is brighter than another; some will rule over five cities, others over two (Lk. 19:19), in reflection of the fact that some people in this life bring forth more fruit than others (Mt. 13:8).

in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ So also it is written: The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and only then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is of the earth, earthy. The second man is heavenly. ⁴⁸ As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy, and as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. ⁵⁰ Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all remain asleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to fulfilment

the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸ Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

CHAPTER 16 Mar. 3 Sep. 2

Paul's Plans for Corinth

Now concerning the collection for the saints, do as I instructed the churches in Galatia. ² Upon the first day of the week let each one of you, as your income allows, put some money aside and store it up so that no collections are needed when I come. ³ And when I arrive, whomsoever you shall approve, them will I send with letters to carry your generosity to Jerusalem. ⁴ And if it be fitting for me to go also, they shall go with me. ⁵ But I will come to you, when I shall have passed through Macedonia (for I plan to pass through Macedonia). ⁶ And perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go further. ⁷ But I do not wish to see you just in passing; I hope to

15:50 As we are still “flesh and blood”, we cannot fully now be in the Kingdom of God, neither is the church fully the Kingdom – because we must be changed at the resurrection before we can fully enter the Kingdom (vv. 51-53).

16:2 God wants regular, consistent generosity rather than occasional large acts of generosity.

16:7 *If the Lord permit* – We should always speak of our plans as being ‘God willing’ (James 4:15).

stay a while with you, if the Lord permit. ⁸ But I will stay at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ for a great door for effective work has opened to me, but there are many adversaries. ¹⁰ Now if Timothy comes, see that he has nothing to fear while he is with you. For he does the work of the Lord, as I do. ¹¹ Let no one despise him. But set him forward on his journey in peace, that he may come to me. For I expect him with the brothers. ¹² But as touching Apollos the brother, I pleaded with him to come to you with the brothers; but he was unwilling to come right now, but he will come when he shall have the opportunity. ¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all you do be done in love. ¹⁵ You know the family of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia and

that they have devoted themselves to serving the saints; now I beseech you, brothers, ¹⁶ you also be in subjection to such, and to everyone that helps in the work and labours. ¹⁷ I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. For what was lacking on your part they supplied; ¹⁸ they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge those that are such. ⁹ The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. ²⁰ All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹ The greeting of me Paul with my own hand. ²² If anyone loves not the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²⁴ My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

16:14 It's possible to serve God without doing it in love – as Paul warns against in chapter 13. It's very important to do all we do consciously motivated by love; not because we 'have to', not for appearances, nor from habit and tradition.

16:15-18 Respect can never be demanded, it can only be earned. We should respect those who have clearly given their lives to serving others in Christ.

16:22 *Maranatha* – A watchword of the early church, meaning 'May the Lord come soon!'.

2 CORINTHIANS

CHAPTER 1 Mar. 4 Sep. 3

The Relationship Between Suffering and Comfort

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God and Timothy our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those that are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, even so our comfort is also in abundance through Christ. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which works in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer. ⁷ And our hope for you is steadfast. Knowing that, as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also are you of the comfort. ⁸ Brothers,

we do not want you to be ignorant in regards to the hardships which we encountered in Asia. We were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, so much so that we feared even for our lives. ⁹ Yes, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in the God who raises the dead- ¹⁰ who delivered us out of so great a death, and will deliver. On whom we have set our hope, that He will also still deliver us. ¹¹ You also helping together on our behalf by your prayers, so that it works out that for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf.

Paul's Change of Travel Plans

¹² For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and Godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world- and more abundantly toward you. ¹³ For we write no other things to you, than what you read or even acknowledge, and I hope you will

1:4 One reason for our sufferings is so that the comfort we are given for them we may share with others who are suffering the same. But this will only be possible if we are meaningfully in relationship with others; and suffering has a way of making us self-centred. Paul understood this principle so well that he could write that his sufferings were so that he could comfort the Corinthians (v. 6).

1:9 *Sentence of death within ourselves* – Paul may be referring to having received a death penalty from the local authorities, or to his recovery from a terminal illness.

1:13 ‘What we write is what you read’ may be a way of saying that they knew within their consciences, at first reading of his words, that there was congruence between Paul’s words and his actions – as there should be in our words too.

acknowledge to the end; ¹⁴ as also you did once partially acknowledge us, that we are your boasting, even as you are also ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus. ¹⁵ And in this confidence I had decided to come first of all to you, that you might have a second benefit; ¹⁶ and by you to pass into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you, and from you proceed on my journey to Judea. ¹⁷ When I planned this, did I show fickleness? Or the things that I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, so that in the same breath I say, Yes, yes and then No, no? ¹⁸ But as God is faithful, our word toward you is not yes and no. ¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no; but in him is yes. ²⁰ For no matter how many and whatever be the promises of God, in him is the ultimate Yes! Therefore also through him is the Amen, to the glory of God through us. ²¹ Now he that establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts. ²³ But I call God for a witness upon my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we have lordship over your faith but

are helpers of your joy. For in faith you must stand fast.

CHAPTER 2 Mar. 4 Sep. 3

Receiving Back the Disciplined Brother

But I determined this for myself, that I would not come again to you with sorrow. ² For if I make you sorry, who then is he that makes me glad, but he that is made sorry by me? ³ And I wrote this very thing, lest when I came, I should receive sorrow from those in whom I ought to rejoice- having confidence in you all, that my joy is in you all. ⁴ For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears. Not that you should be made sorry, but that you might know the love that I have more abundantly for you. ⁵ But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not so much to me but in a sense (not to put it too severely) to you all. ⁶ Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority. ⁷ So that to the contrary you should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his excessive sorrow. ⁸ Therefore I beg you to confirm your love toward him. ⁹ For to this end also did I write, that I might

1:19 The totally positive nature of the Lord Jesus should be reflected in our positivity and sense of purpose in life (v. 17).

2:6 This may refer to the case of the immoral brother about which Paul had earlier written in 1 Cor. 5, advising the church to separate from this person. But Paul knew that excessive separation from even such an immoral person can result in psychological and spiritual damage if they have repented (v. 7).

2:12 *A door was opened* – God sometimes gives us opportunities to make a special witness for Him, and we must have the courage to take them.

know, by putting you to the test, if you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰ But to whom you forgive anything, I also. When I also forgive- if I need to forgive- then I do it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so ¹¹ that no advantage may be gained over us by the Satan. For we are not ignorant of his devices.

Paul Protests his Sincerity

¹² Now when I came to Troas for the sake of the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened to me in the Lord, ¹³ I had no relief for my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother, but taking my leave of them, I went into Macedonia. ¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and makes manifest through us the savour of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are a sweet savour of Christ to God in those that are saved and in those that perish. ¹⁶ To the one a savour from death to death; to the other a savour from life to life. And who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not as most, corrupting the word of God; but as of sincerity and as of God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

CHAPTER 3 Mar. 5 Sep. 4

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as

do some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter of recommendation, written in our hearts, known and read by all; ³ being revealed before all that you are as it were a letter from Christ, delivered by us; written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh. ⁴ And such confidence have we toward God, through Christ. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit. For the letter kills but the spirit gives life.

The Old and New Covenants

⁷ But if that which ministered death, written, engraved on stones, came with glory (so that the children of Israel could not look continually upon the presence of Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this glory was); ⁸ how shall the ministry of the spirit be without glory? ⁹ For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory. ¹⁰ For truly, that which has been made glorious has not been made ultimately glorious in that the other glory is simply so surpassing. ¹¹ For if that

2:14 This alludes to the Roman triumph, whereby the victorious soldiers marched through the streets in glory and with the burning of incense after defeating their enemy. The victory of Jesus on the cross should fill us with such a sense of victory and glory.

3:2 The fact Paul had converted the Corinthians was the basis upon which he had authority with them; he didn't need any letter from any other authority figure.

which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains permanently is yet more glorious. ¹² Having therefore such a hope, we use great boldness of speech, ¹³ and are not like Moses, who put a veil upon his face so the children of Israel could not gaze to see the outcome of that which was fading away. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains, it not being revealed to them that it is made redundant through Christ. ¹⁵ But to this day, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies upon their heart. ¹⁶ But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. ¹⁸ But we, with an unveiled face and

reflecting the glory of the Lord, are all transformed into his likeness from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit.

CHAPTER 4 Mar. 5 Sep. 4

Preaching the Gospel of Glory

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we do not give up. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those that perish, ⁴ in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the im-

3:12 "Boldness" is a word often associated with the preaching of the Gospel in Acts. We who are naturally shy and not confident in witnessing to others can be inspired with boldness by the fact we have a sure hope. If we believe we shall live eternally in God's Kingdom, we will find strength to share this good news with others (see 4:13).

3:13 The things of the Old Covenant (v. 14), the Law of Moses, were fading away (v. 11). They would finally finish with the destruction of the temple in AD70. This means we aren't bound to keep the Law of Moses today – it has faded away.

3:18 When Moses spoke with the Angel, the glory on the Angel's face became reflected onto Moses' face, and he radiated it to others. If we are in a personal relationship with Jesus, His glory, His personality, will be reflected from our faces to others; and moreover, we will become like Him. His face will become ours. This is why we should regularly read the Gospels and meditate upon Jesus as a person; simply knowing Him will transform us.

4:4 It is darkness which blinds men's eyes (1 Jn. 2:11), i.e. not walking according to the light of God's word. There is only *one* God – not two. *God* (and not Satan) blinded Israel to the Gospel (Rom. 11:8); 2 Cor. 3:14 says that their minds were blinded or "hardened" (RV) as Pharaoh's was. Whoever "the god of this world" is or was, God worked through it and is therefore greater than it. In Eph. 4:18 Paul specifically defined what he meant by "darkness": "Having the understanding darkened... through the ignorance that is *within* them... the blindness of their heart" (AV). That opposition was the real adversary / Satan. Paul is likely quoting the phrase "the god of this world" from contemporary Jewish writings rather than actually believing such a 'god' existed.

age of God, should not dawn. ⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ Seeing it is God that said: Light shall shine out of darkness, He shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthly vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, yet not crushed; perplexed, yet not in despair; ⁹ pursued, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed. ¹⁰ Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death works in us, but life in you. ¹³ But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe and on this basis we also speak. ¹⁴ Knowing that He that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. ¹⁵ For all things are for your sakes, that the grace may be multiplied through many, causing

thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God. ¹⁶ Therefore we do not give up, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our slight momentary affliction accomplishes for us an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison; ¹⁸ whilst meantime we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

CHAPTER 5 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

Paul's Longing for the Judgment Seat of Christ

FOR we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. ² For indeed in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven ³ inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. ⁴ For indeed we that are in this tent do groan, being burdened. Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. ⁶ Being there-

4:5 Preaching can become a very proud exercise if we use it to project ourselves to others. The content of our message must be Jesus.

4:10 The principle of baptism is daily worked out in our lives; losing temporarily [dying] and yet sharing in the resurrection life of Jesus (Rom. 6:3-5).

5:3 *Found naked* – Those who will be rejected by Jesus at the final judgment will be “found naked” (Rev. 16:15) because they have not developed anything in God’s account. In a similar figure, Jesus tells us to store up treasure in Heaven with God by the way we live and think today (Mt. 6:20).

fore always of good courage and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord ⁷ (for we walk by faith, not by sight), ⁸ yes, we are of good courage; and we would rather be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to him. ¹⁰ For we must all be revealed before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the result of the things done in a bodily form, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad.

Ambassadors for Christ

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are revealed to God, and I hope that we are revealed also in your consciences. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ con-

trols us, because we have judged that in that one has died for all, therefore all have died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and rose again. ¹⁶ Therefore we, from this time forward, know no one after the flesh. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. ¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation. ¹⁹ That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating the world by us. We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ He who knew no sin, he became a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

5:9 *At home or absent* – Whether we are dead or alive at the return of the Lord Jesus. If we die, we will be unconscious until He returns; but effectively, our death will be His return for us, because the next conscious moment for us will be the resurrection and being with the Lord Jesus.

5:10 We will receive the result of how we lived our lives in a bodily form – either we will remain mortal and die “the second death”, or we will not be affected by the second death (Rev. 2:11) because we will be given an immortal body like Jesus now has. Note we will exist eternally in a bodily form; all existence spoken of in the Bible is bodily existence.

5:17 We are “in Christ” by baptism into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), and thus become part of a new creation, of which Christ is the creator.

5:20 We are Christ’s representatives on earth, and so when people meet us, they meet Jesus. Our behaviour must be appropriate to this (6:3,4).

CHAPTER 6 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

And working together with him we entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He said: In a time of acceptance I hearkened to you, and in a day of salvation did I succour you. Behold, now is the time of acceptance; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Paul's Ministry Commended by God

³ We aim to give no reason for stumbling in anything, that our ministry is not blamed. ⁴ But in everything, commending ourselves as servants of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ⁵ in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings. ⁶ In pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, ⁷ in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, ⁸ by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report. As deceivers and yet true, ⁹ as

unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not killed, ¹⁰ as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing all things. ¹¹ Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged. ¹² You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³ In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.

Do Not be Unequally Yoked

¹⁴ Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God, even as God said: I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be My people. ¹⁷ Therefore come out from among them and be separate,

6:2 The emphasis on the word “now” reflects the crucial importance of life and living today. We are living in moments of amazing, eternal opportunity. At the day of judgment it will be too late.

6:8 *By evil report* – The fact we will be slandered is a proof we are God’s servants (v. 4).

6:11 The Corinthians were aggressive to Paul, and yet he opened his heart to them – there is more autobiographical detail about Paul in his letters to them than in any other of his letters.

6:14 *Unequally yoked* – This principle affects who we chose to marry and have deep relationships with, knowing that bad company corrupts good spiritual habits (1 Cor. 15:33).

6:17 We are to come out from this world, and yet be a light to the world. Our separation from them is therefore from their sinful behaviour. The command to separate is positive – we are to be separated *from* the world so that we can be separated *unto* God Himself; this is the meaning of the Hebrew idea of ‘holiness’.

says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord Almighty.

CHAPTER 7 Mar. 6 Sep. 5

Therefore beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul's Sufferings

² Open your hearts to us. We wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. ³ I say it not to condemn you. For as I have said before, you are in our hearts, to die together and live together. ⁴ Great is my confidence in you. Great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort, in all our affliction I am overflowing with joy! ⁵ For even when we went into Macedonia, our flesh had no relief, but we were afflicted on every side. Without were conflicts, within were fears. ⁶ Nevertheless God that comforts the lowly comforted us by the coming of Titus. ⁷ And not by his coming only, but

also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, while he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me. So that I rejoiced yet more.

Godly Sorrow

⁸ Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, for I see that that epistle made you sorry, though only for a time. ⁹ I now rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you were made sorry to repentance. For you were made sorry in a Godly way, that you might suffer harm from us in nothing. ¹⁰ For Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, it brings no regret; but the sorrow of the world works death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing: you sorrowed in a Godly manner, and what diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be pure in the matter. ¹² So although I wrote to you, I wrote not for his cause that did the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered the wrong; but that your earnest care

7:3 Paul usually speaks of dying together and living together in the context of sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, a process which begins with baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). But our brothers and sisters in Christ are also part of His body, and therefore we should think in terms of dying and living with them too – even with those like the Corinthian believers who were aggressive to Paul (12:16 etc.) and who were weak in their understanding and behaviour.

7:7 Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians it's clear that the Corinthians were aggressive to Paul; and yet he tried to be as positive about them as he could, believing their kind words as far as possible without being naive.

7:10 Our salvation involves repentance, and this comes from "Godly sorrow". How often do we experience this as we reflect upon our failures?

for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³ Therefore we have been comforted, and in our comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. ¹⁴ For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. ¹⁵ And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. ¹⁶ I rejoice that in everything I can have perfect confidence in you.

CHAPTER 8 Mar. 7 Sep. 6
Generous Giving for the Poorer Believers

Moreover brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia. ² For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³ For according to their power, I testify, yes and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, ⁴ begging us earnestly to accept this grace as a token of their fellowship in this service to the saints. ⁵ And their giving was beyond our

hope; for through the will of God, first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us. ⁶ So much so that we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you also this act of grace. ⁷ So as you abound in everything, in faith and speech and knowledge and in all earnestness and in your love to us, see that you excel in this grace also. ⁸ I speak not as direct commandment; but rather through showing you the earnestness of others I am probing the sincerity of your love. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor as a pauper, that you through his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰ And herein I give my judgment. For this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to desire to give but to actually give. ¹¹ But now complete the doing also. That as there was the willingness to want to give, so there may be the completion of the desire also, according to your ability. ¹² For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. ¹³ For I do not say this so that others may be eased and you distressed. ¹⁴ But that as a matter of fairness, your abundance

7:13 If we are unselfish, then the joy of others becomes our joy. Joy is not only to be experienced in terms of things which make us personally joyful.

8:1, 2 The grace or loving kindness of God elicits generosity or 'giving' from us; for the Greek word translated "grace" means 'gift'. We cannot be passive to the gift of saving grace.

8:12 In this way, a poor person can still be generous. If God's grace motivates us to generosity but we simply don't have the things we'd like to give to others, then our desire to give is still counted by Him as if we had done it.

at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be an equality. ¹⁵ As it is written: He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little had no lack. ⁶ But thanks be to God, who put the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. ¹⁷ For he indeed accepted our appeal; but being very earnest, he went to you of his own accord. ¹⁸ And we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel is spread through all the churches. ¹⁹ And not only this but he is the one who was appointed by the churches to travel with us in this act of grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord and to show our own willingness to help. ²⁰ This was to avoid being blamed by anyone in this matter of charity which is ministered by us. ²¹ For we take care to do things honourably, not only in the sight of the Lord but also in the sight of men. ²² And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have many times proved earnest in many things; but now, much more earnest, by reason of the great confidence which he has in you. ²³ Whether any inquire

about Titus, he is my partner and my fellow-worker toward you; or our brothers, they are the messengers of the churches, they are the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Therefore show them in the presence of the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.

CHAPTER 9 Mar. 7 Sep. 6

An Appeal for Generous Giving

FOR concerning the service to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. ² For I know your readiness, of which I boast on your behalf to those in Macedonia, that Achaia has been prepared for the past year; and your zeal has stirred up very many of them. ³ But I have sent the brothers, that our boasting on your behalf may not be made void in this respect. That, even as I said: You may be prepared. ⁴ Lest by any means, if there come with me some Macedonians and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you) would be embarrassed for my being so confident of your generosity. ⁵ So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing

8:15 This quotation from the Old Testament implies some Israelites gathered more manna each day than others who were maybe weak or old. But those who gathered more shared their excess with those who couldn't gather enough.

8:16 God puts things such as the needs of others into our hearts, and we must follow His leading.

8:23 Christ glories in those who do His work of caring for others; He has such a positive view of His servants.

9:2 Zeal and enthusiasm to be generous are contagious; but generosity and care for others mustn't be mere words, as it was with the Corinthians and as it so often is in conversations between believers; there must be concrete action (v. 3).

gift, not, as it were, as an extortion. ⁶ But this I say: He that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Let each man do according to what he intends in his heart. Not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that you, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work. ⁹ As it is written: He has scattered abroad, He has given to the poor. His righteousness abides for ever. ¹⁰ And He that supplies seed to the sower and bread for food shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the administration of this charity not only provides for the wants of the saints, but abounds also through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service they glorify God for your loyalty which you confess to the gospel of Christ, and for the generosity

of your contribution to them and to all. ¹⁴ While they also, with prayers on your behalf, long after you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

CHAPTER 10 Mar. 8 Sep. 7

Paul Threatens the Corinthians with Divine Authority

Now I Paul, I myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who in your presence am lowly among you but being absent am bold toward you: ² I beg you now, so that when I am present I may not be bold with that confidence by which I intend to be bold against some, who think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not fight in a fleshly way ⁴ (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), ⁵ casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. ⁶ And being in readiness to avenge

9:6 Reaping the results of our generosity will come at the harvest, which is the return of Christ (Mt. 13:30). We can be generous with things other than money.

9:7 Giving to others, of anything (not only money), should be done with joy and not because we feel we have to, or it's expected of us; it should be the result of a conscious decision which we privately take.

9:8 If we truly desire to be generous, then God will give us what is required to be generous with – He will give us yet more seed to sow, so that the harvest from it (both in terms of praise to Him from the recipients and of glory we will receive in the Kingdom) will be greater (vv. 10-12). Jesus taught the same in Lk. 11:5-7 – we will be given whatever we ask, if we ask for it in order to give to others that which they truly need but we truly don't have.

10:5 The essence of Christianity is to be spiritually minded, to bring all our thoughts under control.

all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full. ⁷ Look at the things that are before your face, starting at you. If anyone trusts in himself that he is Christ's, let him remind himself that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we! ⁸ I could boast, unashamedly and somewhat abundantly, concerning our authority- authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for casting you down. ⁹ But I will not, lest I appear to terrify you by my letters. ¹⁰ For they say: His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech of no account. ¹¹ Well, let such a person reckon this, that what we are in word by letters, when we are absent, such will we be also in deed, when we are present. ¹² For we are not bold enough to class or compare ourselves with those that commend themselves. These are without understanding, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves with themselves, which is unwise. ¹³ But we will not boast beyond our measure but rather

according to the measure of the province which God apportioned to us- a measure to reach even to you. ¹⁴ For we are not overextending ourselves in our boasting, as though we did not reach unto you. For we were the first to come as far as you in preaching the gospel of Christ. ¹⁵ So we are not boasting beyond our measure in other men's labours; but rather we hope that as your faith grows, our influence among you may be greatly increased, ¹⁶ so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. ¹⁷ But he that boasts, let him boast in the Lord. ¹⁸ For it is not he that commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

CHAPTER 11 Mar. 8 Sep. 7

Paul Protests His Great Love for the Corinthians

Iwish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me. ² For I am jealous over you with a Godly jealousy. For I betrothed you

10:7 *So also are we* – Whatever we know of our own experience of Christ, not least His gracious love, presence and forgiveness of us, we should recognize is also experienced by our brethren in Christ with whom we may have differences.

10:8 Authority, be it in a church, over children, in a marriage, in the workplace, is a gift from God to be used positively to build others up, to serve others with, rather than for our own glorification and negative destruction of others thereby.

10:10 Paul may have had some physical weakness or deformity which made him unattractive (10:1; 11:6) – a “thorn in the flesh” (12:7). God delights to use those with weakness to do His work, and Paul was a great example of this.

10:12 We tend to spiritually compare ourselves against other people and conclude that we're not bad. But the standard of comparison must be with Jesus. He was of our nature, our representative, so that we can realistically do this.

10:16 *So that...* – If Paul's converts at Corinth grew spiritually, then he felt he would be used to take the Gospel to other new areas. Their immaturity was therefore an obstacle to the spreading of the Gospel and the salvation of others.

to one husband, that is, that I might present you a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve with his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that comes preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept- it seems you think you do well to go along with him. ⁵ But I reckon that I am not in the least inferior to these so called super apostles. ⁶ Although rude in speech, I am not in knowledge. No, in every way have we made this manifest to you in all things. ⁷ Or did I commit a sin in abasing myself so you might be exalted, because I preached to you the gospel of God for nothing? ⁸ I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you.

⁹ And when I was present with you and was in want, I was not a burden on anyone. For the brothers, when they came from Macedonia, supplied all my needs; indeed in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I remain. ¹⁰ As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me boasting about this throughout the regions of Achaia. ¹¹ And why? Because I do not love you? God knows, I do! ¹² But what I do, that I will continue to do, so I may not provide an opportunity to those that desire such an opportunity, and so that their boasting will be shown to be not the same as ours. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel. For even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ It is no great thing therefore if his servants also fashion themselves as servants of

11:2 In baptism, we are betrothed to marry Christ. As Paul had brought them to Christ, he felt the need to ensure they were a virgin for Him; every act of unfaithfulness, going after other gods, is no less awful than a betrothed virgin sleeping around with other men. It was for the sake of Christ's feelings, for the sake of how Paul loved and felt for Christ, that he so wanted the Corinthians to be faithful to Him.

11:3 Paul saw the Corinthians as innocent Eve in Eden – even though it's clear from his letters to them that they were sexually immoral and very immature in their Christian understanding. He really tried to be as positive as possible about them.

11:4 *You do well* – Paul is being sarcastic, concerning how the Corinthians were so easily attracted by false Gospels. There is such a thing as “another Jesus”; just because a teaching says something about Jesus, this doesn't mean it is the truth.

11:7-9 Paul is writing in response to criticisms made of him. The way he protests that he never once took money from the Corinthians implies that he had been falsely accused of making money out of them. Such slander and personal attack is sadly almost an inevitable consequence of preaching the Gospel.

11:14 Paul is here quoting from contemporary myths or a common saying about Satan. He is saying that in the same way, the false apostles were making themselves appear true apostles. The ‘satan’ / adversary in the Corinthian church seems to have been Jewish false teachers, who were “Hebrews”, “Israelites” (11:22).

righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

Paul Lists His Sufferings

¹⁶ I say again, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, accept me as a fool so that I may also boast a little. ¹⁷ What I will now speak in this confidence of boasting, I speak not after the Lord but as in foolishness. ¹⁸ Seeing that many boast after the flesh, I will boast also. ¹⁹ For being wise, you bear with the foolish gladly. ²⁰ For it seems you follow a man if he brings you into bondage, if he devours you, if he takes you captive, if he exalts himself, if he hits you on the face. ²¹ To my shame, I can say, we were too weak to do that. Yet wherein any is bold (I speak in foolishness), I am bold also. ²² Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as like a madman) I more, with far greater labours, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Of the Jews five times I received thirty nines lashes. ²⁵ Three

times I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, three times I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been adrift at sea. ²⁶ On frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my own people, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in the city, in danger in the wilderness, in danger at sea, in danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, in many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness. ²⁸ Besides those things that are without, there is the daily pressure of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, without me being weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? ³⁰ If it is necessary for me to boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed for always, knows that I do not lie to you. ³² In Damascus, the governor, under Aretas the king, guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to capture me. ³³ And only through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall and escaped his hands.

11:24 Forty lashes were supposed to kill a man. The list of Paul's sufferings here is amazing. They would have physically and psychologically shattered most men; he kept going because he was truly motivated by the cause of Christ.

11:28 Equivalent to all these awful physical sufferings listed in vv. 23-27 was the pressure of anxiety for other brothers and sisters. This, therefore, was quite something.

11:29 There are times when we must appear weak and even be weak, even though ultimately we aren't weak; we show our strength by being weak. Jesus' death was the great example of this (2 Cor. 13:4); Paul is saying that he has taken this example personally. And we must do likewise.

11:33 Paul remembered that escape, squashed small in a garbage basket let down over a wall into the rubbish dump, as one of the most humiliating things that happened to him (v. 30).

CHAPTER 12 Mar. 9 Sep. 8
Paul Speaks of the Great Revelations Given to Him

I must go on boasting (though there is nothing to be gained by it). I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. ² I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I do not know, or whether out of the body, I do not know; God knows), such a person was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I do not know; God knows), ⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. ⁵ On behalf of such a one will I boast, but on my

own behalf I will not boast, save in my weaknesses. ⁶ For if I wanted to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be speaking the truth. But I will not boast, lest anyone should account me above that which he saw me to be, or hears from me. ⁷ By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, that I should not be exalted too much. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly will I rather boast in my

12:2 Paul speaks of himself as a “man in Christ”; he had the ability to see himself from outside of himself.

12:2 *The third heaven* – ‘Heavens and earth’ is sometimes used in the Bible to mean ‘a system of things’. The first ‘heaven’ was the Mosaic system; we are now in the heavenly places of Christ (Eph. 1:3 2:6); the third heaven may therefore refer to the Kingdom age after Christ has returned. Paul was given a special vision of the Kingdom – “paradise” (v. 4), the Kingdom of God on earth when the original state in the garden of Eden will be restored.

12:6 If people have too high an opinion of us, we should inform them of our weakness, as Paul did.

12:7 *Thorn in the flesh* – This could refer to a physical weakness in Paul, maybe a speech impediment (10:1,10; 11:6). Or the reference to “flesh” could suggest a moral weakness in Paul – worldly women were ‘thorns’ to God’s people in the past (Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13). The ‘satan’ / adversary to Paul’s work which was associated with his “thorn in the flesh” was however clearly the Jewish opposition to him, involving a group of false teachers following him around trying to get his converts to turn against him and return to the Jewish system.

12:8 This recalls the triple prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane that the cup of suffering would pass from Him.

12:9 There are things we too repeatedly ask God for, convinced that our service of Him will be enhanced if He hears our prayer. But the answer is the same for us as it was for Paul – the fact we have His grace and acceptance should mean that we ultimately lack nothing (Ps. 23:1; 34:10). The other part of the answer is that God loves to work through the broken, the small, those who think they aren’t good enough or smart enough.

weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong.

The Motives for Paul's Planned Visit to Corinth

¹¹ I have become foolish. You compelled me. For I ought to have been commended by you. For in nothing was I behind the super apostles, though I am nothing. ¹² Truly the signs of an apostle were done among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works. ¹³ For in what way were you made inferior to the other churches, except that I was not a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong. ¹⁴ Behold, this is the third time I have been ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you. For I do not seek your things, but you. For the children ought not to save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. ¹⁵ And I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less by you because of this? ¹⁶ But granting that I myself did not burden you, you say I was crafty, and got the better of you by deceit. ¹⁷ But did I really take advantage of you by any one

of them whom I have sent to you? ¹⁸ I urged Titus to go and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? Did we not act in the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps? ¹⁹ You think all this time that we are excusing ourselves to you. But in the sight of God we speak in Christ. All things, beloved, are for your upbuilding. ²⁰ For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not as I would wish, and should myself be found by you such as you would not wish. Lest by any means there should be quarrelling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. ²¹ I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality and sensuality that they have practiced.

CHAPTER 13 Mar. 9 Sep. 8

Paul's Final Appeal

This is the third time I am coming to you. At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. ² I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I

12:14 Paul saw his converts as his spiritual children. We can go through all the same emotions if we bring others to Christ.

12:15 Love that is unresponded to is one of the hardest human experiences. But it is what God and Jesus go through more than any; for the more we love and are prepared to love, the harder is the rejection.

12:21 *I may have to mourn* – He means, he may have to discipline them. But such discipline was motivated by true sadness.

will not spare them- ³ seeing you seek proof that Christ speaks in me (who toward you is not weak but is powerful in you). ⁴ For he was crucified through weakness, yet he lives through the power of God. For we also are weak in him; but we shall live with him through the power of God toward you. ⁵ Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶ But I hope you shall know that we have not failed the test. ⁷ Now we pray to God that you do no evil. Not so we may appear to have met the test, but so you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. ⁸ For

we can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth. ⁹ For we rejoice, when we are weak and you are strong. This we also pray for, even your perfecting. ¹⁰ For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present with you deal sharply with you, according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up, and not for casting down. ¹¹ Finally, brothers, farewell. Be perfected. Be comforted. Be of the same mind. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. ¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹² All the saints greet you. ¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

13:4 Christ's death, His willing weakness, was the model followed in handling the difficult Corinthians; and the cross becomes the pattern for us in our side of handling difficult relationships.

13:5 We also should be able to examine ourselves and see whether Christ is in us or not. Serious self-examination is a distinct feature of the Christian life.

13:7 *Seem to have failed* – Paul wasn't concerned with his image, with appearing a failure in the eyes of men [such fear of public failure obsesses many people]. What he wanted was for them to grow in Christ and please Him, even if they temporarily rejected Paul.

13:8 This wonderful principle means that we should not worry unduly if our technique is successful or not; for if we are truly motivated, we cannot damage the Truth by our genuine efforts to serve. It is the one talent man who did nothing, through fear of failure, who was condemned – not those who somehow did at least something (Mt. 25:25).

GALATIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 2 Oct. 2

Greetings and Introduction

Paul, an apostle (not from men, nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead), ² and all the brothers that are with me, to the churches of Galatia. ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father. ⁵ To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you to the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel. ⁷ Not that there is another one; but there are some who trouble you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you any gospel other than that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so I now say again: If anyone preaches to you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰ For

am I now seeking the favour of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ.

Paul Recounts His Conversion

¹¹ For, brothers, I make known to you, as regards the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not from man. ¹² For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through direct revelation from Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and made havoc of it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of my own age among my fellow countrymen, being even more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles— immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,

1:6,7 A teaching which appears to make mention of Jesus isn't therefore harmless; a 'distortion' of the Gospel (v. 7) is another Gospel (v. 6), which can lead to condemnation (v. 9). Correct understanding of the Gospel is so important (1 Cor. 15:2).

1:8 *An angel* – This is hyperbole; Paul means 'even if even an Angel was to teach something else...'. But Angels in fact do not sin; for our reward is to live eternally like them (Lk. 20:35,36). Sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), and so Angels can't sin, seeing they are eternal.

1:10 Any preaching of Christ will lead to opposition from men, and we have to simply accept this fact.

1:16 Paul emphasizes that he was never one to be "in with the in crowd"; he was a loner, who preached Christ according to his totally personal experience of Him, not because any man had sent him to preach. We should be the same.

¹⁷ nor did I go to Jerusalem to those that were apostles ahead of me; but I went away into Arabia, and returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But none of the other apostles did I see, except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! ²¹ Then I came to the regions of Syria and Cilicia, ²² but I was still unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³ They only heard say: He that once persecuted us now preaches the faith of which he once made havoc! ²⁴ And they glorified God in me.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 2 Oct. 2

Paul's Argument with Peter

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, also taking Titus with me. ² And I went up there by revelation, and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. ³ But not even Titus

who was with me, being a Gentile, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ In view of the false brothers unknowingly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus that they might bring us into bondage, ⁵ we did not yield to them in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶ But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatever they were, it makes no matter to me, God does not accept man's person) they, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me. ⁷ But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the Gospel to the circumcision ⁸ (for he that worked through Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, worked through me also to the Gentiles); ⁹ and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, then James, Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcision. ¹⁰ Only they asked us to remember the poor, which very

1:17 These silent three years of Paul in the Arabian desert may have been his disobedience to the call to preach, after his preaching immediately after conversion was met with rejection and opposition.

2:4 These false brothers appeared to be Christians, but their agenda was to bring Paul's converts back into bondage to the Law of Moses and the Jewish system. This element appear to have been the 'satan' / adversary to Paul's preaching of the Gospel throughout the Roman world.

2:9 If we too perceive that other brethren with whom we differ have been given a gift, a grace, and that they too preach the same Gospel (v. 7), then we should also not reject them – even if we agree to work somewhat separately from them. The agreement that Paul would focus on converting Gentiles rather than Jews was pragmatic, but here we have a precedent for pragmatic decision making in the church.

thing I was also zealous to do. ¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before that certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they did not walk straightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before all: If you, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Justification by Faith not Law

¹⁵ We being Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be jus-

tified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. ¹⁷ But if, while we seek to be made righteous in Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? God forbid! ¹⁸ For if I build up again those things which I destroyed, I prove myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live but Christ living in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. ²¹ I do not make void the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 3 Oct. 3

The Error of the Galatians

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your own eyes that Jesus Christ was open-

2:11-13 Although there has to be pragmatic decision making at times (v. 9 note), we must be careful not to let God's principles be broken. It must've been hard for Paul to directly confront Peter about his hypocrisy, but he did so because an important principle was at stake. Peter would break bread privately with Gentile believers, but not when some Jewish brothers came to visit. Paul saw this as seriously wrong; we should unashamedly break bread with our brothers and sisters in Christ, whatever political pressure may be exerted; and whatever the consequences. To do otherwise is to not walk according to the Gospel (v. 14). If a spiritual giant like Peter could fail in this matter, we must recognize it will be a temptation for the rest of us.

2:20 *Crucified with Christ* – Maybe a reference to the fact Paul had been baptized into the death of Christ, with the result that the resurrection life of Jesus is now revealed in our lives (Rom. 6:3-5).

2:20 *Loved me and gave Himself up for me* – We can each say and feel these words.

3:1 When Paul had preached the Gospel to the Galatians, he had been an incarnation of Christ crucified. People should see in us, in our sufferings and 'weakness', something of the crucified Christ in His time of dying.

ly displayed as crucified. ² Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing works of the law, or by hearing with faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now perfected in the flesh? ⁴ Did you suffer so many things in vain? If it be indeed in vain. ⁵ Does he that supplies to you the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and that faith was imputed to him for righteousness. ⁷ Know that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would make the Gentiles righteous by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, when it says: In you shall all the nations be blessed. ⁹ So then, they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do all things that are written in the book of the law. ¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified by the law before God! For, The righteous shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith, but: He that does the command-

ments shall live in them. ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. For it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree. ¹⁴ This was so that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

The Promises to Abraham Were the Christian Gospel

¹⁵ Brothers, I speak in human terms. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds thereto. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He did not say: And to seeds, in the plural, but in the singular: And to your seed, who is Christ! ¹⁷ This is what I mean; the law which came ⁴³⁰ years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise! But God has granted it to Abraham by promise. ¹⁹ For what, then, was the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made. The law was

3:6 *Imputed* – God counted Abraham as totally righteous because Abraham believed in God and in his promised future descendant, Jesus. Abraham lived before the Law of Moses, and so he wasn't counted as righteous because of his obedience to Law but by faith in the [future] Christ who was to come.

3:8 In the promises to Abraham, we see the basic elements of the Gospel. Abraham was promised that he would inherit the land for ever; God would be his personal God; that he would have one special descendant who would bring blessing [forgiveness – Acts 3:27,28] upon people from all nations; and that this one special son [Jesus – v. 16] would become many people who would also eternally inherit the land. This is fulfilled by people being baptized into Christ and being counted as “in” Him (vv. 27-29).

given through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now an intermediary implies more than one party, but God is one. ²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law given which could give life, truly righteousness would have been of the law. ²² But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So that the law became our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There can be neither Jew nor Gentile, there can be neither slave nor free, there can be no male and female- for you all are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's

seed, and the heirs according to the promise!

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 3 Oct. 3

God's Adopted Children

But I mean so long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a slave, though he is lord of all. ² But the child is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed by the father. ³ So we also! When we were children, we were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ that He might redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. ⁸ However at that time, not knowing God, you were in bondage to those that by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can

3:24 The purpose of the Law of Moses was to convict God's people of sin, and to understand their salvation in terms of the great future offering of God's own Son, which it pointed forward to. Once Christ came, there was no need to keep the Law of Moses.

3:27 *As many of you* – Implying only as many as have been baptized into Christ are “in Christ” and heirs of the things promised to Abraham. These included eternal possession of the earth and the blessing of forgiveness from sin through Christ, Abraham's great descendant. Thus through baptism we become the spiritual children of Abraham, “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), members of the new ‘community of Israel’ (Eph. 2:12).

4:4 If Jesus was “born [Greek: ‘made’] of a woman”, He therefore didn't physically exist before His birth of Mary.

4:6 *Abba* – The Aramaic word for “daddy”. This is how close we can come to God Almighty.

you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain.

Paul's Personal Appeal

¹² Brothers, I urge you to become as I am, for I also have become as you. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as a messenger of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Where then is that satisfaction you felt? For I testify, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ So then have I become your enemy, by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They zealously seek you for no good purpose. On the other hand, they desire to exclude you- so you might go running after them. ¹⁸ But it is good to be zealous in a good matter at all times, and not only when I am present with you. ¹⁹ My little children, of whom I am again in the pains of childbirth

until Christ be formed in you: ²⁰ I so wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am in doubt about you.

The Allegory of Abraham's Two Sons

²¹ Tell me, you that want to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the handmaid, and one by the freewoman. ²³ However the son by the handmaid was born after the flesh, but the son by the freewoman was born through the promise. ²⁴ Such things contain an allegory. For these women are two covenants. One from mount Sinai, bearing children to bondage, which is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar represents mount Sinai in Arabia, she corresponds to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written: Rejoice, O barren one who did not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who were not in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than those of the one who has a husband. ²⁸ Brothers: We, as Isaac was, are children of

4:10, 11 If we are justified by keeping the Law of Moses, then the work of the Gospel is in vain for us.

4:13 God often uses our weakness as an opportunity for preaching the Gospel – this may be a reference to Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7), which Paul asked three times to be taken from him. But in fact God used this weakness in order for the Gospel to spread.

4:19 *Pains of childbirth* – Paul took such responsibility for the people he preached to. We are "born again" by baptism and response to the Gospel (Jn. 3:3-5; 1 Pet. 1:23); but it can happen as with the Galatians that people go so far away from the Gospel that they have to go through the birth process again.

promise. ²⁹ But as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰ However, what does the scripture say? Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. ³¹ Therefore brothers, we are not children of the handmaid but of the freewoman.

CHAPTER 5 Apr. 4 Oct. 4

Freedom in Christ

For freedom did Christ set us free. Therefore, stand fast and do not get entangled again in a yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I Paul say to you: If you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing! ³ Yes, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ if you would be justified by the law! You are fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything,

but faith working through love. ⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion came not from him that calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then has the stumbling-block of the cross been done away. ¹² I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision and emasculate themselves.

The Fruits of the Spirit and the Works of the Flesh

¹³ For you, brothers, were called for freedom. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed

4:29 Conflict with the world of unbelievers is inevitable, as predicted in Gen. 3:15.

4:30 *The scripture* – Paul is here quoting the angry words of Sarah as she cast out her slave girl Hagar (Gen. 21:10). Even in flashes of failure and anger like this, God's Spirit may still be working through the whole situation to inspire later generations.

5:1 The warnings against keeping parts of the Jewish law are very clear.

5:9 False teaching and wrong behaviour spreads more easily than right teaching and good behaviour.

5:13 The very fact that we do not have long lists of commandments to obey should of itself inspire us to serve one another practically.

5:14 The Law was also fulfilled by the death of Christ; His death was love unto the end, the ultimate definition of loving our neighbour.

5:15 *Take care that you are not consumed* – Aggressive disagreement and argument with our brethren may cost us eternity.

by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other. You may not do the things you would like to! ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—fornication, uncleanness, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, ²¹ envyings, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Of which I forewarn you now, even as I did previously forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ meekness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts of it. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not

become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

CHAPTER 6 Apr. 4 Oct. 4

Keep on Keeping on

Brothers, even if a man is caught in any sin, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you also be tempted. ² Carry one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. ³ For if a man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each man test his own work, and then shall he have his boasting in regard to himself alone, and not of his neighbour. ⁵ For each man shall carry his own burden. ⁶ One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. ⁸ For he that sows to his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. But he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us

5:16 Victory against the flesh will be achieved more by focusing upon the positive than trying to cut off the negative.

5:20 Divisions are placed in the same category as sexual immorality.

5:21 *Practice* – To live in these things as a self-justified way of life and thinking, rather than occasional, repented of failures.

6:1 *Lest you also* – We should always remember our own spiritual weakness whenever we have to deal with the failures of others.

6:7 The reaping is at the harvest, when Christ returns. Then we will receive a reward for how we have lived today. We don't receive "eternal life" (v. 8) when we die, but at the harvest – when Christ returns. Until then we are unconscious in the grave.

6:8 The punishment for the wicked at the last day will be "corruption" in that they will be resurrected mortal, but their bodies won't be changed; they will exist for a while and then die "the second death" and be eternally unconscious (Rev. 2:11).

6:9 The more we believe in the coming of judgment at Christ's return, the more we will be inspired in this life.

not be weary in doing well. For in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward those that are in the family of the faith.

A Final Appeal

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.

¹³ For not even they who receive circumcision do themselves fully keep

the law, but they desire to have you circumcised so they can boast about you. ¹⁴ But far be it for me to boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is being a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. ¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me further trouble. For I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. ¹⁸ Brothers, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

6:11 *What large letters* – Perhaps Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. 12:7) was poor eyesight – hence Gal. 4:15.

6:12 Judaism was a legally recognized religion in the Roman world. If the new Christians joined or rejoined the synagogues, they would be spared persecution. This is why Gentile Christians in Galatia were being tempted to join Judaism.

6:14 Are we proud of the cross, as Paul was?

6:17 *The marks* – An allusion to how slaves were branded with the sign of their owners. It should be visible to others that we are slaves of Jesus.

EPHESIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

Our Exalted Status in Christ

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ in that He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love. ⁵ Having foreordained us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the beloved. ⁷ In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, ⁸ which He lavished on us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ making known to us the mystery of His will according to His good

pleasure which He purposed in him, ¹⁰ in a plan which runs to the fullness of the times: To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. ¹¹ In whom also we were made His heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who does all things after the counsel of His will, ¹² so that we who had first hoped in Christ should be for the praise of His glory. ¹³ In whom you also believed, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ which is a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession, for the praise of His glory.

Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁵ For this cause, I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you and the love which you show toward all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. ¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

1:3 We are "in Christ" by baptism into Him (Rom. 6:3-5). He is now in Heaven, and so we are in a spiritual sense 'in the heavens' (Eph. 2:6). This situation has been brought about by Christ, and so we could say that He is the creator of a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), of heavenly places for us. This theme of Paul's has been misunderstood badly by those who mistakenly believe that we go to Heaven on death (rather are we unconscious until Jesus returns and then we will be resurrected); or that Jesus created the literal Heavens (God did, not Jesus).

1:4 We didn't physically exist before the foundation of the world; neither did Jesus. Both He and us existed in God's purpose and plan.

1:16 Paul writes this about many people. For it to be true, he would have spent much of his available time in prayer for various brothers and sisters throughout the Mediterranean world. How long do we spend in prayer for others each day?

Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; so that you may have ¹⁸ the eyes of your mind enlightened, that you may appreciate what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and had him sit at His right hand in heaven, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to us to be head over all things in the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

The Meaning of Conversion

You once were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, according to

the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by our natural condition destined to be children of God's wrath, even as the others. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, for the sake of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved!), ⁶ and raised us up with him; and in Christ Jesus, has made us sit with him in the heavens. ⁷ His intention was that throughout the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace have you been saved through faith, and that faith is not of yourselves, it is a gift from God. ⁹ It is not of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them.

Unity Created Between Jew and Gentile

¹¹ Wherefore remember, that once

1:20-22 The exalted position of Christ is only because *God* resurrected Him and gave Him such authority and glory; clearly God and Jesus are separate, and God is greater than Jesus.

2:2 *The spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience* – Defined in v. 3 as “the lust of our flesh... the desires of the flesh and of the mind”. This spirit or principle within us is what causes disobedience and sin (James 1:13-15); and it is personified here as the prince of the world. For the mind of the flesh is indeed the effective master and ruler of most people in the world.

2:5 *Alive together with Christ* – A reference to baptism (Rom. 6:3-5). If we make the choice to be baptized, God and Jesus will work powerfully in us.

2:10 God long ago prepared good works for us to do. We need to understand what is His hope for us, His expectation – and seek to fulfil it.

you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by those called Circumcision (which is in the flesh and made with hands),¹² you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and living without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility,¹⁵ having abolished in the flesh the enmity, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of the two one new man, making peace;¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby having slain the enmity.¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were near.¹⁸ For through him we have our joint access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and pilgrims, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God,²⁰ being built upon the foundation

of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone.²¹ In whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.²² In whom you also are being built up together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 6 Oct. 6

The Mystery Now Revealed

FOR this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles,² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,³ as I wrote before in few words: How by revelation was the mystery made known to me,⁴ whereby, as you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.⁵ This in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit:⁶ That the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,⁷ of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the

2:12 This verse is proof enough there can be no salvation in any religious system that excludes Jesus. To be without Him is to be “without God”, because He is the only way to relationship with God (Jn. 14:6). We also learn here of the vital importance of the covenant or promise which God made with the Jewish fathers – for the Gospel was preached to Abraham in the form of the promises made to Him about Jesus and the future Kingdom of God on earth (Gal. 3:8).

2:15 If Jesus has removed the “law of commandments contained in ordinances”, then we really are free from keeping the Law of Moses. The reference to “commandments... ordinances” may refer to the ten commandments, which included the Sabbath. We are totally under the teaching of Christ.

working of His power. ⁸ To me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make all men see what is the intention of this mystery which for ages has been hid in God who created all things. ¹⁰ The intention was that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, ¹¹ according to the eternal purpose which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In whom we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in him. ¹³ Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

Paul's Further Prayer for the Ephesians

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees to the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that you may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you would be rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ that you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, ¹⁹ and to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him that is able to do immeasurably above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 5 Oct. 5

The Basis for Christian Unity

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the

3:8 *Less than the least* – Paul preached the Gospel very aware of his own weakness and unworthiness. Hence his witness was in humility and with power. We should preach with the same spirit. Paul's awareness of his sinfulness grew over time. In an earlier letter he felt "least of the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:9), now least of all believers, and at the end of his life he felt the worst sinner in the world (1 Tim. 1:15). Yet he was progressively more and more confident in his ultimate salvation, even though he increasingly realized the extent of his unworthiness. We will go through the same pattern in our spiritual growth.

3:10 This refers to how the Gospel was preached before the rulers of the first century Mediterranean world (Lk. 21:12; Acts 9:15). They are described as in "heavenly places", following the Biblical way of speaking of positions of power and authority as the 'heavens'.

3:19 We can "know" what is beyond human knowledge, because God will open our hearts and understanding – if we let Him.

3:20 God delights to do for us more than we could even imagine; we should have the same generous spirit to others.

4:1 Paul was a prisoner of Rome; but he saw himself as a prisoner of Christ. Those things and life situations which appear to limit us and imprison us are all of Him;

calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and meekness, with patience making allowance for each other in love; ³ giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in the one hope of your calling. ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The Gifts of God

⁷ But to each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ⁸ Wherefore He says: When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. ⁹ (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things). ¹¹ And he gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and

teachers. ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, to the work of holy service, to the building up of the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ That we may no longer be like children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine devised by the trickery, craftiness and deceitful scheming of men. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head-Christ! ¹⁶ By him all the parts of the body fit and are knit together, with every joint supplying something according to its unique purpose, thus making the body grow as it builds up itself in love.

The New Life

¹⁷ Therefore, this I say and testify in the Lord: You are to no longer walk as the Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, alienated from

and we find spiritual freedom from their burden by perceiving ourselves as slaves of Christ.

4:5 *One faith* – One set of beliefs which comprise the true Gospel.

4:6 The one and only God is clearly distinguished from the one Lord Jesus (v. 5).

4:13 *Until* – It could be argued that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were given until the early church had come to maturity and the New Testament had been written.

4:16 *Builds up itself* – The body of Christ edifies itself because of what each member of the body supplies to the whole. This is why pushing off on our own is damaging both to ourselves and to the rest of the body. We need fellowship with others; they do have something to give us, and we have something to give them. This is why division within the body of Christ is such a serious sin.

4:17 Notice the emphasis in this section upon the internal state of our thinking; this is the essence of Christianity. The world has a “vain” mind, spiritually empty. They live a corrupt “manner of life” because they are deceived by their own desires (v. 22); whereas we are to have a new mind (v. 22).

the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart. ¹⁹ Who being past feeling gave themselves up to sensuality, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ! ²¹ Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. ²² Those things belonged to your former manner of life, which was corrupt through deceitful desires. ²³ But you, being renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ put on the new man, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, putting away falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour. For we are members one of another. ²⁶ In your anger, do not sin! Do not let the sun set while you remain angry. ²⁷ Give no opportunity to the Devil! ²⁸ Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, so he may have something to give to him that has need. ²⁹ Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but as the need arises, speak that which is good for encouragement, that it expresses

grace to those that hear you. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by which you were sealed until the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and railing be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind to each other, sensitive, forgiving each other, even as God in Christ also forgave you.

CHAPTER 5 *Apr. 7 Oct. 7*

The Inevitable Judgment for Sin

Therefore, as beloved children, be imitators of God, ² and walk in love- just as Christ also loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. ³ But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you- as is appropriate among saints; ⁴ nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor crude joking, which are not befitting saints; but rather the giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know for sure, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words. For because of

4:26 This is great practical advice; don't let the day end with you angry.

4:32 We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. If we ask God to forgive us our secret sins, things we do wrong without realizing it nor specifically repent of – then we must likewise forgive those who sin against us without repenting. The more we reflect upon our own sins and their forgiveness, the more empowered we will be to forgive others.

5:2 The death of Christ on the cross isn't just something for us to look at from a distance; we should let there be a direct bridge of influence and inspiration between it and our lives today; loving others in practical ways because He, there, so long ago, on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April, on a hill just outside Jerusalem – died for me.

5:3 *Not even be named* – Just as the Jews were not to even mention the names of other gods (Ex. 23:13).

these things comes the anger of God upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not associate with them! ⁸ For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³ But all things when they are reprov'd are revealed by the light. For everything that is revealed then becomes light. ¹⁴ Therefore it is said: Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall shine upon you. ¹⁵ Therefore, look carefully how you walk, not as the unwise but as the wise, ¹⁶ redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹ Speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all

your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Husbands and Wives

²² Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife and Christ is the head of the church—himself being the saviour of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so the wives should also be to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it, ²⁶ that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and blameless. ²⁸ Thus husbands ought also to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his own wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ For this

5:23-32 The husband is the head of the wife in the context of being her saviour. The man isn't simply the head of the woman in any context just because he's a male. A saviour has to be the leader and be accepted as such; Christian marriage is to role play the relationship of Christ to the church. The husband should therefore be willing to die for the wife, to love her as Christ loved the church; and the wife in recognition of this should in this context be acceptive and obedient to that (v. 24). Thus Christian marriage is connected to very high ideals; human dysfunction of course means that neither husband nor wife totally fulfil the roles they are called to, but the height of the challenge, if seriously accepted, will ennoble marriage and lift it to a very high plane. The reasoning of these verses shows that a choice to marry an unbeliever can never be marriage as God intends.

cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³² This mystery is great, but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

CHAPTER 6 Apr.7 Oct. 7

Commands to Children and Slaves

Children, obey your parents in the Lord. For this is right. ² Honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), ³ that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth. ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but nurture them in the training and instruction of the Lord. ⁵ Servants, be obedient to those that according to the flesh are your masters, with respect and fear, in singleness of your heart, as if to Christ. ⁶ Not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers;

but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ giving service with a good will, as if to the Lord and not to man. ⁸ Knowing that whatever good thing each one does, the same shall he receive in return from the Lord, whether he be slave or free. ⁹ And you, masters, do the same things to them, and stop your threatening; knowing that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Spiritual Armour

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle only against flesh and blood, but also against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour

6:4 The Lord is the trainer and instructor of our children; but He chooses to mediate that teaching through the parents.

6:5 Those who feel enslaved by their daily work can do their tasks *as if* they are doing them as service to Christ – and He will accept this as done to Him. This means that the person who has to work long, hard hours in the workplace most of the week can do as much service to Christ as the person who is ‘free’ to serve Christ in things like preaching, teaching and serving His brethren – *if* the work done to our human employer is consciously done by us “as to Christ”.

6:11-13 The world is under God’s control, not that of evil beings in heaven (Dan. 4:32). “All power” in heaven and in earth has been given to Jesus (Mt. 28:18) by God (Rev. 3:21; Lk. 22:29), so it cannot also be possessed by wicked beings in literal Heaven. There can be no sinful being in heaven itself (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10). Verse 12 may be translated, “For we wrestle not only against flesh and blood...” i.e., we do not only wrestle against individual men, but against organized systems. The church was facing “the evil day” of persecution at the hands of the Romans (1 Pet. 4:12; 5:8,9). “The rulers of this dark world” at the time were the Romans. Note that the wrestling is spiritual wrestling to keep the faith (2 Cor. 10:3-5). The Greek word

of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to withstand it; and after you have done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded yourself with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the readiness to announce the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ meanwhile taking up the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ With all prayer and petition, praying at all times in the Spirit; and with this in view, be alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and on my

behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. That in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. ²¹ But so you may also know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; ²² whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the believers and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all those that love our Lord Jesus Christ with undying love.

for “principalities” is translated “magistrate” in Lk. 12:11; human “rule”, in the sense of human government, in 1 Cor. 15:24, and the “power” of the Roman governor in Lk. 20:20. So it does not necessarily have reference to any power or prince in heaven. “Wicked spirituals in high (heavenly) places” doesn’t refer to wicked beings in heaven itself. The exalted position of the true believers in Christ is described as being “in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:6). The threat to the church was twofold: from the Roman/Jewish persecution and from the (often Judaist) “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13) within. Remember Ephesians was written to the church at Ephesus. Paul had previously warned them about this threat from within in Acts 20:29-30.

6:17 Salvation is our helmet in that if we firmly believe that we really will be saved when Christ returns, then this will guard our thinking [our head].

PHILIPPIANS

CHAPTER 1 Apr. 8 Oct. 8

Paul Updates the Philippians on His Situation in Rome

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine with joy making requests for you all, ⁵ giving thanks for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, so

that you may be sincere and void of offence until the day of Christ; ¹¹ being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. ¹² Now I would have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out for the progress of the gospel; ¹³ so that my bonds made Christ manifest throughout the whole Praetorian guard, and to all the rest; ¹⁴ and further, most of the believers in the Lord, being made confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will. ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? In every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and therein I rejoice, yes and will rejoice.

Paul Speaks of His Future

¹⁹ For I know that this shall result in my salvation, through your prayer

1:6 God will never stop working with us once He has started; there will be times when His apparent silence may lead us to question this, but the fact is, even those apparent silences are part of His working with us.

1:12 Even imprisonment for false reasons can be used by God to lead us to meet people to whom we can witness the Gospel; and far lesser traumas and misjudgements will be used by Him likewise.

1:18 We should genuinely rejoice that the real Christ is preached, even if we doubt the credentials and behaviour of those who preach. The progress of Christ's Name and work is far more important than our personal disagreements with other preachers.

and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death.

²¹ For to me to live, is Christ, and to die- is gain. ²² But if by living in the flesh, this shall bring fruit from my work, then what I shall choose I do not know. ²³ I am torn between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ Yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and stay with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith; ²⁶ that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again. ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. That, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state- you standing fast in one spirit, with one mind together striving for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, and of your salvation- and that from God.

²⁹ Because to you it has been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer in his behalf; ³⁰ having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

CHAPTER 2 Apr. 8 Oct. 8

The Mental Attitude of Christ to be Our Example

Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, ² make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself; ⁴ each of you not looking to his own things, but each of you to the things of others. ⁵ Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶ Who, though being in the mental image of God, did not consider grasping at being equal with God, ⁷ but poured himself out, taking the mental attitude of a servant, and was the made just the same as all ordinary men. ⁸ And being perceived as a normal

1:23 Paul would “be with Christ” in the Kingdom, thanks to the resurrection at the return of Christ to earth. Death is no more than an unconscious sleep for the believer; the next waking moment, we will be with Christ.

1:27 The basic teachings of the Gospel are designed to elicit a practical life in response to them.

2:6-11 “God also has highly exalted” Jesus “and given him a name” (v.9) shows that Jesus did not exalt Himself – God did it. It follows that He was not in a state of being exalted before God did this to Him, at His resurrection. The whole process of Christ’s humbling and subsequent exaltation by God was to be “to the glory of God the Father” (v.11). God the Father is not, therefore, co-equal with the Son.

man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name—¹⁰ that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ¹² So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work, for His good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and question-

ings, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation; among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain. ¹⁷ Yes, and if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ And in the same manner you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul's Messengers

¹⁹ But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be cheered by news of you.

The context of this passage must be considered. Phil. 1:27 speaks of the importance of our state of mind. This is developed in the early verses of chapter 2: "Of one spirit... one *mind*... in lowliness of *mind* ... Let this *mind* be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...". Paul is therefore speaking of the importance of having a mind like that of Jesus, which is devoted to the humble service of others. The verses which follow are therefore commenting upon the humility of *mind* which Jesus demonstrated, rather than speaking of any change of *nature*. Just as Jesus was a servant, so earlier Paul had introduced himself with the same word (1:1 cp. 2:7). The attitude of Jesus is set up as our example, and we are urged to join Paul in sharing it. We're not asked to change natures; we're asked to have the mind of Jesus – so that we may know the "fellowship of sharing in His [Christ's] sufferings, becoming like Him in His death and so to attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:10,11).

Jesus was "in the form [Greek *morphe*] of God". Although Jesus was perfect, He had a totally God-like mind, yet He was willing to take on the demeanour of a servant. Later Paul encourages us to become "conformed unto (Christ's) death" (3:10). We are to share the *morphe*, the form of Christ which He showed in His death. Christ "made himself of no reputation", or "emptied himself" (R.V.), alluding to the prophecy of His crucifixion in Is. 53:12: "He poured out His soul unto death". He "took upon Himself the form (demeanour) of a servant" by His servant-like attitude to His followers (Jn. 13:14), demonstrated supremely by His death on the cross (Mt. 20:28). Is. 52:14 prophesied concerning Christ's sufferings that on the cross: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men". This progressive humbling of Himself "unto death, even the death of the cross" was something which occurred during His life and death, not at His birth.

20 For I have no one likeminded, who will truly care for your welfare. 21 For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served as an apprentice with me in declaring the gospel. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly. 25 But I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick and near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I have sent him more diligently, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and that I may be less sorrowful. 29 Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy and hold such in honour. 30 Because for the work of Christ he came near to death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

CHAPTER 3 Apr. 9 Oct. 9

Warning Against the Judaizers

Finally my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. For me to repeat the same things to you as I did before is not tedious, indeed it only confirms their certainty. 2 As so I say again: Beware

of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilators! 3 For we are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more. 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of Israelite stock, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee. 6 As touching zeal, persecuting the church. As touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. 7 However, what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yes indeed, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ, 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own which is of the law, but which is through faith in Christ- the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death. 11 If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul's Aim

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold

3:10, 11 If we share the sufferings of Christ now, we will share in His resurrection. Our baptism committed us to this as a way of life (Rom. 6:3-5).

of me. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet. But one thing I do, forgetting the past and looking forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus decided; and if in anything you are otherwise decided, this also shall God reveal to you. ¹⁶ For now, according to that understanding unto which we have attained, by that same rule let us walk. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our

lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

CHAPTER 4 Apr. 9 Oct. 9

Being Spiritually Minded

Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, my beloved, stand firm in the Lord. ² I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, I urge you also, true companion, help these women, for they laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentle attitude be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. ⁶ In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts

3:13 *Forgetting the past* – This is so difficult to do. But if we believe for sure that we will live eternally in God’s Kingdom, we have so much to look forward to that the past weighs less heavily. And God can help us – He made Joseph “forget” or [Hebrew] ‘neglect’ the pain he suffered in his family (Gen. 41:51).

3:20 We are citizens of Heaven, of God and of Jesus, although we live here on earth. This is where our loyalty should be; our earthly citizenship should mean far less to us than the fact we are citizens of God’s Kingdom.

3:21 Jesus now exists in a bodily form; and we also will, eternally in God’s Kingdom.

4:1 *My brothers... my joy and crown* – The crown of joy will be given us when Jesus returns to earth (1 Thess. 2:19; 1 Pet. 5:4). But that crown will be our brothers and sisters for whom we have laboured in this life. Their presence in God’s Kingdom, the fact they get to be saved, will be what gives us eternal joy. The amount we try for others in this life will affect the nature of our eternal salvation.

4:7 The simple fact of having prayed to God about things (v. 6) can give us this peace.

and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honourable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. ⁹ The things which you both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Paul's Practical Needs

¹⁰ But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your thought for me. I know you did indeed take thought for me, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak regarding want; for I have learned to be content whatever my situation. ¹² I know how to be abased and I know also how to abound. In everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to have plenty and to be in want. ¹³ I can do all things in him that strengthens me.

¹⁴ However you did well in that you had fellowship with my affliction.

¹⁵ And you yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel's work, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent often to my need.

¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that accrues to your account. ¹⁸ But I have all things and abound.

I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, they were as the odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches, in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers that are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially they that are of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

4:17 *Accrues* – God keeps a record of every act of generosity which we commit.

COLOSSIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 14 Nov. 13

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God and Timothy our brother, ² to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ that are at Colosse. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Colossians

³ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have toward all the saints. ⁵ We thank God because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel. ⁶ That Gospel is come to you, even as it has also come to all the world, bearing fruit and increasing, as it does in you also, since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. ⁷ Even as you learned it of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf; ⁸ who also

declared to us your love in the Spirit.

⁹ For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make requests for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ to walk worthily in the Lord fully pleasing him, bearing fruit in every good work; increasing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹ strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, to all patience and endurance, with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who made us suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love; ¹⁴ in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins; ¹⁵ who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things have been created on account of him

1:5 The hope we have is the hope of God's Kingdom on earth; Jesus will come from Heaven to earth to raise the dead and give us the reward (2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4). In this sense the promised hope is being prepared for us in Heaven.

1:9, 10 Knowledge is related to our practical walk in Christ; not academic knowledge, but the practical knowledge of Christ which comes from His word. Daily reading of His word is therefore so important.

1:15 Jesus isn't God Himself but is the "image" of God, because His character was exactly like God's.

1:16 The idea of a creation "in Him" can be understood with the help of 2 Cor. 5:17, which says that anyone who is "in Christ" becomes a new creation. It's not talking about the literal creation of the world, which the Bible says was done by God Himself.

and for him. ¹⁷ And he is superior to all things, and in him all things consist. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; so that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. ¹⁹ For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross- yes, to reconcile all things through him, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

The Context of Paul's Preaching

²¹ And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, ²² yet now has he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unproveable before him. ²³ If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to all creation under heaven. Of which I Paul was made a servant, ²⁴ who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,

and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church. ²⁵ Of which I was made a servant, according to the plan of God which was given me concerning you, to fulfil the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery of which has been hid for ages and generations; but now has it been manifested to His saints, ²⁷ to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles- which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ We proclaim him, encouraging every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹ For this purpose I labour, striving according to his power, which works in me mightily.

CHAPTER 2 May 15 Nov. 14

Paul Warns the Colossians of False Teaching

FOR I would have you know how greatly I strive for you and for those at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, ² that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love; and

1:22 It's amazing to think that we can stand "without blemish" before God, because we are "in Christ".

1:23 The stabilizing element in our lives is "the hope of the Gospel", that we will live for ever in God's coming Kingdom on earth. We must not only not deviate in understanding, but continue positively believing that we will really be there. This continuing in faith in the certainty of future salvation is what will 'ground and settle' us.

1:24 God arranges circumstances in our lives so that the essence of the sufferings of Jesus are experienced by us – so that we might also share in His resurrection life. Only in this sense can we begin to "rejoice in my sufferings".

2:1 For Paul, prayer was a striving with God – based upon the example of Jacob wrestling with an Angel until his request was heard (Gen. 32:24,25; Hos. 12:4).

to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God as it is in Christ.

³ In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ This I say, so that no one deludes you with persuasive speech. ⁵ For though I am absent in the flesh, I am still with you in the spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord- walk in him, ⁷ rooted and up built in him and established in your faith, even as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. ⁸ Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ. ⁹ For in him, in a bodily form, dwells all the fullness of all that God stands for; ¹⁰ and in him you are made complete. He is the head of all principality and power. ¹¹ In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ.

The Meaning of Baptism

¹² Having been buried with him in baptism, by which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses. ¹⁴ Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, Christ did away with it by nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having despoiled the principalities and the powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

No Need to Keep the Sabbaths

¹⁶ Let no one therefore judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ They were a shadow of the things to come, but the real object is Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one rob you of your prize by a false humility and worshiping of the angels, keeping on about all the things which he has sup-

2:2 Understanding brings assurance; this is the advantage of searching the Bible for the correct understanding of God.

2:9 As the fullness of God dwells in Jesus, so it can also dwell in us (v. 10; Jn. 1:16; Eph. 1:23; 4:13). But this doesn't make us God Himself in person, and neither does it make Jesus that.

2:12 Baptism is an immersion in water, symbolizing death in the grave, and emerging in resurrection. Baptism isn't sprinkling.

2:13 Forgiveness of sins is associated with baptism; which is why baptism is so important.

2:14 *Written in ordinances* – A reference to the ten commandments, which include the Sabbath. Most of the other nine commandments are repeated in the teaching of Jesus; but the Sabbath command isn't.

2:17 The rituals of the Jewish law pointed forward to Jesus (Gal. 3:24). But now that He has come, the Jewish law has been ended (v. 14).

posedly seen in visions, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,¹⁹ and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.²⁰ If you died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances?²¹ Handle not, nor taste, nor touch²² (all things that perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?²³ Which things have indeed a false appearance of wisdom in worship and humility and severity to the body, but are not of any real value against stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

CHAPTER 3 May 16 Nov. 15

The New Focus of our Lives in Christ

If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.² Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.³ For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then with him you shall also be manifested in glory.⁵ Therefore, put to death what is earthly in you:

Fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire and covetousness, which is idolatry.⁶ For which things' sake comes the anger of God upon the children of disobedience,⁷ things in which you also once walked, when you lived in these things.⁸ But now you are to also put away: Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.⁹ Do not lie to each other, seeing you have put off the old man with his doings,¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator;¹¹ where there cannot be Gentile and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman- but Christ is all and in all.¹² Therefore, as God's elect and beloved, put on sensitivity, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;¹³ forbearing one another and forgiving each other, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as the Lord forgave you, so also forgive.¹⁴ And above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection.¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts- to this you were also called in one body; and be thankful.¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. In all wisdom teach and encourage one another with Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs-

2:23 It may 'feel good' to obey legalistic rituals, but this will not help us in our battle against self-indulgence.

3:1 Christ resurrected and then ascended to Heaven. We share in His resurrection by baptism (2:12); and the equivalent of His ascension to Heaven is that we should be thinking about spiritual, Heavenly things. These should be our reality, rather than the passing things of this world like wealth, comfort and temporary success. To be spiritually minded is the goal of the Christian life.

singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or in action, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Domestic Relationships

¹⁸ Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, in order that they are not discouraged. ²² Servants, obey in all things those that are your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as if to the Lord and not to men. ²⁴ Knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵ But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

CHAPTER 4 May 16 Nov. 15

Masters, give to your servants what is just and equal. Knowing you also have a master in heaven. ² Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, ³ meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for preaching the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for the sake of which I am also in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may speak boldly, as I should. ⁵ Walk in wisdom toward those that are without, redeeming the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Greetings and News

⁷ All my affairs shall Tychicus make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord, ⁸ whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our state and that he may comfort your hearts. ⁹ Together with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved

3:17 To be thankful in all things is a major feature of the Christian life.

3:23 It's very gracious of Jesus to accept our service to our worldly employer as service to Him. This empowers us to no longer be crushed by the monotony of our daily work – it can now have meaning and be consciously done for Jesus. This must've been especial comfort to slaves in the first century.

3:25 *No partiality* – Masters of slaves were not to think they were unaccountable to anyone (4:1). Even if in some aspects of our lives and thinking we are free from being accountable to people – we are still accountable to God and He will repay us at the day of judgment, when Christ comes.

4:3 We should also ask God to give us opportunities for preaching.

4:4 If even Paul felt he ought to preach more boldly than he did, and asked others to pray that he might do this... we shouldn't be surprised if we feel the same.

4:5 We shouldn't waste our time, but redeem it. The world is full of opportunities to waste our time, to fritter it away on the internet or entertainment. But we should use every moment we can in the Lord's service; for we are His servants.

brother, who is one of you, they shall make known to you all things that are done here. ¹⁰ Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him), ¹¹ and Jesus who is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellow-workers to the kingdom of God, men that have been a comfort to me. ¹² Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. ¹³ For I bear witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and for those in Hierapolis. ¹⁴ Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. ¹⁵ Greet the brothers that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church that is in their house. ¹⁶ And when this letter has been read among you, take steps to have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and you also read the letter from Laodicea. ¹⁷ And say to Archippus: Take heed to the service which you have received in the Lord, that you fulfil it. ¹⁸ I Paul write this salutation with my own hand. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you.

4:17 God gives us all opportunities, potentials and maybe specific things which He wants us to achieve in His service; we must not flunk out of our calling.

4:18 *Remember my bonds* – In this almost pathetic cry, we sense Paul’s frustration at the limitations of his situation (as in Acts 26:29 “except these bonds”). When we feel the same, let’s realize that all God’s servants have felt similar.

1 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 17 Nov. 16

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace.

² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³ remembering without ceasing before our God and Father your work of faith, labour of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Power of Example

⁴ Knowing, brothers beloved of God, your first calling, ⁵ how that our preaching of the gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. Even as you know what manner of men we have shown ourselves toward you, for your sake.

⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit. ⁷ In this way you became an example to all in Macedonia and in Achaia that believe. ⁸ For from you has sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place your faith toward God has gone forth; so that we do not need to say anything about

you. ⁹ For others report about what kind of reception you gave us and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

CHAPTER 2 May 17 Nov. 16

The History of the Gospel in Thessalonica

Brothers, you know our visit with you, that it has not been found vain. ² As you know, previously in Philippi we suffered and were spitefully treated; but even amid much opposition we were bold in our God to tell you about the gospel of God.

³ For our appeal is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deceit. ⁴ But even as we have been approved of God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who tests our hearts. ⁵ For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness; ⁶ nor seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ. ⁷ But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherishes her own

1:5, 6 Converts tend to imitate the person who converted them. We therefore have to watch who we are, for the sake of others who will hear us preach. This isn't a call to hypocrisy; rather to being aware that who we are really does affect who others become, and so we should watch who we are for others' sakes.

1:10 The return of Christ to the earth is the basic Christian hope.

2:7 The figure is of a wet nurse this time feeding her very own child. This was the tender, special care of Paul for his brethren, and it should be ours.

children. ⁸ So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹ For, brothers, you remember our labour and distress, working night and day, so that we would not burden any of you while we preached the gospel of God to you. ¹⁰ You are witnesses and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward you that believe. ¹¹ As you know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, encouraging you and testifying, ¹² to the end you should walk worthily of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. ¹³ And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when you received from us the word of the message of God, you accepted it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also works powerfully in you that believe. ¹⁴ For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea. For you also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews, ¹⁵ who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and

drove us out, and do not please God, and oppose all mankind, ¹⁶ forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved. By doing so they fill up the full measure of their sins. But God's wrath comes upon them at last. ¹⁷ But we, brothers, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence but not in heart, endeavoured more eagerly to see your face with great desire. ¹⁸ Because we wanted to come to you, I Paul time and again; but Satan hindered us. ¹⁹ For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming? ²⁰ For you are our glory and our joy.

CHAPTER 3 May 18 Nov. 17

Paul's Great Love for the Thessalonians

Wherefore when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left behind at Athens alone; ² and sent Timothy, our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith. ³ That no one be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that for this we are appointed. ⁴ For truly, when we were with you, we told you before-

2:8 Preaching the Gospel isn't merely a relaying of ideas and teaching; it's a giving of ourselves to others.

2:12 *Who calls you* – As if God is already in the future Kingdom of God, and He is calling out to us from there to come and enter it. The Gospel of the Kingdom is a call, an invitation, to go and walk towards it.

2:17 In the 'virtual' world in which we live, we shouldn't forget the importance of face to face contact and fellowship with each other (3:10).

3:1 This implies Paul found it so hard being alone without his brethren.

3:3 The believer shouldn't be surprised that afflictions come; it has to be in our lives, for only through tribulation can we enter God's Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

hand that we are to suffer affliction. Even as it came to pass and you know. ⁵ For this cause I also, when I could no longer endure it, sent Timothy, that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you and our labour should be in vain. ⁶ But now Timothy has come to us from you and brought us the good news of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also you. ⁷ For this cause, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we were comforted through hearing of your faith. ⁸ For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. ⁹ For what thanksgiving can we render again to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sakes before our God, ¹⁰ night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and may perfect whatever is lacking in your faith? ¹¹ Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you. ¹² And the Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we also toward you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father,

at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

CHAPTER 4 May 18 Nov. 17

The Sanctified Life

Finally, brothers, we urge and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God. ² For you know what instruction we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, that you live sanctified lives. Therefore abstain from fornication; ⁴ let each one of you take a wife for himself in sanctification and honour, ⁵ not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who do not know God. ⁶ Let no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God called us not to uncleanness but to sanctification. ⁸ Therefore he that rejects this teaching rejects not man but God, who gives His Holy Spirit to you. ⁹ But concerning love of the brothers, you have no need that anyone write to you. For you yourselves are taught of God to love one another. ¹⁰ For indeed you

3:9 *Before our God* – We are ‘before God’ when we pray to God, and in our lives generally. Yet Paul uses the same phrase in v. 13 to describe how we will come ‘before God’ at the day of judgment. In prayer, and in our lives, we should try to live as if we are before God at judgment. In our daily lives, let’s not isolate ourselves from that ultimate reality. Prayer especially is a foretaste of judgment day.

3:13 As we face Jesus at the day of final judgment, our hearts will be calm if we have lived a life of love to others (v. 12).

4:4, 5 We should take a partner in love, not “in... lust”. Marriage is to be on the basis of love, not lust.

4:10 If our self-examination reveals that we are loving toward others, we shouldn’t be

do it toward all the brothers that are in all Macedonia. But, brothers, we encourage you to abound more and more. ¹¹ May you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, ¹² that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing

Comfort From the Hope of Resurrection

¹³ Brothers, we would not have you ignorant concerning those that fall asleep, lest you grieve like those who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, just as surely those that have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring up

with him. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are still living at the coming of the Lord, shall in no way precede those that have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. ¹⁷ Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be snatched away in the clouds in the air to meet the Lord, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

CHAPTER 5 May 19 Nov. 18

But concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no

complacent. Love by its nature grows and grows. Are our lives characterized by ever increasing love?

4:11 *Aspire* – The Greek word means ‘to be ambitious’. In spiritual reality, our ambition should be for spiritual and not material things.

4:17 There is no mention here of the righteous being caught up to *Heaven*. Christ descends from Heaven before the believers meet him. Christ will reign for ever on David’s throne in Jerusalem, and we will be with him, here on earth. It is therefore impossible that we should spend eternity with him suspended in mid-air. ‘The air’ extending only a few kilometres above the earth’s surface means that it cannot refer to Heaven, the dwelling place of God.

The Greek phrase translated “caught up” really means to be snatched away; it does not carry the idea of any specific direction. It also occurs in Acts 8:39: “The Spirit of the Lord *caught away* Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more... But Philip was found at Azotus”. This records how Philip was miraculously transported from one place on earth to another. When Christ comes, the responsible will be gathered together to the place of judgment; they will not be left to make their own way there. It is possible that our means of transportation to that place will be literally through the air.

Jesus said that “in the day when the Son of man is revealed...two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:30,36). This gives the same picture of a sudden snatching away. The disciples earnestly asked, “Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke 17:37). As the eagles fly instinctively through the air and then land on earth where the carcass is, so the responsible will be brought to the place where they will meet their Lord in judgment.

need that something be written to you. ² For yourselves know perfectly well that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying: Peace and safety, then sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no way escape. ⁴ But you, brothers, are not in darkness, that this day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ For you are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunk, are drunk in the night. ⁸ But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God has not destined us to suffer His wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, even as you already do.

Closing Thoughts

¹² But brothers, we urge you to rec-

ognize those that labour among you, who are over you in the Lord and who encourage you. ¹³ Esteem these exceedingly high in love, for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. ¹⁴ And we exhort you, brothers, warn the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all. ¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil with evil, but always follow after that which is good one toward another and toward all. ¹⁶ Rejoice always. ¹⁷ Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸ In everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies. ²¹ Test all things. Hold fast to what is good. ²² Abstain from evil wherever it appears. ²³ Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Faithful is He that calls you, who will also do it. ²⁵ Brothers, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I solemnly implore you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the brothers. ²⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

5:6 We should not be asleep – but the parable of Mt. 25:1-13 suggests that even the “wise virgins” will be asleep when Christ comes.

2 THESSALONIANS

CHAPTER 1 May 20 Nov. 19

Suffering Has an End – At the Return of Christ

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ² Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Brothers, we are obligated to thank God always for you, as is appropriate, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, ⁴ so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. ⁵ These are proof that God's judgment is righteous, and you are enduring them to the end you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer. ⁶ It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who afflict you; ⁷ and to give relief to those who are afflicted (and to us too), when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, ⁸ rendering

vengeance to them that do not acknowledge God and to them that do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, ¹⁰ when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all them that have believed in that day (because our testimony to you was believed). ¹¹ To which end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of your calling and fulfil every desire of goodness and work of faith, with power. ¹² To the end that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 2 May 20 Nov. 19

The Man of Sin

Now brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we urge you ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter ap-

1:5 The fact we experience tribulation is a sure token that we are in fact going to be accepted into God's Kingdom; for through such tribulation we have to enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

1:9 *Eternal destruction* – The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23), not eternal conscious existence in torture. Their death will be permanent, and in this sense their destruction will be eternal.

1:11 If we are desiring good and right things, then God will powerfully fulfil those desires.

2:2 There were and are many false ideas around to the effect that Christ has already come; Preterism says He came in AD70, the Watchtower claimed He came in 1914.

pearing to be from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one beguile you in any way. For first of all must come the falling away and the man of sin shall be revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself up as God. ⁵ Have you forgotten that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining him now, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so, until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the powerful glory of his coming. ⁹ But the coming of the lawless one will be according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deceit of them that perish. Because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved, ¹¹ for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie; ¹² that they all

might be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

An Appeal to Stand Firm

¹³ But, brothers, we are obligated to give thanks to God always for you, beloved of the Lord, for God chose you from the beginning to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; ¹⁴ unto which He called you through our preaching of the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand fast, and hold to the teachings which you were taught, whether by word, or by our epistle. ¹⁶ Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

CHAPTER 3 May 21 Nov. 20

Paul Asks For Prayer

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, even as also it is with you. ² And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men. For all do not have faith.

But the coming of Christ will be publically obvious to all because the wicked will be destroyed by it (v. 8), and we will be gathered unto Christ in that day (v. 1).

2:11 God isn't passive toward those who don't want to love His truth (v. 10) – He actively encourages them to believe delusions. This is one reason why we find believing such huge nonsenses – because God has in fact deluded them.

2:17 If we desire to speak and do the right things, God will confirm us in this; just as He confirms those who don't love the truth in the way of untruth (vv. 10,11). There is both a downward and upward spiral in spiritual life; we can't just opt out, we are on a journey either to eternal life or eternal death, and God is propelling us on the way we choose.

³ But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and guard you from the evil. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do, and will do, the things which we command; ⁵ and so may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Discipline Those Who Just Want Material Benefit

⁶ Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the tradition which they received from us. ⁷ For yourselves know how you ought to imitate us. For we ourselves did not behave disorderly among you, ⁸ neither did we eat bread for nothing at anyone's hand; but we ate our bread as the result of our own labour and toil, working night and day, that we might not financially burden any of you. ⁹ Not because we do not have the right to

do so, but to make ourselves an example to you- that you should imitate us. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, this we commanded you: If any will not work, neither let him eat of your food. ¹¹ For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that do not work at all but are busybodies. ¹² Now those that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. ¹³ But you, brothers, be not weary in doing good. ¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word by this letter, note that man, that you have no association with him, so that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ But do not count him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. ¹⁶ Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all. ¹⁷ The salutation of me Paul with my own hand, which is the token in every epistle. So I write. ¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

3:5 The Lord Jesus is able to directly influence human minds [hearts].

3:6 *Withdraw yourselves* – This verse is in the context of verses 7-12, concerning some who were “disorderly” in that they were involved with the church simply in order to get money, and refused to work when they could do so. Verse 6 doesn't mean we should withdraw ourselves from anyone who breaks any commandment of Jesus, for we all do this. The verse speaks about the specific situation of those seeking to gain money from being members of the church in Thessalonica.

3:9 Sometimes it's better not to do something which we could legitimately do, because of the bad example it may set, and because it may be misunderstood and misused by others who are weaker.

3:14 This is to be understood the same way as :6.

1 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1 May 22 Nov. 21

Paul Encourages Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope. ² To Timothy, my true child in faith. Grace, mercy and peace to you, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ Stay at Ephesus, just as I urged you to do when I was going into Macedonia, so that you might instruct certain men not to teach a different doctrine, ⁴ nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than Godly edification which is in faith. ⁵ The intended result of this instruction is love out of a pure heart, a good conscience and sincere faith. ⁶ From which things some having strayed have turned aside to idle talking; ⁷ desiring to be teachers of the law, though they neither understand what they say, nor what they confidently affirm. ⁸ But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, ⁹ since we know that law is not made for a righteous man but for the lawless and unruly, for the un-

godly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹ in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

Paul's Conversion a Pattern for All

¹² I thank him that enabled me, Christ Jesus our Lord, for that he counted me faithful, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Though I was before a blasphemer, a persecutor and abusive. However, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptance: That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as the chief sinner might Jesus Christ show all his patience as a pat-

1:5 The importance of correct teaching is that it leads to love and faith. This is why having correct doctrine and rejecting wrong teachings is practically important (:3,4).

1:15 Paul, now nearing the end of his life, considers himself the world's worst sinner. Previously he had thought of himself as the least apostle (1 Cor. 15:9), then as the least of all the believers (Eph. 3:8). As Paul grew spiritually, he became more aware of both the extent of his own sinfulness, and of the certainty of his salvation. We should be following this pattern.

1:16 Paul's dramatic conversion is a pattern for each of us. Whether we were raised Christian or not, whether we committed what the world would consider major sins or not, the fact is that our conversion was and is as dramatic as Paul's; and our response to God's grace should be as zealous as his.

tern to those that would later believe in him to gain eternal life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. ¹⁸ This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, in accordance with the prophecies which were made about you, that by them you may war the good warfare. ¹⁹ Holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some having thrust from them, made shipwreck of their faith. ²⁰ Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme.

CHAPTER 2 May 22 Nov. 21

Paul Encourages Prayerfulness

Iurge therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all men; ² for kings, and all that are in high place, that we may lead a calm and quiet life in all Godliness and dignity. ³ This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, ⁴ who would wish all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who

gave himself as a ransom for all, the testimony made at the due time. ⁷ To this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I speak the truth, I do not lie), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. ⁸ I therefore desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without anger and dispute. ⁹ In like manner, I urge that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with bashfulness and sobriety; not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly clothing, ¹⁰ but apparel which becomes women professing reverence towards God through good works. ¹¹ Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection; ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in submission. ¹³ For Adam was first formed, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But she shall be saved through the child-bearing, if they continue in faith, love and sanctification with sobriety.

CHAPTER 3 May 22 Nov. 21

About Bishops and Deacons

Faithful is the saying: If a man seeks the office of a bishop, he

1:20 *Delivered to Satan* – Maybe a reference to the local Roman authorities, the Satan-adversary of the Christians.

2:5 This verse clearly shows the Trinity to be a wrong understanding. Writing even after Jesus ascended to Heaven, Paul calls Him “the man Christ Jesus”. He is a mediator between God and man; not God Himself, for there is only one God.

2:8 *I therefore desire* – Because we have such a powerful mediator for our prayers before God (v. 5), therefore we should make use of this blessing, and pray.

2:13, 14 The basis for Paul’s teaching about the differing roles of men and women is based upon the principles of Adam and Eve in Eden; his teaching is therefore not just a special expedient for his own times, because it is continuing the principles God laid down in creation.

desires a good work. ² The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober, orderly, given to hospitality, able to teach; ³ not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not argumentative, not covetous. ⁴ One who rules his own family well, having his children in submission with all reverence. ⁵ For if a man does not know how to rule his own family, how shall he take care of the church of God? ⁶ Not a new convert, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace or into a snare of the devil. ⁸ Likewise, deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money; ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. ¹⁰ And let them first be tested. If they are found blameless, then let them serve as deacons. ¹¹ Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be men of one woman, ruling their children and their own families well. ¹³ For they

that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ These things I write to you, hoping to come to you shortly. ¹⁵ But if I am delayed, I write so you may know how you ought to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy, great is the mystery of reverence towards God: He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

CHAPTER 4 May 23 Nov. 22

A Prediction of Apostasy

But the Spirit says expressly, that in the last times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of the idol worshippers, ² through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron. ³ Forbidding to marry, and to abstain from food- which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know

3:13 Our service of itself develops our faith. This is an example of the upward spiral in spiritual life; years of humble service make faith deeper, which in turn motivates us to more service.

3:15 Even Paul didn't know exactly how his plans would work out; we all long for stability and clear plans for the future. But God doesn't work with us like that; He wants us to go through life with faith in His leading.

3:16 God was manifested in the flesh in His Son, Jesus. Jesus was of human nature but had a perfect character, so that He showed us what God would have been like if He were a human being. This doesn't mean He was God Himself in person.

4:1 This is a prophecy of how the initially pure Christian understanding would be corrupted by false ideas and practices.

4:3 *Forbidding to marry* – As the Catholic church forbid their priests

the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving. ⁵ For it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer. ⁶ If you put the believers in mind of these things, you shall be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed. ⁷ But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself with reverence towards God. ⁸ For bodily exercise is profitable for a little time; but reverence towards God is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is and of that which is to come. ⁹ Faithful is this saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we labour and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe. ¹¹ These things command and teach. ¹² Let no one despise your youth. Be an example to those that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Until I come, give attention to reading, to preaching, to teaching. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given to you by prophecy when the council of elders

laid their hands on you. ¹⁵ Be diligent in these things. Give yourself wholly to them, that your progress may be manifest to all. ¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

CHAPTER 5 May 23 Nov. 22

Commands About Widows

Do not rebuke an elder but exhort him as a father. The younger men as brothers. ² The elder women as mothers. The younger women as sisters, in all purity. ³ Honour widows that are indeed widows. ⁴ But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show devotion towards their own family and to repay their parents. For this is acceptable in the sight of God. ⁵ Now she that is indeed a widow and alone has her hope set on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶ But she that gives herself to pleasure is dead while she lives. ⁷ These things also command, so that they may be without reproach. ⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own family and specially his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse

4:3 *To abstain from food* – As Adventists and others forbid various foods and meats, even though God has given us all animals as a gift, and we can eat them (vv. 4,5).

4:8 A spiritual life not only gives us hope of eternal life, but gives us blessing in this life.

4:15 The things of the Gospel can't be a hobby, something we show occasional enthusiasm for. We are to give ourselves to them "wholly".

4:16 *Your hearers* – Our salvation can to some degree depend upon third parties. If the wrong teaching is taught, the salvation of others may be jeopardized.

5:4 Parents aren't to be forgotten, but to be cared for – a principle seriously overlooked in many parts of the world.

5:8 *Provide for his own family* – The context is talking about looking after elderly

than an unbeliever. ⁹ Let no one be registered as a widow who is under sixty years old. Only register those who have been the woman of one man and ¹⁰ well reported of for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has used hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has helped the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work. ¹¹ But refuse to register younger widows, for when their passions draw them away from Christ, they desire to marry, ¹² having condemnation, because they have rejected their first pledge. ¹³ Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not. ¹⁴ I desire therefore that the younger widows marry, bear children, rule the household, give no occasion to the adversary for slander. ¹⁵ For already some are turned aside after satan. ¹⁶ If any woman that believes has widows in her family, let her help them and let not the church be burdened, so that it may help those that are indeed widows.

Commands About Elders

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the word and in teaching. ¹⁸ For the scripture says: You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his wages. ¹⁹ Do not receive an accusation against an elder, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those elders that sin, reprove in the sight of all, so that the rest may also be in fear. ²¹ I charge you in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. ²² Lay hands hastily on no one, and do not participate in other's sins. Keep yourself pure. ²³ No longer drink only water; instead use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. ²⁴ Some men's sins are evident, preceding them to judgment; but those of others follow them there later. ²⁵ Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.

parents (v. 4). God's word here gives an unusually strong condemnation for those who don't do this.

5:14 *Rule the household* – The believing woman is ideally intended to serve in the domestic sphere.

5:18 Paul clearly supported the idea of a paid ministry, even though he himself chose not to take advantage of this in Corinth (1 Cor. 9:4-12) and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8,9). There are times and places and contexts where it's better not to do some things which we could legitimately do, for the sake of others; the example we set may be misused, or misinterpreted.

5:24, 25 All our sins and good works will be openly revealed at the day of judgment in front of everyone; so we shouldn't be hypocritical in this life, nor should we grieve that our good works aren't noticed or valued. For the day shall come when they will be.

CHAPTER 6 May 24 Nov. 23

Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled. ² And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brothers, but rather serve them because those whom they are serving are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things.

The Danger of Riches

³ If anyone teaches a different doctrine and consents not to sound words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which shows reverence towards God, ⁴ he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵ wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the truth, who suppose that reverence towards God is a way of gain. ⁶ But reverence towards God with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out. ⁸ But having

food and covering we shall be content. ⁹ But they that are intent on being rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and condemnation. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which some, by seeking for, have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ¹¹ But you, O man of God, flee these material things and instead pursue after righteousness, reverence towards God, faith, love, patience, meekness. ¹² Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the everlasting life, whereunto you were called and did confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses. ¹³ I urge you in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate made the good confession: ¹⁴ Keep the commandment without stain, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ In due time He shall reveal him, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who only has immortality,

6:1, 2 Paul didn't advocate the demise of slavery, even though it was an unChristian institution. He accepted some things are as they are in this world, and taught us to live within those limitations but in a spiritual manner. This principle applies to many situations and aspects of modern society.

6:10 *Love of money* – As our societies become increasingly money based, this is a temptation for our generation as never before.

6:10 *Pierced themselves through* – This is the language of crucifixion. We must be crucified one way or the other – either with Christ, or in trying to amass wealth. Suffering with Christ therefore becomes the logical choice.

6:16 No human being has ever seen God. Jesus was seen by men, therefore He was not God Himself. When the Old Testament speaks of men like Moses 'seeing God',

dwelling in light unapproachable. Whom no one has seen, nor can see. To whom be honour and power eternal. Amen. ¹⁷ Instruct those that are rich in this present world, that they are not proud, nor have their hope set on the uncertain riches; but instead on God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. ¹⁸ Let the rich do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distrib-

ute, willing to communicate; ¹⁹ laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed. ²⁰ O Timothy, guard that which was committed to you, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of false knowledge, ²¹ which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you.

the reference is therefore to their having seen Angels, who carry the Name of God (Ex. 23:21).

6:18 The real spiritual wealth is in giving our material wealth away.

2 TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1 May 25 Nov. 24

Paul's Relationship with Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, ² to Timothy, my beloved child. Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of you in my prayers, night and day ⁴ longing to see you, remembering your tears, wanting to be filled with joy for you. ⁵ I am often reminded of the sincere faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded dwells in you also.

Living up to Potential

⁶ Because of this I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and a disciplined mind. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony

of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but suffer hardship for the gospel according to the power of God. ⁹ Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal; ¹⁰ but has now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; ¹¹ of which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. ¹² For which cause I suffer also these things. Yet I am not ashamed. For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard what I have committed to him against that day. ¹³ Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ That good thing which was committed to you guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. ¹⁵ This you know, that all that are in Asia turned away from me. Of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ The Lord grant mercy to the

1:3 Paul writes to so many that he prays for them constantly. This means he must've spent much of his time in prayer for others, both individuals and groups. Do we?

1:10 Immortality has only been revealed to us in the Gospel of Christ. Therefore we have no inherent immortality; there is no such thing as an immortal soul which each human is born with. This is a wrong, pagan idea. The Bible teaches that immortality is conditional.

1:12 We commit things to God, and He commits things to us (v. 14). There is a mutuality between God and man.

1:15 However, it's clear from the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 [which were written later] that there were some in Asia who remained faithful to the Lord. Believers at times misjudge others and reject them, which is very painful for those rejected; but those believ-

house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain. ¹⁷ But, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me ¹⁸ (the Lord grant to him that he find the mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he gave service to me at Ephesus, you know very well.

CHAPTER 2 May 26 Nov. 25

Suffering Hardship for Christ

You therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, you are to commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. ³ Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier in service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he may please whoever enrolled him as

a soldier. ⁵ And if also a man competes in the games, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The husbandman that labours must be the first to partake of the fruits. ⁷ Consider what I say. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things. ⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to the gospel I preached. ⁹ Because of this I suffer hardship, even to bonds, as a criminal; but the word of God is not bound. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, so that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he abides faithful. For he cannot deny himself.

ers may still be acceptable to their Lord. Seeing Paul's work had led to the conversion of most of those in Asia, their being poisoned against him must've been so painful.

2:4, 5 The images of a soldier at war and a training athlete show the intensity expected of us in the Lord's service. It can never be a mere hobby, culture or inherited tradition.

2:7 If we "consider" God's word, He will confirm our efforts by giving us the understanding we seek. But we must reflect upon the Bible and life, rather than being unthinking and superficial.

2:8 Jesus was the "seed of David", a literal descendant of David through His mother Mary. This shows Jesus didn't personally pre-exist before His birth; and that Mary was an ordinary woman, also a direct descendant of David.

2:10 If Paul hadn't kept doing the work of the Gospel, at great personal pain and cost, others wouldn't have been saved. The salvation of others is to some extent dependent upon the efforts of third parties such as ourselves. Whatever the cost, we can't quit the Gospel's work.

2:11 This is the principle of baptism – death with Jesus beneath the water, and then resurrection with Him (Rom. 6:3-5).

2:12 *If we shall deny him* – Paul wrote this knowing that Peter had denied Jesus – but had repented. We too can repent.

Don't Argue About Words

¹⁴ Of these things put them in remembrance, instructing them in the sight of the Lord, that they do not fight about words, to no profit, to the catastrophic destruction of those that hear them. ¹⁵ Exert yourself, to prove you are pleasing to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling correctly the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane babblings of false teachers; for they will result in progressive ungodliness, ¹⁷ and their word will eat away like a cancer. An example would be Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ men who concerning the truth have erred, in saying that the resurrection is past already; and they ruin the faith of some. ¹⁹ However the firm foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those that are his. And: Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness. ²⁰ Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. ²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, fulfilling the use intended by the master, prepared to do every good work. ²² Enthuse about righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ But foolish and ignorant questions refuse,

knowing that they only cause strife. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be gentle towards all, eager to teach, patient of ills and wrongs, ²⁵ in meekness correcting those that contradict themselves, so that God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, ²⁶ and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

CHAPTER 3 May 27 Nov. 26***A Prophecy About the Last Days***

But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. ² For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, argumentative, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. ⁵ Holding a form of reverence towards God, but having denied the power of it. From such people- turn away. ⁶ For of these are they that creep into houses and take captive weak minded women laden with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth. Men corrupted in

2:14 Arguments between brethren about small matters can lead to the destruction of others.

2:18 *The resurrection is past already* – The error of extreme Preterism today.

3:1-5 This is an exact description of society as it is in our “last days” before the return of Christ to earth.

mind, reprobate concerning the faith. ⁹ But they shall proceed no further. For their folly shall be made evident to all men, as theirs also came to be.

Paul's Encouragement to Timothy

¹⁰ But you, follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings. Think of what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹² Yes, and all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³ But evil men and impostors shall grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you, grow in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them. ¹⁵ And that from a

child you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise to salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, completely empowered to every good work.

CHAPTER 4 May 27 Nov. 26

I charge you in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, ² to preach the word. Preach it urgently, whether the occasion seems appropriate or not. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, as you patiently teach. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching, but hav-

3:10 Paul's life and character are set up for us in the Bible as our pattern – not just something to be historically studied, plotting where he went on a map, viewing him as a mere historical figure.

3:12 Persecution therefore shouldn't surprise us. It may not involve physical suffering, but in some sense, the unbelieving world will persecute us.

3:15 This is the importance of the Bible – if we believe God's word, we find there the wisdom which leads to salvation. Attention to the Bible is therefore vital for every true Christian, and we ought to be reading the Bible daily.

3:16 *Inspired* – God breathed His word into the Bible writers, so that what they wrote wasn't merely the word of men, but was God speaking through them. This is what makes the Bible unique amongst books; God's word is all we need to prepare us to every good work (v. 17). We need no other books or revelations, as the Bible is enough to completely equip us (v. 17).

4:1 When Christ returns, the dead will be raised and judged, and then God's Kingdom fully established on earth.

4:3 This prophesied corruption of pure Biblical teaching has come true in the many confused and incorrect versions of Christianity which there are. People choose to accept whoever teaches what they naturally want to here – rather than realizing that the Bible is the inspired word of God (3:16), and only believing what they read there. We must be teachable in front of God's word, even if it says things we naturally would prefer were not true. We cannot exalt our ideas above those of God.

ing itching ears, will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own lusts; ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables. ⁵ But you, be sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

Paul Speaks of His Impending Death

⁶ For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure comes. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. ⁸ From this time forward there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing. ⁹ Make an effort to come to me soon. ¹⁰ For Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you; for his service is profitable to me. ¹² But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come,

bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; may the Lord render to him according to his works. ¹⁵ You also need to be on guard about him, for he greatly withstood our words. ¹⁶ At my first defence no man stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, that through me the message might be fully proclaimed; and so all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸ The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me to his heavenly kingdom; to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila and the house of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick. ²¹ Try by all means to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, and Pudens and Linus and Claudia, and all the brothers. ²² The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

4:8 The reward of the faithful will be given when Christ returns – at “that day” (the “day” of v. 1); and all the true believers will receive their reward at that same time (Heb. 11:39,40). It is not true that when we die, we go to Heaven and receive our reward. We are unconscious until Christ returns; all the faithful will then be resurrected, judged, and given eternal life together in His Kingdom on earth (Mt. 25:34).

4:16 *All forsook me* – As all in Asia turned away from Paul (1:15). Paul died a lonely man, unpopular even with his brethren; but therefore he felt the very real presence of Jesus with him (v. 17).

TITUS

CHAPTER 1 May 28 Nov. 27

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth- the truth which is ultimately all about reverence towards God. ² In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; ³ but in His own time manifested His word in the message with which I was entrusted, according to the commandment of God our Saviour; ⁴ to Titus, my true child after a common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Paul's Advice About the Church in Crete

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was so you would set in order the things that were lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I instructed you- ⁶ if anyone is blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe, who are not accused of riot or unruly. ⁷ For the bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless, not arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunk-

ard or violent or greedy for gain; ⁸ but given to hospitality, a lover of good, self controlled, just, holy, disciplined, ⁹ holding to the faithful word which is according to the doctrine, that he may be able to minister comfort using the sound doctrine and also refute those who oppose it. ¹⁰ For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped. Men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they should not, all for money's sake. ¹² One of their prophets said: Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons. ¹³ This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not giving heed to Jewish fables and the commandments of mere men who aim to turn away others from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess that they know God, but by their works they deny him. They are

1:2 Immortality is a hope, promised by God to those in Christ – we therefore have no inherent immortality or 'immortal soul'.

1:9 A church leader must be familiar with Scripture – not just a good presenter or charming personality.

1:14 Much false doctrine entered Christianity as a result of Jewish infiltration (v. 10). The ideas of a personally pre-existent Messiah, the need to keep the Sabbath and Jewish food laws, a personal Satan, demons, life after death in Heaven etc. can all be traced to the influence of an apostate Judaism.

1:15 Thus sometimes, in some areas, the same actions can be performed by people, but for some they are sinful and for others they aren't. It depends upon our worldview, motivations and conscience.

detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

CHAPTER 2 May 28 Nov. 27

Commands to Men and Women, Old and Young

But you must teach what accords with sound doctrine: ² That older men be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, in patience. ³ That older women likewise be reverent in demeanour, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; ⁴ so that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands; that the preaching of the word of God may not be mocked. ⁶ The younger men likewise exhort to be self-controlled. ⁷ In all things show yourself as an example of good works. In your teaching show integrity, dignity, ⁸ sound speech, that cannot be condemned; so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

⁹ Encourage servants to be submissive to their masters, and to be pleasing to them in all things. Not argumentative, ¹⁰ not petty thieves, but showing integrity in everything; that they in all things may make attractive the doctrine of God our Saviour. ¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. ¹² It trains us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives in this present age, ¹³ as we look for the blessed hope: The manifesting of the glory of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works. ¹⁵ These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one despise your teaching.

CHAPTER 3 May 28 Nov. 27

The Way of Life Elicited by God's Grace

Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities-

2:3 "Slanderers" here translates the Greek word *diabolos*, elsewhere translated "devil". This word simply means a slanderer; it doesn't of itself mean a cosmic, supernatural evil being. It can be used about ordinary people, as it was about Judas (Jn. 6:70,71).

2:4, 5 Loving a Christian husband and submitting to him are here paralleled. Submission within marriage can never be demanded; it is motivated by love.

2:10 The doctrines of the Gospel are made attractive to others by our examples, as we translate them into practice. Doctrine as theology will not immediately attract secular people.

2:12 We cannot be passive to God's grace (v. 11) – God's free gift of salvation to us trains us, as we experience and reflect upon it, in a life of good works.

2:14 The giving of Jesus in His death makes us "zealous of good works" in that the sensitive, reflective believer cannot be passive to the cross of Christ. We have to respond in practice to such love and grace.

be obedient, to be eagerly ready to do every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, not to be contentious, but to be gentle, showing all meekness toward all men. ³ For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when there appeared the kindness of God our Saviour and His love toward man, ⁵ not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit ⁶ which He poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. ⁷ This was so that being justified by His grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This teaching is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have

believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people. ⁹ But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. ¹⁰ A divisive person, after a first and second warning, reject, ¹¹ knowing that such a one is perverted and sins, being self-condemned. ¹² When I shall send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, give diligence to come to me at Nicopolis, for there I have decided to winter. ¹³ Do your best to speed Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way; see that they lack nothing. ¹⁴ And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, to help those in urgent need, and not to be unfruitful. ¹⁵ All that are with me greet you. Greet those that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all.

3:1 Are we ready to good works, whenever the opportunities present themselves, whether the timing is convenient or not?

3:7 Justification by grace is a major New Testament theme. We are counted as righteous, even though we are not of ourselves, by God's pure grace; and thus we are waiting to inherit eternal life – which we will receive when Jesus returns. The fact we are saved as a pure free gift, and not by our works, should actually be a motivation to do good works (v. 8).

3:10 Keep away from those who cause division. Making divisions and factions between brethren can lead to condemnation (v. 11) – even though it is often justified as love for God.

PHILEMON

CHAPTER 1 May 29 Nov. 28

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved and fellow-worker, ² and to Apphia our sister, and to Archipus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house. ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, ⁵ hearing of the love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints. ⁶ I pray that our fellowshiping of your faith may result in our coming to acknowledge every good thing which is in you in Christ. ⁷ Already I had much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you our brother. ⁸ Thus although I have all boldness in Christ to command you to do what is required, ⁹ yet I prefer to appeal to you for love's sake- I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ I appeal to you for my child Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment.

Paul's Appeal for Onesimus

¹¹ He was once unprofitable to you but now is profitable to you and to me. ¹² He is as my very heart, and it is he whom I have sent back to you. ¹³ I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel. ¹⁴ But I preferred to do nothing without your consent, so that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own free will. ¹⁵ For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever- ¹⁶ no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me your partner, take him into your home as you would me. ¹⁸ But if he has wronged you at all or owes you something, put that on my bill. ¹⁹ I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay any debt, even though you owe me your own self. ²⁰ Yes, brother, let me profit from you in the

1:10 Paul saw those he converted to Christ as his spiritual children. Onesimus was a runaway slave who had ended in prison in Rome; and yet Paul converted his fellow prisoner. It happened that Onesimus's master, Philemon, had also been converted by Paul (v. 19). And so now Paul is sending Onesimus back to Philemon, persuading Philemon to have mercy upon him. We may feel imprisoned by situations, but we can still reach out to others who are also imprisoned within them, and lead them to Christ.

1:15 Paul is very positive. He suggests that such disagreements and interpersonal failures occur so that the fellowship and unity achieved after reconciliation will be that much stronger.

1:19 We owe our eternal lives to those who converted us; this shows the eternal significance of converting another person to Christ.

Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. ²¹ I write to you having confidence in your obedience, knowing you will do what I ask. ²² But meanwhile also prepare for me a lodging; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be restored to you. ²³ Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you; ²⁴ as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow-workers. ²⁵ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1:22 Paul acted as if his prayers for deliverance for prison were going to be answered – so much so that he, a prisoner, asks someone to prepare a room for him to stay in when he next visits. This is the principle of Mk. 11:24 – to act and feel as if we have already received what we are asking for.

HEBREWS

CHAPTER 1 May 30 Nov. 29

The Supremacy of Christ

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last times spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, on account of whom also He structured the ages. ³ Who being the brightness of His glory and the exact image of His person, upholds all things by the word of his power. When he had accomplished the purification of sins, he then sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven. ⁴ He thus became so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Christ Greater than Angels

⁵ For to which of the angels said He at any time: You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again: I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son? ⁶ And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world He says: And let all the angels of God worship him. ⁷ And of the angels He says: Who makes His angels winds, and His servants a flame a fire. ⁸ But of the Son He said: Your

throne, O Mighty One, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of your kingdom is a sceptre of uprightness. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows. ¹⁰ And: You, Lord, in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. ¹¹ They shall perish, but You continue; and they all shall wear out as does a garment, ¹² and like a cloak You shall roll them up as a garment, and they shall be changed; but You are the same and Your years are without end. ¹³ But of which of the angels has He said at any time: Sit on my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of those that shall inherit salvation?

CHAPTER 2 May 30 Nov. 29

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest attention to the things that we heard, lest we drift away from them. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just

1:3 Jesus was the reflection of God's glory, His image – but not God Himself. He is seated now at the right hand of God, begotten by Him (v. 5), and God is called 'his God' (v. 8). All this language is inappropriate if Jesus is God Himself.

1:5 Here and throughout Hebrews 1 and 2 it is emphasized that Jesus wasn't an Angel. The claim by some that He was is simply non-Biblical.

1:14 All of the Angels are serving God, and involved in caring for us whom He is preparing to inherit eternal life in His Kingdom. All the Angels are obedient to God and doing His work – there are no sinful beings in Heaven.

retribution, ³ how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those that heard; ⁴ God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various powers and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. ⁵ For not to angels did He subject the world to come, of which we speak. ⁶ But one has somewhere testified: What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that You visit him? ⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels, You crowned him with glory and honour and did set him over the works of Your hands; ⁸ You did put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He subjected all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not see all things subjected to him.

The Humanity of Christ

⁹ But we behold him who has been made a little lower than the angels- Jesus- crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering of death, whereby, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every per-

son. ¹⁰ For it became Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of the same nature. For this cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹² saying: I will declare Your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation will I sing Your praise. ¹³ And again: I will put my trust in Him. And again: Behold, I and the children whom God has given me. ¹⁴ Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same nature; so that through his death he might bring to nothing him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; ¹⁵ and might deliver all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For truly not to angels does he take hold in association; but he took hold of the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore in all things he had to be made like his brothers, so that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitia-

2:4 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to confirm the spoken word; once the New Testament was completed, there was no need for this confirmation.

2:11 This solidarity between Jesus and us is fundamental; and any teaching that Jesus was God Himself is therefore fundamentally wrong.

2:13 The humanity of Jesus is reflected in the way that He had to put His faith in God.

2:14 *He also himself in like manner partook of the same* – This is saying the same thing five times over. It is a colossal emphasis.

2:14 Sin has the power of death (Rom. 6:23) – here “the devil” has this power. Paul often personifies sin, and here he is personifying it as *the* greatest ‘slanderer’ or ‘false accuser’ which there is. For ‘devil’ as a word means just those things; it doesn’t of itself refer to an evil cosmic being.

tion for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For because he himself suffered when tempted, he is able to succour those who are being tempted.

CHAPTER 3 May 31 Nov. 30

The Supremacy of Christ Over

Moses

Therefore holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, ² who was faithful to Him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. ³ For he has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, in that he that built the house has more honour than the house. ⁴ Every house is built by someone; but He that built all things is God. ⁵ And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken. ⁶ But Christ, as a Son over his own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, remaining firm to the end.

Learn the Lesson from Israel

⁷ Therefore, even as the Holy Spirit

said: Today, if you shall hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, like the time of testing in the wilderness, ⁹ where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was displeased with this generation, and said: They do always err in their heart. They did not know My ways. ¹¹ As I swore in My anger: They shall not enter into My rest. ¹² Brothers, take care, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, causing you to depart from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day by day, so long as it is called today, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast to our original confidence, remaining firm to the end. ¹⁵ It is said: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion. ¹⁶ For who, having heard, still rebelled? Was it not all those who followed Moses out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was He displeased for forty years? Was it not with those that sinned, whose bod-

2:18 God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), He has no possibility of sinning. But Jesus had temptation in a meaningful, legitimate sense – in that He had the real possibility to sin.

3:6 It's therefore not true that 'once saved, always saved'. We must endure to the end to be saved (v. 14; Mt. 10:22).

3:8 Hard heartedness is a spiritual disease we must avoid. Numbness of conscience, of feeling to and for others, indifference to God, existing rather than living life as God intended... this must be replaced by a softness of heart, a sensitive conscience, a gentleness.

3:13 Sin deceives; hence 2:14 personifies sin as a 'devil', a slanderer or false accuser. We deceive ourselves that we can sin; the Bible continually focuses us upon our internal thought processes, for to change them is the essence of Christianity.

3:17 Our baptism is like leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and entering the wilder-

ies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to those that were disobedient? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter in because of their unbelief.

CHAPTER 4 May 31 Nov. 30
The Possibility of Rejection

Therefore, while the promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any one of you should seem to have failed to attain it. ² For indeed we have had good tidings preached to us, even as also they did; but the word they heard did not benefit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard it. ³ For we who have believed do enter into that rest, even as He has said: As I swore in my anger: They shall not enter into My rest, although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: And God rested on the seventh day from all His works. ⁵ And in this place again: They shall not enter into My rest. ⁶ Seeing therefore it remains

that some should enter therein, and they to whom the good tidings were earlier preached failed to enter in because of disobedience; ⁷ He again defines a certain day, a today, saying through David a long time afterwards (in the words already quoted): Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts. ⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day. ⁹ There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. ¹¹ Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no one fall by the same kind of disobedience. ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, and pierces even to the dividing apart of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ And there is no creature that is not revealed to his sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to give account.

ness journey with Israel (1 Cor. 10:1). All that happened to them there, especially their failures, becomes a warning to us.

4:1 It's no bad thing to have a sense of the future we may miss if we turn away. For the Hebrews, that meant turning back to reliance upon their own works and legal obedience.

4:2 The Gospel ("good tidings") preached in the Old Testament was in essence the same as that of the New Testament (Gal. 3:8).

4:9 It could be argued that if a day with God is as 1000 years (2 Pet. 3:8), then the day of rest, the Sabbath, the 7th day, will begin 6 days or 6000 years after creation. Rev. 20:2-7 suggests that the first part of God's Kingdom, the Millennium, will last for 1000 years. According to Biblical chronology, Jesus lived about 4000 years after creation. We are now 2000 years later, making 6000 years. This would mean that the coming of Christ to establish the 'sabbath rest' of the Millennium could be at any time now. This suggestion has some problems but it's stimulating to reflect on it.

The Comfort of Christ's Humanity

¹⁴ Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things, yet did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in our time of need.

CHAPTER 5 May 31 Nov. 30

For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness; ³ and because of it, he is required to offer sacrifices both for his sins and also for the sins of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honour to himself, but only when he is called by God, even as was Aaron. ⁵ So Christ also did not glorify himself to become a high priest, but He that spoke to him: You are my Son. This day have I begotten you. ⁶ As

also He said elsewhere: You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek. ⁷ Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his Godly fear; ⁸ though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. ⁹ And having been made perfect, he became to all those that obey him the author of eternal salvation, ¹⁰ pronounced by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Spiritual Growth

¹¹ Of him we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹² For when by reason of the time, you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God; and have become as those in need of milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone that partakes of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, those who by experience of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

4:15 Clearly Jesus was of our nature if He was tempted; for God cannot be tempted (James 1:13).

4:16 The practical result of believing that Jesus was of our nature and tempted like us is that we can confidently pray to God, knowing we have a sympathetic mediator in Heaven who once was human and tempted.

5:2 As stressed in 4:15,16, the atonement 'works' because Jesus in His mortal life was "subject to weakness" as we are; therefore He wasn't God.

5:7-9 Jesus prayed to God, and needed saving from death. He was therefore not God. He 'learnt' obedience and was 'perfected' by His sufferings. Such language is inappropriate to God Himself.

5:12-14 When we are baptized, we are "born again" (Jn. 3:3-5), and drink milk; but

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 1 Dec. 1

Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to completion. Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, ² the teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment. ³ And if God permits, this will we do.

The Need for Endurance

⁴ For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ but then fell away—it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. ⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is rejected and in danger of being cursed, whose end is to be burned. ⁹ But beloved, though we speak in this manner, we are confident of

we should develop over time so that we are able to move on from basic Gospel teachings [“milk”] to deeper things.

6:5 The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit which were experienced in the first century are the same gifts which will be used in “the age to come”, the Kingdom. These gifts will be poured out again when Christ returns to establish the Kingdom on earth. Therefore they are not possessed at this moment.

6:6 This seems to be specifically talking about those in the first century who possessed the miraculous Holy Spirit gifts; in our time, we can always repent and be assured of forgiveness and acceptance by God.

6:18 *Fled for refuge* – An allusion to the way in which under the Law of Moses, if you accidentally killed someone [thereby committing a sin worthy of death, but not

better things for you; things that accompany salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which you have shown toward His Name, in that you serve the saints and still do. ¹¹ And we desire that each one of you may show the same zeal to have the full assurance of hope until the end. ¹² Do not be lazy, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The Certainty of God’s Promise

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying: Surely blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply you. ¹⁵ And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men swear by something greater, and in every dispute of theirs, the oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ Therefore God, determined to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of His purpose, confirmed with an oath; ¹⁸ so that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to

lay hold on the hope set before us. ¹⁹ This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and passing into the presence beyond the veil; ²⁰ into which as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 1 Dec. 1

Christ and Melchizedek

For this Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ² to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all. He was first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also, King of Jerusalem, which is, King of peace. ³ He was without recorded father or mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but presented as being like the Son of God, abiding a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have the commandment according to the law to take tithes from the people, that is, of their brothers; even

though they are also descendants of Abraham. ⁶ Melchizedek was not descended from Levi by genealogy, but he took tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had received the promises. ⁷ But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. ⁸ And here mortal men receive tithes; but there one received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ And, so to say, when Abraham paid the tithe, Levi, whose descendants receive the tithe, also paid a tithe. ¹⁰ For Levi was yet in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met Abraham. ¹¹ Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed requires also a change of the law. ¹³ For he of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴ For it is evident that our Lord originated from the tribe of Judah. Regarding this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵ And what we say is even more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek

willingly], you could flee to a city of refuge, and remain there until the death of the High Priest; you would be safe in that city, and pronounced free when the High Priest died (Num. 35:24-32). We are in such a situation; the city of refuge and High Priest we have is Christ.

7:3 Melchizedek was not Jesus – he was “*like* the Son of God”, and Jesus was a priest *similar to* him (v. 11). The Hebrew Christians were complaining that Jesus was not from the priestly tribe, Levi, but from Judah (v. 14). The point is that Melchizedek, the great Old Testament priest, had no genealogy [“Without father, without mother”], and yet was still a priest.

there arises another priest, ¹⁶ who has been appointed, not on the basis of a law about physical descent, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For it is witnessed: You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. ¹⁸ On the other hand, there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

The End of the Old Priesthood

²⁰ And the Melchizedek priesthood was not without the taking of an oath. ²¹ The Levitical priests were made priests without an oath, but he with an oath: The Lord swore and will not change His mind; you are a priest for ever. ²² By this also has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. ²³ And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing. ²⁴ But he, because he abides for ever, has his priesthood unchangeable. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save for ever those that draw near to God through him,

seeing he lives forever to make intercession for them. ²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us—holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has been exalted higher than the heavens. ²⁷ Who needs not to offer up sacrifices daily, like those high priests, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 2 Dec. 2

The Old Covenant Replaced by the New Covenant

Now in the things of which we are talking, the chief point is this. We have such a high priest who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ² a servant of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. ³ For every high priest being appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, it is therefore necessary that this high priest also have these to offer. ⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at

7:16 *Has been appointed* – Jesus was given eternity by God; He therefore isn't God Himself.

7:18, 19 The Law of Moses has been 'annulled' and is therefore not binding upon us today – it is 'unprofitable'. Throughout this section, the Law of Moses is spoken of in very inferior terms compared to the excellency of salvation in Christ.

7:27 *Offered up Himself* – Jesus was both priest and sacrifice. This indicates how in control He was of the situation as He died, despite the evident pain and distress He was under.

7:28 *Been perfected* – Hardly the language one would expect if Jesus is God Himself.

8:3 Jesus is actively at work in Heaven for us. He offers up our works, our thoughts, our prayers, to God.

all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law, ⁵ who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned when he is about to make the tabernacle. For He said: See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. ⁶ But now has he obtained a more excellent service, as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, He said: Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, so I paid no attention to them. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind and in their heart also will I write them, and I will be to them a God and they

shall be to Me a people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbour, and none his brother, saying: Know the Lord. For all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will not remember against them. ¹³ In that He said: A new covenant, He has made the first redundant. Now what is becoming redundant and growing old is ready to vanish away.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 2 Dec. 2

The Mosaic Rituals Pointed Forward to Christ

Now even the first covenant had regulations for Divine service and an earthly sanctuary. ² For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first section, wherein was the candlestick, the table and the bread of the Presence, which is called the Holy Place. ³ And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies. ⁴ This had the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna and Aaron's rod that budded,

8:7 There was 'fault' (v. 8) with the Old Covenant [the Law of Moses]; the New Covenant is "better" (v. 6). We therefore don't need to keep the Law of Moses.

8:9 *Took them by the hand* – This is a picture of a loving Father taking the hand of a child to lead them. This is how gentle God was in leading His people out of Egypt and through the Red Sea – events which represent our exit from this world's ways and passing through the water of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1).

8:13 *Ready to vanish away* – Suggesting that Hebrews was written shortly before the destruction of the temple worship system in AD70.

9:3 When Jesus died, the veil was torn (Mt. 27:51). This symbolized that through His death, not just the High Priest but all in Christ can enter the Most Holy Place and have direct fellowship with God (v. 8); not just once a year on the day of Atonement, but continually.

and the tables of the covenant. ⁵ And above it were cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, of which things we cannot now speak in detail. ⁶ Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests went in continually into the first tabernacle, performing the services. ⁷ But into the second only the high priest went, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people; ⁸ the Holy Spirit indicating that the way into the Holy Place was not yet made manifest whilst the first tabernacle remained ⁹ (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this system, both gifts and sacrifices were offered which could not make the worshiper perfect as relates to the conscience, ¹⁰ being merely foods, drinks and various washings, earthly ordinances imposed until a time of reformation. ¹¹ But Christ having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, ¹² nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, he entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, could sanctify to the cleansing of the flesh- ¹⁴ how much more

shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And because of this, he is the mediator of a new covenant; that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶ For where a will is of power, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. ¹⁷ For a will is of force where there has been death; it does not have power while he that made it lives. ¹⁸ Therefore even the first covenant has not been dedicated without blood. ¹⁹ For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰ saying: This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded for you. ²¹ Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. ²² And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood; and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. ²³ It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed

9:19 Water, scarlet and hyssop all feature in the events of Christ's crucifixion, which the Old Testament rituals pointed forward to.

9:22 *Almost* – Blood was required for the forgiveness of sins, so animals had to be offered. But there were cases where the Law of Moses stipulated that if someone was too poor to offer an animal, they could offer grain or flour. This shows how although

with these things, but the heavenly things themselves had better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are only copies of the true ones; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the actual presence of God for us. ²⁵ Nor must he offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the Holy Place year by year with blood not his own. ²⁶ Or else he must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end of the ages has he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed to men once to die and after this comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ also, having once been offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to bring salvation to those who are eagerly waiting for him.

CHAPTER 10 Jun. 3 Dec. 3

The Weakness of the Mosaic System

For the law having only a shadow of the good things to come, not the reality of the things, can never

with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those that draw near. ² Else would they not have ceased to be offered? Because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in that sacrificial system there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. ⁴ For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. ⁵ Therefore when he came into the world, he said: Sacrifice and offering You did not want, but a body did You prepare for me. ⁶ In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then said I: Behold, I come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do Your will, O God. ⁸ First he said: Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor did You have pleasure in them (all of which are offered according to the law). ⁹ Then he said: Behold, I come to do Your will. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second. ¹⁰ By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ

God respects His own principles, He is so eager to grant forgiveness and have fellowship with people, even if their personal circumstances preclude them from serving Him in the way He ideally requires.

9:27 After death we die and are unconscious until Christ comes, but this period of death is like a sleep; after we die, our next conscious moment will be the return of Christ and standing before Him at judgment.

9:28 *To bring salvation* – We will only be fully ‘saved’ when Christ returns and gives us an immortal body and inheritance in His Kingdom on earth.

10:4 However, God does state in the Old Testament that He forgave people their sins when they offered sacrifice. They were forgiven not because God was pleased with the blood as red liquid; but on account of the fact that it pointed forward to the future sacrifice of Christ, and because it showed they recognized that sin brings death. By placing their hand on the head of the sacrifice, they accepted it as their representative.

once for all. ¹¹ And every priest indeed stands day by day serving, and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; ¹³ from that time forward expectantly waiting until his enemies be made the footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering he has perfected for ever those that are sanctified. ¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us. For after saying: ¹⁶ This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and on their minds I will write them; ¹⁷ then is added: And their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. ¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin required.

The Practical Result of Christ's Sacrifice

¹⁹ Therefore brothers, having bold-

ness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹ and having a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water; ²³ let us hold fast the confession of our hope so that it does not waver. For He who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the habit of some is; but rather encouraging one another, and so much the more, as you see the day drawing near.

Do Not Go Back

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after what we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more

10:12 The point is frequently made that Jesus now *sits* at the right hand of God, whereas the Mosaic priests *stood* as they did their work (v. 11). However, in Acts 7:55, Stephen saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God, interceding for him. This shows that even now in His Heavenly glory, Jesus has passion and emotion; He so feels for us as we suffer on earth that at times He *stands up* in order to plead more powerfully for us.

10:15 The Bible is written by the inspiration process, whereby God's Holy Spirit was in the Bible writers, and what they wrote was therefore God's word. In this sense we can read the Old Testament passage which is here quoted (v. 16) and feel the Holy Spirit testifying to us personally in this age.

10:22 *Our bodies washed* – A reference to baptism into Christ which enables us to acceptably approach God.

10:24 We must take time to “consider” how we may encourage others to do good. This requires reflection, thinking about who others are, their contexts, their possibilities, and provoking them to do good rather than evil. Christianity cannot be lived alone with no reference to others.

10:26 Wilful sin involves a conscious blasphemy against the blood of Christ (v. 29); it

a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. ²⁸ A man that set at nothing Moses' law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, shall be considered those who have trodden underfoot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the covenant (with which they were sanctified) an unholy thing, and have insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him that said: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will reward. And again: The Lord shall judge His people. ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. ³² But call to remembrance the former days, when you were first enlightened. You endured a hard struggle, with sufferings; ³³ partly in that you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly in that you became companions of those who were so treated. ³⁴ For you had both compassion on them that were in bonds, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your own property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and

an enduring one. ³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your boldness, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. ³⁷ For yet a very little while, and he that comes shall come and shall not delay further. ³⁸ But My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul will have no pleasure in him. ³⁹ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 4 Dec. 4

The Definition of Faith

Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction about invisible things. ² For on account of their faith, the elders had witness borne to them. ³ By faith we understand that the ages have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which appear.

Abel, Enoch and Noah

⁴ By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God

doesn't refer to the temporary failures which we all commit. For we confess continually that we still commit sin (1 Jn. 1:8).

10:33 *Companions* – Our sufferings aren't only what we ourselves experience, but if we are truly connected with others, then we suffer also in their sufferings.

10:39 *Shrink back* – The rejected will shrink away from Christ when He comes, being ashamed from before His presence (1 Jn. 2:28). Those who love Him will in faith go towards Him, confident in His love despite being aware of their sins.

11:3 Matter was created – and all the science in the world cannot explain the ultimate question of origins. There had to be a point of ultimate creation, which implies God.

11:4 Abel offered animal blood to God, whereas Cain ignored the principle of 9:22 and offered just vegetables. Abel's faith was therefore in that God would forgive sin

bearing witness in respect to his gifts; and through it he, though being dead, still speaks. ⁵ By faith Enoch was snatched away so that he should not be killed; and he was not found, because God had taken him away. He had witness borne to him, that before his being snatched away he had been well pleasing to God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him. For he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those that seek after Him. ⁷ By faith Noah, being warned concerning things not seen as yet, moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Abraham and Sarah

⁸ By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed, and left for a place which he was to receive for an inheritance afterwards. And he left not knowing where he was going to. ⁹ By

faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as yet not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹ By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude— innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. ¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them, and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things make it obvious that they are seeking after a country of their own. ¹⁵ And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a bet-

because of what that blood represented – maybe he understood something of the future sacrifice of Christ, and showed his faith in this.

11:5 It seems Enoch was snatched away from death by persecution, and was not found by his enemies. But the first person to be given eternal life was Christ (1 Cor. 15:23). So Enoch wasn't given eternal life in Heaven; he too must've died after his deliverance.

11:7 Noah so believed God's word that he could imagine the future flood (v. 1), although at the time he had never seen rain. His faith and related imagination was so vivid that he feared greatly and therefore built the ark.

11:11 When Sarah first heard that she would have a child, she laughed in disbelief (Gen. 18:12). So the "faith" of which we read in this chapter wasn't simple nor automatic, it had to be developed.

11:13 The promises were of the eternal possession of the earth in God's Kingdom. These people died without having received that; therefore, because God keeps His promises, they will be resurrected when Christ returns and given what God promised. Therefore they didn't go to Heaven when they died to receive the promised salvation.

ter country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed of them- to be called their God. For He has prepared for them a city. ¹⁷ By faith Abraham, being tested, offered up Isaac. Yes, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son. ¹⁸ Even he to whom it was said: In Isaac shall your seed be called. ¹⁹ Abraham accounted that God is able to raise up, even from the dead. From where he did, figuratively, receive him back.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph

²⁰ By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. ²¹ By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff. ²² By faith Joseph, when his end was near, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Moses

²³ By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. ²⁴ By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing instead to share ill treatment with the people of God, rather than enjoy

the pleasures of sin for a short time; ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. For he looked to the greater reward. ²⁷ By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king. For he endured, because he saw Him who is invisible. ²⁸ By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborns should not touch them. ²⁹ By faith they passed through the Red Sea as if on dry land, which the Egyptians in trying to do were swallowed up.

Joshua, Rahab and Many Others

³⁰ By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace. ³² And what more shall I say? For time will run out if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets. ³³ Those who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead by a resurrection; and others were tortured, not ac-

11:27 *Not fearing* – But Ex. 2:14,15 says: “Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh”. We can conclude that Moses did have fear, and yet his faith overcame that fear. Faith wasn't automatic nor easy for him, but involved much struggle (v. 11 note).

cepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ And others were tested by mockings and whippings, yes, also by bonds and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tested, they were killed with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ³⁸ (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and the holes of the earth. ³⁹ And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, did not receive the fulfilment of the promise; ⁴⁰ God having provided some better thing involving us, that without us they should not be made perfect.

CHAPTER 12 Jun. 5 Dec. 5

Think About Jesus

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud

of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the author and completer of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has been sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Think on him that endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴ In your striving against sin you have yet to resist to the point of shedding your blood.

The Reason for Suffering

⁵ You have forgotten the word of encouragement which reasons with you as with sons: My son, do not regard lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor become faint when you are reproved by Him. ⁶ For the Lord

11:40 God's plan is that all the faithful receive the promises (eternal life in God's Kingdom on earth) at the same time – at the return of Christ, when the dead will be resurrected, judged and given immortality here on earth. It's therefore not true that one believer dies, goes to Heaven and gets rewarded, 100 years later another one does, etc. The true Christian hope is that of bodily resurrection from the dead when Christ returns to establish His Kingdom.

12:1 The faithful listed in chapter 11 are as it were a great crowd who are cheering us on as we run our race towards the Kingdom.

12:3 *Think on Him* – We are to live life always “looking to Jesus” (v. 2). But how many times each day do we think of Him? We should be reading something of Him each day, reflecting on Him and His words, so that His example is the constant guide for our lives.

12:4 An allusion to Jesus sweating as it were drops of blood as He battled temptation in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44).

12:5-11 Suffering comes from God, and in the context of Christian life it is given in order to develop us spiritually. The idea that good things come from God and bad things from Satan is therefore wrong. Nothing is chance or bad luck in our lives. God is in control and all negative things occur for our ultimate good as believers. This takes some faith to accept.

disciplines those whom He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. ⁷ Endure your sufferings as a father's chastening; it shows how God deals with you as with sons. For what son is there whom his father does not chastise? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have been made partakers, then aren't you illegitimate children and not real sons? ⁹ Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them respect; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, so that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ All chastening seems for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yields peaceable fruit to those that have been exercised thereby— the fruit of righteousness. ¹² Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be disabled further, but rather be healed. ¹⁴ Follow after peace with all men, and the holiness without which no one shall see the Lord. ¹⁵ See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by

it many are defiled. ¹⁶ Ensure that no one is an immoral or Godless person like Esau, who for one meal sold his own birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no conditions for a change of mind, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Zion Rather Than Sinai

¹⁸ For you have not come to a mountain that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, ¹⁹ and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words which they that heard them begged that no more words should be spoken to them. ²⁰ For they could not endure that which was commanded— If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned. ²¹ And so fearful was the appearance that Moses said: I am exceedingly afraid and trembling. ²² But you have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks

12:14 Our ultimate hope is to “see the Lord”. Job in the Old Testament rejoiced in this same hope – that in the very end, he would see God face to face (Job 19:26).

12:17 It would seem from this that last minute repentance before the judgment seat, even with tears, will not change our destiny – now are our great days of opportunity.

12:24 The blood of Christ speaks to us; we cannot be passive to the fact Christ died for us. It is an imperative and call to action – and we should not refuse that voice of the cross (v. 25).

better things than that of Abel. ²⁵ See you do not reject him that speaks. For if they did not escape when they rejected Him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that warns from heaven. ²⁶ Whose voice then shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying: Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷ And further: Yet once more, signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe. ²⁹ For our God is a consuming fire.

CHAPTER 13 Jun. 6 Dec. 6

Love in Practice

Let love of the believers continue. ¹ Do not forget to show love to strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ² Remember those that are in bonds, as if you were bound with them; those that are ill treated, as being yourselves also

in the body. ³ Let marriage be held in respect among all, and let the marital bed be undefiled. For fornicators and adulterers God will judge. ⁴ Be free from the love of money, content with such things as you have. For God Himself has said: I will in no way fail you, neither will I in any way forsake you. ⁵ So that with good courage we can say: The Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What shall man do to me? ⁶ Remember those that had the rule over you, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁷ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever. ⁸ Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings. For it is good that the heart be established by grace- not with food laws, which have not profited those who have been so occupied with them. ⁹ We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹⁰ For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the Holy Place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside of the camp. ¹¹ Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through

12:28 If we are motivated by grace, in response to the fact God has graciously given us the Kingdom, then our works of response on this basis are pleasing to God.

13:2 Abraham was unaware that the strangers he entertained were Angels (Gen. 18:1-16). It's possible that we may meet Angels today in the form of people who appear as ordinary humans.

13:3 This is a high challenge – to be so closely connected with our brethren that we feel their sufferings as if they are happening to us.

13:8 It isn't true that Jesus was loving and mild when on earth, but will return in angry judgment. The Jesus who loved children, with whom fallen men and women felt at ease, the sinners' friend, who delighted in grace and forgiveness... is the same Jesus who now looks down upon us, and whom we shall meet at the day of judgment.

his own blood, suffered outside of the gate. ¹³ Let us therefore go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach. ¹⁴ For we do not have here a permanent city, but we seek after one which is yet to come. ¹⁵ Through him, therefore, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God; that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive; for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Final Requests and Greetings

¹⁸ Pray for us. For we are persuaded that we have a good conscience,

desiring to live honourably in all things. ¹⁹ And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. ²⁰ Now the God of peace, who brought from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, through the blood of an eternal covenant, ²¹ perfect you in every good thing to do His will; working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ. To whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²² But I urge you, brothers, bear with this word of encouragement; for I have written to you in few words. ²³ Be informed that our brother Timothy has been set at liberty; along with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you. ²⁴ Greet all those that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy greet you. ²⁵ Grace be with you all. Amen.

13:15 We should be praising God all the time. This might be through singing or humming Christian music to ourselves, or simply having a thankful heart for everything, even the very [apparently] smallest things.

13:19 *The sooner* – The more they prayed (v. 18), the more quickly he would be released. Prayer really does change things, and therefore we should be in the habit of asking others to pray for us, and praying for them too.

JAMES

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 7 Dec. 7

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion, greeting. ²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations, ³ knowing that the proving of your faith works patience. ⁴ And let patience have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing. ⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all liberally and without reproaching, and it shall be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, never doubting. For he that doubts is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. ⁷ Do not let that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ He is a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹ Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, ¹⁰ but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with the scorching wind and withers the grass, and the flower of it falls and the beauty of its appearance perishes. So also shall the rich man fade away in his business.

Temptation and God's Word

¹² Blessed is the man that endures temptation. For when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted: I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and He tempts no one. ¹⁴ But each man is tempted, when he is dragged away by his own lust and enticed. ¹⁵ Then the lust, when it has conceived, carries sin; and the sin, when it is fully grown, brings death. ¹⁶ Be not deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation nor shifting shadow. ¹⁸ Of His own will He gave us birth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creations. ¹⁹ You know this, my beloved brothers! But let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. ²⁰ For the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. ²¹ Wherefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

1:5 The allusion here is to Solomon, who when given the choice of whatever he wanted, chose wisdom – and therefore so much else was added to him.

1:13 Jesus was tempted (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15); yet God cannot be. Therefore, Jesus cannot be God in person.

1:14, 15 Sin and temptation come from within; we are tempted by our own desires, not by any cosmic being called Satan. We are therefore totally responsible for our sin, and the result of sin is therefore quite rightly death.

1:18 The word of God is likened to seed in Lk. 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23. This is what has the power to birth the spiritual man within us. We should therefore be quick to hear it (:19).

Self-examination

22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your selves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like to a man seeing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he sees himself and goes away and immediately forgets what manner of man he was. 25 But he that looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues, being not a hearer that forgets, but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in what he does. 26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious while he does not hold his tongue but rather just deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain. 27 Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: To visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 8 Dec. 8

Surface Level Judgment

My brothers, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For

if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; 3 and you have regard to him that wears the fine clothing, and say: Sit here in a good place; and you say to the poor man: Stand there, or, Sit under my footstool; 4 do you not make distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers. Did not God choose those that are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those that love him? 6 But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the courts? 7 Do not they blaspheme the honourable Name by which you are called? 8 However, if you fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture: You shall love your neighbour as yourself, you do well! 9 But if you show favouritism, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one

1:22 We who read the Bible can delude ourselves that this very process will save us; but unless there is a direct connection between our Bible reading and concrete action, it will not help us at all. True Bible reading as God intends will elicit self-examination and an abiding awareness of our true spiritual state (:24). If it doesn’t, then we are actually deceiving ourselves by the process of Bible reading into thinking we are religious when actually we are vain (:26).

2:5 If we are “heirs of the Kingdom”, then God has promised it to us. We haven’t yet fully received it. Gal. 3:27-29 says that we are heirs of the promises made to Abraham if we are baptized into Christ.

2:6 The Christians whom James was writing to were being abused by those richer than them; and they were taking out their hurt on those who were poorer than them. This is a psychological classic; but in Christ we are to break the cycle of abuse by *not* taking out our hurt on those over whom we in our turn have some advantage and human superiority.

2:7 The Name of God and Jesus is called upon us by our baptism into the Name.

point, he is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For He that said: Do not commit adultery, also said: Do not kill. So if you do not commit adultery but if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and act as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to whomsoever has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Faith and Works

¹⁴ My brothers, what good is it if a man claims to have faith but has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them: Go in peace, be warmed and filled! And yet you do not give them the things needful to the body—what does it profit? ¹⁷ Even so, faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself. ¹⁸ Yes, a man will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works and I, by my works, will show you my faith. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one! You do well. The demons also believe and shudder. ²⁰ But, O vain man, do you need evidence that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? ²² You saw that

faith worked together with his works, and so by works was faith perfected. ²³ And the scripture was fulfilled which said: And Abraham believed God and it was accredited to him as righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that by works a man is justified and not only by faith. ²⁵ And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers and sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 9 Dec. 9

The Tongue

Be not many teachers. My brothers, realize that we teachers shall receive heavier judgment. ² For in many things we all make others stumble. If any does not cause stumbling by his words, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also. ³ Now if we put the horses' bridles into their mouths that they may obey us, we turn about their whole body also. ⁴ Behold the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by rough winds, they are all the same turned about by a very small rudder, wherever the impulse of the steersman wills. ⁵ So the tongue also is a little member,

2:10 This is the fallacy of keeping just part of the Mosaic Law, e.g. the feasts or Sabbaths.

2:25 In this unusual case, telling a lie was actually an act of faith.

2:26 There is no contradiction here with Paul's teaching of justification by faith without works. If we really believe that by God's grace we shall surely be saved, on the basis of His grace alone, then we cannot be passive to this; if we really believe this, we will concretely *do* something in response to such total grace.

and boasts great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body and sets on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by Gehenna. ⁷ For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But the tongue no one can tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. ⁹ With this we bless the Lord and the Father, and with this we curse men, even though they are made after the likeness of God. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth comes forth blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does the fountain send forth from the same spout both fresh and bitter water? ¹² My brothers, can a fig tree yield olives or a vine figs? Neither can salt water yield fresh.

True Wisdom

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show his works in his good life, in meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and rivalry in your heart, do not boast about it and deny the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not a wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and division are, there is confusion and every vile deed. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is most importantly pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those that make peace.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 9 Dec. 9

A Call to Repentance

What causes the wars and fights among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasures that

3:6 Our words really can lead us to eternal condemnation; for by our words we will be either condemned or saved (Mt. 12:37). The control of our thinking and words is so utterly vital; and it is these things which are the essence of Christianity.

3:13 Good works aren't so much the occasional dramatic act, but a life lived in wisdom and humility.

3:16 Division between believers comes ultimately from jealousy and rivalry (:14; 4:1) which begins within the mind. Personal spiritual mindedness is therefore so important. Only because this isn't achieved do we end up with divisions. And division results in "vile deeds". Yet such division was being justified by the immature Christians as "wisdom" (:15). Hence James has to say that this isn't wisdom at all, as true wisdom leads to unity and gentle behaviour between believers (:17).

4:1 Sin comes from within the human heart, not from some external cosmic being. James draws a connection between the 'wars' within the mind of the individual weak believer, and the 'wars' between groups of believers within the church. Divisions start because individuals aren't single-heartedly devoted to spiritual things. He repeatedly criticizes double mindedness (:8). James constantly highlights the human mind, processes deep within the heart of the individual, as the real arena of spiritual conflict – not in Heaven or 'out there' in the supposed 'spirit world'.

war within you? ² You want what you don't have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive because you ask with the wrong motivation, you want only what will give you pleasure. ⁴ You adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the scripture says in vain: The Spirit that dwells in us yearns jealously. ⁶ But He gives more grace. Wherefore the scripture said: God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁷ Therefore, be subject to God and resist the Devil, and the Devil will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you doubleminded sinners, and purify your hearts. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall exalt you. ¹¹ Brothers, do not speak evil against each other. He that speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not

a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² One only is the lawgiver and judge. He who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge your neighbour? ¹³ Come now, you that say that today or the next day we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. ¹⁴ Whereas you do not know what shall be the next day. What is your life? For you are as a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ For you ought to say: If the Lord wills it, we shall both live and do this or that. ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Therefore, to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 10 Dec. 10

A Call for Justice

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth eaten. ³ Your gold and your silver are rusted, and their rust shall be a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days. ⁴ Indeed, the wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the

4:4 We are as it were married to Christ; any unfaithfulness to Christ is therefore as adultery.

4:15 We should therefore unashamedly say "God willing" when talking about our plans, no matter if others look at us strangely.

4:16 Here we have the principle of knowledge bringing responsibility to Divine judgment.

5:3 If we claim to live as if we expect Christ to return at any moment, it's inappropriate to be saving up wealth for future enjoyment.

ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts only for a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned, you have killed the righteous, even though he does not oppose you.

A Call for Patience

⁷ Therefore brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and latter rain. ⁸ Be you also patient. Establish your hearts. For the coming of the Lord is at hand! ⁹ Brothers, do not complain about each other, so that you are not judged. Behold! The judge stands at the door! ¹⁰ Brothers, take for an example the suffering and patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the Lord is full of pity and is merciful.

Prayer and Healing

¹² But above all things, my brothers, do not make oaths. Neither by

the heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath; but let your yes, mean yes, and your no, mean no, so that you will not fall under judgment. ¹³ Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he has committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. ¹⁹ My brothers. If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back: ²⁰ let him know, that he who turns back a sinner from the error of his way, he shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

5:9 If we believe that any moment now Christ will return and judge us, we will not be critical and condemnatory of our brethren.

5:11 Even when it seemed God wasn't answering Job's prayers nor helping him, He was in fact very pitiful of Job.

5:17 The context suggests that Elijah's prayers for a drought were because he believed this would lead Israel to repentance and forgiveness; and he himself suffered terribly as a result of that drought, coming near to starvation.

5:20 The prayers and spiritual efforts of a third party really can lead to a believer's forgiveness and salvation – although see 1 Jn. 5:16,17. If our prayers and efforts for others can have such eternal consequence – we should, like Paul, be praying for our brethren all the time (:15).

1 PETER

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 11 Dec. 11

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen ones who are temporary dwellers of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, to be obedient and sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

The Purpose of Trials

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you; ⁵ you who by the power of God are guarded through faith to a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ Wherein you greatly rejoice; though now, for a little while, if need be, you have suffered many trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith (more precious than gold that perishes though it is proved

by fire) may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ whom you love though you have not seen him. On whom you believe, though now you do not see him, and rejoice greatly with joy inexpressible and full of glory; ⁹ receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you; ¹¹ searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point to, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow them. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. Which things the Angels desire to look into. ¹³ Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober and set your hope completely on the grace that is to be brought to you at

1:4 God and Jesus are in Heaven, preparing for us a wonderful, eternal future. But we will only receive this at the last day when Jesus returns (:5). We therefore don't go to Heaven on death to receive that future, but Christ brings it to us on earth when He returns.

1:7 The hard experiences of life are like fire applied to us, purging out the dross, and making our dirty piece of rock turn into pure gold. It's hard to imagine, but we will be "praised" by Jesus at the last day – just as He enthusiastically commends the faithful for the good things they did which they had forgotten (Mt. 25:36,37). This is how positively Jesus views us.

1:13 Our faith isn't to be a hobby, but our complete focus in life should be upon the grace which will result in us being given eternity when Christ returns.

the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As children of obedience, do not be conformed to the lusts you had in your former ignorance. ¹⁵ But like He who called you is holy, be you yourselves holy in all manner of living. ¹⁶ Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy.

Our Response to the Gospel

¹⁷ And if you call on Him as Father, who without partiality judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear. ¹⁸ Knowing you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of times for your sake, ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So that your faith and hope might be in God. ²² Seeing you have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth to sincere love of the brothers, fervently love one another from the

heart. ²³ Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which lives and endures. ²⁴ For, All flesh is as grass and all the glory of it as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word of good news which was preached to you.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 12 Dec. 12

Therefore, put away all wickedness, deceit, hypocrisies, envies and all evil speaking. ² Be as newborn babes, longing for the spiritual milk which is without deceit, so that you may grow thereby to salvation, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The New Temple

⁴ Come to him as to a living stone, indeed rejected by men but chosen by God and precious. ⁵ You as living stones are being built up into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ Because it is contained in scripture: Look, I lay in Zion a chief corner

1:20 Jesus didn't physically exist before He was born, but He was know by God within God's plan, just as we were also (Eph. 1:4).

1:22 The result of believing "the truth" will be sincere love of our fellow believers; we can't discern and believe "the truth" and remain disengaged from others, otherwise we haven't really understood "the truth".

2:2 We are born again in baptism (Jn. 3:3-5) and afterwards we should desperately desire the milk of God's word; we need to get in the habit of daily Bible reading as soon as possible.

2:5 God's intention is that we should be a priesthood (:9). Priests serve others and empower them to give to God; this should be the focus of our lives. Most religions teach that just some religious leaders are the priests; but we are all to be priests.

stone, chosen, precious. And he that believes in him shall not stumble. ⁷ Therefore, for you that believe he is precious. But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, ⁸ a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. For being disobedient, they stumble at the word; to which they also were appointed. ⁹ But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may show forth the excellence of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Who in times past were no people but now are the people of God. Who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as temporary residents and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honourable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Our Attitude to Those in Authority

¹³ Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Whether to the king, as supreme leader, ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent by him to punish evil-doers and for the praise

of those that do well. ¹⁵ For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ As free and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷ Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. ¹⁸ Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For it is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief - suffering unjustly. ²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when you sin and are beaten, you shall take it patiently? But if when you do well, and suffer, you shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. ²¹ For this were you called. Because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps. ²² He did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ Who, when he was insulted, did not retaliate with insults, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but committed himself to Him that judges righteously. ²⁴ Who himself bore our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died to sin, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed. ²⁵ For you were going astray like sheep, but are now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

2:9 These are the very terms used about the Old Testament people of Israel (Ex. 19:6). By baptism into Christ we become the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29) and are thus a new, spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16). We should therefore feel our national identity as "spiritual Israel" rather than whatever nation we were physically born into.

2:21 The cross and sufferings of Christ are therefore not just something to be admired from a distance as we may admire a picture or be intrigued by distant history. He there is our very real pattern and inspiration in daily life.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 13 Dec. 13***Husbands and Wives***

In like manner, you wives be in subjection to your husbands. That, even if any do not obey the word, they may without the word be gained by the behaviour of their wives, ² seeing your chaste behaviour coupled with fear. ³ Whose adorning, let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; ⁴ but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great value. ⁵ For after this manner, in the past, the holy women who trusted in God also made themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands. ⁶ As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. Whose children you now are, if you do well and are not put in fear by any terror. ⁷ You husbands, in like manner live with your wife with understanding, giving honour to the woman as to the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers are not impeded.

A Gracious Life

⁸ Finally, all of you, be likeminded, compassionate, loving as brothers, sensitive, humble. ⁹ Not rendering evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but instead give blessing. For this were you called, that you should inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For he that would love life and see good days, let him restrain his tongue from evil and restrain his lips so they speak no lies. ¹¹ And let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Coping with Persecution

¹³ And who is he that will harm you, if you be zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, always ready to give answer to every man that asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear. ¹⁶ Having a good con-

3:1 Peter writes here speaking about Christian marriage, in which both parties are heirs and therefore hope for eternal life (v. 7). He tacitly recognizes that no marriage will be perfect and that the man will at times fail the huge challenge of loving his wife as Christ loved and died for the church (Eph. 5:25).

3:6 Sarah is only recorded as calling Abraham her “Lord” when we are told that she thought this about him in her heart (Gen. 18:12). In fact she said this in disbelief in the promises of God – in her heart she initially thought God’s promises of her and Abraham having a child couldn’t come true because “my Lord” was so old and impotent (Rom. 4:19). However we see how both spirituality and unspirituality can exist within the heart of believers at the same time; and God here chose to focus upon the positive. His positivity about His children is an example to us, as well as a comfort.

3:7 Peter here assumes that believing husbands and wives will be regularly praying together; although those prayers will lose power if there is marital strife.

science, that, when you are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ. ¹⁷ For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. ¹⁸ Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. ¹⁹ In which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ that previously were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was prepared. Wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ Which is also a true likeness of how baptism does now save you: not the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²² Who is the one at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, Angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 13 Dec. 13

Living to God

Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also

with the same mind. For he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. ² You should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ³ For we have spent enough of our past lifetime doing the will of the Gentiles- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. ⁴ In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, and so speak evil of you- you ⁵ who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead! ⁶ For to this end was the gospel preached to those now dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. ⁷ But the end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be of sound mind and sober in prayer, ⁸ above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves. For love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Be hospitable to each other without complaining; ¹⁰ according as each has received a gift, minister it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks, let him speak as if it were oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as

3:21 Baptism is therefore related to salvation; by being in Christ we have a clear conscience before God because all our sins really are forgiven and we are counted by Him as being His own Son, the perfect Lord Jesus.

4:4 We shouldn't be surprised if the world views us as strange and even gets aggressive with us because of our refusal to do the sinful things which they do. What they don't appreciate is that we have to give account to God for our lives, whereas they simply live and die for ever (:5).

4:10 Whatever gifts we receive from God, we are given them only to give them as gifts to others. These gifts may not be financial; but the poor need not think they have been given no gifts. We have each been given gifts by God.

with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To whom belongs the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Encouragement for the Last Days

¹² Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to test you, as though some strange thing happened to you. ¹³ But inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice! That at the revelation of his glory you also may rejoice with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters. ¹⁶ But if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in this name. ¹⁷ For the time of judgment begins at the house of God, and if we are judged first, what shall be the outcome of those that do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And if the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? ¹⁹ Therefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God,

commit their souls in doing well to a faithful Creator.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 13 Dec. 13

Elders in the Church

The elders among you I urge (I who am a fellow-elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who is also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed), ² tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not reservedly but willingly, according to the will of God; not for dishonest gain, but eagerly. ³ Neither lord it over those entrusted to you, but make yourselves examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, you shall receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. ⁵ Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder men. Yes, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another. For God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. ⁶ Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; ⁷ casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

Stand Firm

⁸ Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the Devil, like a roaring lion,

4:19 Whilst we should be confident of our final salvation by God's grace, we should always be aware that we are totally unworthy of this; thus we will only be barely saved as it were, scraping in by grace alone – in one sense. This should give us an appropriate humility and grace in how we relate to others.

5:2 Shepherding the flock should never ever be motivated by a desire for money or material benefit.

5:4 The reward is given when Christ returns, at the resurrection; going to Heaven at death isn't taught in the Bible.

5:8 The "devil" or 'false accuser' here seems to refer to the power which was causing

walks about seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Stand firm in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brothers who are in the world. ¹⁰ And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfect, establish, strengthen you. ¹¹ To Him be the dominion for ever

and ever. Amen. ¹² By Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I account him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it! ¹³ She that is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you, and so does Marcus my son. ¹⁴ Greet each other with a kiss of love. Peace be to you all that are in Christ.

the “sufferings” of the Christians to whom Peter was writing (:9); and this was clearly the Roman empire, rather than any cosmic being.

5:9 We are strengthened in our sufferings by realizing that in fact they aren’t unique to us, but somewhere, another believer is going through the same in essence. This is how Christian fellowship and engaging meaningfully with other believers on a spiritual rather than a merely human level can give such strength.

2 PETER

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 14 Dec. 14

Spiritual Growth

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those that have obtained the same precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ. ² Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. ³ Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the precise and correct knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue. ⁴ Whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust. ⁵ Yes and for this very cause you on your part should show all diligence; to your faith add virtue, and to virtue, knowledge. ⁶ And to your knowledge self-control, and to your self-control patience, and to your patience, reverence toward God. ⁷ And to your reverence toward God, brotherly kindness, and to your brotherly kindness, love. ⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the precise and correct knowledge of our Lord Je-

sus Christ. ⁹ For he that lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. ¹⁰ Wherefore brothers, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you shall never stumble. ¹¹ For thus shall be richly supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Certainty of Truth

¹² Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth which is with you. ¹³ And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. ¹⁴ Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle comes swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated to me. ¹⁵ Yes, I will give diligence that at every time you may be able after my death to call these things to remembrance. ¹⁶ For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ For he received from God the Father honour and glory, delivered to him by such a

1:3 “Precise and correct knowledge” is important; it therefore does matter what and how we believe and understand God and His word. It’s not that academic purity of understanding is important in itself; but this “correct knowledge” is useful for practical Godliness. This knowledge produces fruit in practice (:8).

1:5, 6 There is an upward spiral in spiritual life, just as there is a downward spiral. One spiritual strength is connected with and leads to others.

voice from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ¹⁸ And this voice we heard, delivered out of heaven, when we were with him on the holy mount. ¹⁹ And we have the word of prophecy made yet more sure; to which you do well that you take heed, as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day-star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 14 Dec. 14

False Teachers

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies, denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their destructive ways, by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed. ³ And

in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you. Their sentence now from of old does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber.

Old Testament Examples of Judgment

⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved until judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, having made them an example to those that should live ungodly lives; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds): ⁹ therefore the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out

1:21 The Bible was written by inspiration of God – the writers were moved by God’s Spirit so that the words they wrote weren’t merely their private views, but the word of God. This is why the Bible is so unique and needs to be read and meditated upon daily. The word of God is to be the light for us in the darkness of this world, until the “day” of Christ’s return dawns (:19).

2:1 *Among the people* – The people of Israel. The following examples in this chapter are therefore taken from the history of Israel in the Old Testament. The ‘angels’ or messengers that sinned and were thrown down into the earth refer to the men led by the false prophet Korah who were swallowed up into the earth (Num. 16:32).

2:7 We get the impression from the Old Testament that Lot was spiritually weak; but we must be careful how we judge Bible characters because here we read that Lot was in fact righteous and although he was well involved in the life of Sodom, he was deeply grieved for their wickedness. He is a type of the faithful living in the world of the very last days (Lk. 17:28-32).

of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment to the day of judgment.

Characteristics of False Teachers

¹⁰ Chief among these are those that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. ¹¹ Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not dare bring before the Lord an injurious accusation against them. ¹² But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, speak reproachfully in matters of which they are ignorant; they shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of wrong-doing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime, spots and blemishes, reveling in their deceivings while they feast with you. ¹⁴ Having eyes full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness, children of cursing. ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wrongdoing. ¹⁶ But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with a man's voice

and hindered the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷ These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error; ¹⁹ promising them liberty, while they are in fact slaves to corruption. For of whom a person is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. ²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹ For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit and a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 15 Dec. 15

Prophecy of the Last Days

This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write to you; and

2:14 *A heart exercised* – The Bible uses “the heart” to refer to the mind. Our mind thinks in regular patterns; we are to exercise it, but not with unspiritual thoughts.

2:21 This proves there is no such thing as universal salvation, nor ‘once saved always saved’. We who have believed have a very real possibility of failure, and we should always be aware of this.

3:1 Remembering is a major theme of Peter’s letters. It seems that his initial audience had heard the Gospel but were forgetting it; this problem is seen in the way Paul writes too. We need to regularly remind ourselves of the basic Gospel.

in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance: ² that you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles. ³ Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, ⁴ and saying: Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

Judgment to Come

⁵ For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; ⁶ by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. ⁷ But the heavens that now are and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. ⁸ But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand

years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief. Then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ¹¹ Seeing that these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be- in all holy living and reverence toward God. ¹² Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. ¹³ But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. ¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight. ¹⁵ And consider, that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according

3:6, 7 The physical planet wasn't destroyed by the flood, but the wicked human system upon earth was. 'Heaven and earth' is a phrase used in the Bible to refer to a system of things – the rulers are likened to the heavens, e.g. the sun, moon and stars refer to the fathers of Israel; and the earth refers to the ordinary people. The literal heaven and earth won't be destroyed (Ecc. 1:4), but the system of human evil which is currently here will be. The new heavens and earth will therefore be "righteous" (v. 13).

3:15 This along with v. 9 could imply that God is delaying the return of Christ because He is so passionate for human repentance, so that as many as possible may live eternally in His Kingdom. We should therefore not only repent ourselves, so that our spiritual development hastens the return of Christ (:11,12); but also seek to spread the Gospel to others and thereby hasten the second coming (Mt. 24:14).

to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you; ¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things. In his letters there are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the other scriptures. ¹⁷ Therefore beloved,

you, knowing these things beforehand, beware; lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, you lose your own stability. ¹⁸ But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

1 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 16 Dec. 16

Prologue

That which existed from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we saw and our hands handled, concerning the word of life. ² The life was manifested and we have seen and testify and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which existed with the Father and was manifested to us. ³ What we have seen and heard, we declare to you also, so that you may also have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write, that your joy may be made full.

Life in the Light

⁵ And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce to you: That God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in the darkness, we lie and not do the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He

is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 16 Dec. 16

My little children, these things I write I to you, so you may not sin. And if anyone sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. ³ And hereby we truly know that we truly know him: If we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that says: I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But who keeps his word, in him truly has the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him.

Walking in the Light

⁶ He that says he abides in him, ought also walk even as he walked. ⁷ Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard. ⁸ But now, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you. Be-

1:3 True Christian fellowship is based around a common belief in the same basic Gospel message which both Jesus and John preached, and living according to it (v. 7). Christian fellowship as John speaks of it isn't the same as social friendship, although it may include this.

1:10 The more God's word abides in us, the more we are convicted of both our sinfulness and yet also the grace and certain salvation of God.

cause the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines. ⁹ He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, he remains in the darkness. ¹⁰ He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he that hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Something for Everyone of Every Age

¹² I write to you little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake. ¹³ I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you little children, because you know the Father. ¹⁴ I have written to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I have written to you young men, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust

of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passes away and the lust of it, but he that does the will of God abides for ever.

Antichrists

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you heard that antichrist comes, even now have there arisen many antichrists. Whereby we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be revealed, that all these are not of us. ²⁰ And you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all these things. ²¹ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it! And because no lie is of the truth. ²² Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist: he that denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father. He that confesses the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also shall abide in the

2:10 Bitterness against our fellow believers creates a stumblingblock in our spiritual path which can cost us our place in God's Kingdom. We must urgently let go of all bitterness (Eph. 4:31).

2:12 Forgiveness is available through baptism into the Name of Jesus because His Name is His character, and this is counted to us if we are in Him. Our sins are not therefore visible, as it were, to God's judgment.

2:19 We should never be the ones who "go out from" our fellow believers. They may go out from us or exclude us, but this is their sin; we shouldn't be the ones who create the divisions.

Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise which he promised us—everlasting life. ²⁶ These things have I written to you concerning those that would lead you astray. ²⁷ And as for you, the anointing which you received of him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you all things and is true and is no lie and even as it taught you, so you are to abide in him. ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in him. That, when he shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone also that does righteousness is begotten of him.

CHAPTER 3 Jun. 17 Dec. 17

Children of God

Look what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God. And we are! For this cause the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now are we children of God; and it is not yet revealed what we shall be. We know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. ³ And

everyone that has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure. ⁴ Everyone that keeps on committing sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that he was manifested to take away sins; because in him is no sin. ⁶ Whoever abides in him does not keep on in sin. Whoever keeps on in sin has not seen him, nor truly knows him.

Overcoming Sin

⁷ My little children, let no one lead you astray. He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸ He that keeps on in sin is of the Devil. For the Devil sins from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. ⁹ Whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin, because his seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on in sin, because he is begotten of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he that does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹² Not as Cain, who was of the evil one, who killed

2:28 “Boldness” is the same Greek word we find elsewhere about how we can be “bold” or confident, open, as we stand in the presence of God in prayer (Eph. 3:19; Heb. 4:16). Thus our attitude to the Father and Son in prayer today is the attitude we shall have to them when we stand before them at judgment day. This gives cause for much self-examination.

3:2 It is not just the eternity of the Kingdom life which we should look forward to; the greatest thing is that we shall be like Jesus, perfect, 24/7.

3:3 If we really believe we will be in the Kingdom, this hope will lead us to practical changes and purity in this life – quite naturally.

his brother. And why did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³ Marvel not brothers if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He that does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brothers is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But whosoever has the world's goods and sees his brothers in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word, nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth. ¹⁹ Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him. ²⁰ Because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have boldness toward God. ²² And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe in the name

of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as He gave us commandment. ²⁴ And he that keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He gave us.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 17 Dec. 17

Warning Against False Teachers

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God. Because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² Hereby do you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is of God. ³ And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh is not of God, and they are proved to be of the antichrist; of whom you have heard that it comes, and now is already in the world. ⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world. Therefore speak they of the world and the world hears them. ⁶ We are of God. He that knows God hears us. He who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

3:16 Jesus' life wasn't taken from Him, but He "laid it down" (Jn. 10:17). He gave His last breath as an act of the will, a consciously controlled outgiving of life rather than dying because men took His life from Him by murder. This intense level of self-giving is applied to us. When Jesus died for us in this way, we were far away in understanding, appreciation and spirituality. And so it will be with our fellow believers for whom we are to likewise die.

3:21 Although our conscience isn't always reliable (1 Cor. 4:4), we should aim like Paul to live every moment in good conscience before Him (Acts 23:1).

4:2, 3 See on 2 Jn. 7-9. Our understanding of the nature of Jesus is therefore very important.

Love One Another

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God, and everyone that loves is begotten of God and knows God. ⁸ He that does not love, does not know God. For God is love. ⁹ Herein was the love of God manifested to us, in that God has sent His only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved. if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³ Hereby we know that we abide in him and He in us, because He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And we know and have believed the love which God has toward us. God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. ¹⁷ In this way is love made perfect with us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, even so

are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; because fear has punishment, and he that fears is not made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If a man says, I love God, and hates his fellow believers, he is a liar. For he that does not love his fellow believers whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment have we from him, that he who loves God, loves his fellow believers also.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 18 Dec. 18

God's Children

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God; and whoever loves Him that begat, loves him also that is begotten of Him. ² Hereby we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and do His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. ⁴ For whatever is begotten of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. ⁵ And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of

4:10 God took the initiative in loving, and we are asked to love others in this same way. We should be thinking how we can initiate loving acts towards others, rather than simply responding to others' love to us by loving them back.

4:20 It's therefore impossible – although very tempting – to claim to be a Christian if we continually find excuses why we can't have contact with other believers. Love is to be something active, concrete and meaningful in practice; we therefore can't be 'out of church believers', we need active engagement with our brethren in order to reflect God's love to them as we are commanded here. Private Bible reading in our room, understanding doctrine correctly, praying to God alone, may sound all very good; but we can't actually love God unless we love His children, for He is manifested in them.

God. ⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. ⁷ And it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁸ For there are three who testify, the spirit and the water and the blood; and the three agree in one. ⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. For the witness of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰ He that believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. He that does not believe God has made Him a liar; because he has not believed in the witness that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the witness is this: that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He that has the Son has life. He that does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Assurance and Encouragement

¹³ I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have

eternal life. ¹⁴ And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we obtain the requests we have asked of him. ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life for them that sin not to death. There is a sin unto death. Not concerning this do I say that he should make requests. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not unto death. ¹⁸ We know that whoever is begotten of God does not keep on in sin; but he that was begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one touches him not. ¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God came, and has given us an understanding so that we truly know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

5:13 The Bible teaches that we are mortal and don't consciously survive death. We "have eternal life" in the sense that from God's perspective He remembers us after our death and knows we will be immortalized at Christ's return. Further, insofar as we live the kind of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom, we have and can live the eternal life right now.

5:14 Answered prayer is therefore a great encouragement to us that we are of God.

5:16 God is prepared to forgive some sins for the sake of others' prayers to Him about them. If third party prayers are this powerful, we should like Paul be praying for our fellow believers all the time.

5:21 Anything that detracts our focus from the simple fact that we shall live eternally in God's Kingdom is an idol, and we should shun it.

2 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 19 Dec. 19

The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth. ² For the truth's sake which abides in us, and shall be with us for ever. ³ Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴ I rejoice greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵ And now lady, I urge you not as though I write a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.

Antichrist Defined

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world, especially those that do not confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose the things which we have done but that we receive a full reward. ⁹ Whoever goes ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. He that continues in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not welcome him into your house and give him no greeting. ¹¹ For he that gives him greeting partakes in his evil works. ¹² Having many things to write to you, I would not write them with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. ¹³ The children of your elect sister salute you.

:6 Love isn't the passing emotion which the world calls love. Love for God and each other involves keeping His commandments; it's not enough to just be vaguely attracted to the ethos of Christianity in a casual manner.

:7 It could be argued that those who believe in the Trinity have denied that Jesus was in the flesh. Whilst we can leave all judgment to God, the question of the nature of Jesus is therefore crucial – because according to our understanding of Him, so will we live our lives.

:10 The early preachers travelled from home to home, and were supported by Christian families who welcomed them into their homes (3 Jn. 6). John is saying that missionaries who don't teach the right thing about Jesus shouldn't be given this support.

3 JOHN

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 19 Dec. 19

The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. ² Beloved, I pray that in all things you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers. ³ For I rejoiced greatly, when brothers came and testified to the truth which is in you, even as you walk in truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. ⁵ Beloved, you do a faithful work in whatever you do toward those that are brothers and especially to strangers, ⁶ who testify of your love before the church. You will do well to set them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God; ⁷ because for the sake of the Name they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to welcome such, that we may be fellow-workers for the truth. ⁹ I wrote somewhat to the church, but

Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not welcome us. ¹⁰ Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, prating against us with wicked words, and not content therewith, neither does he welcome the brothers; and those that would, he forbids and throws them out of the church. ¹¹ Beloved, do not imitate such evil, but imitate that which is good. He that does good is of God. He that does evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius has the witness of all and of the truth itself. Yes, we also testify, and you know that our witness is true. ¹³ I had many things to write to you, but I am unwilling to write them to you with ink and pen. ¹⁴ But I hope shortly to see you, and we shall speak face to face. ¹⁵ Peace be to you. The friends salute you. Salute the friends by name.

:3,4 If our idea of joy is purely self-centred, we won't find it. The writings of John and Paul show they felt joy because of the spiritual health of their brethren.

:7 The early preachers were motivated in their work by God's Name – they wished to share with others the personality and character of the Father and His Son. As this was their focus, they weren't so interested in taking money from their audience.

:10 This is exactly the kind of 3rd party 'guilt by association' which has destroyed so many churches today – believers are excluded because of their inclusive attitude to other believers, and John condemns this very clearly.

JUDE

CHAPTER 1 Jun. 20 Dec. 20

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those that are called; beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. ² Mercy to you and peace and love be multiplied. ³ Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, urging you to contend earnestly for the faith which was delivered once and for all to his saints. ⁴ For there are certain people who have crept in secretly, who long ago were designated for condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into a license for immorality, and who deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Old Testament Warnings

⁵ Now I desire to have you remember (as you know all things already) that the Lord having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that did not believe. ⁶ And the angels which did not keep to their own domain, who left their proper abode, He has kept in everlasting bonds, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day. ⁷ Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, these gave themselves

over to fornication and went after strange flesh. Such are given as an example. All of them suffered the punishment of eternal fire. ⁸ Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil in dispute about the body of Moses, does not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said: The Lord rebuke you. ¹⁰ But these revile whatever things they do not see with their eyes or cannot examine naturally. They are like the beasts without reason. In these things are they destroyed. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

Characteristics of the Rejected

¹² These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves. Clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn leaves without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³ wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of

:6 The Greek word translated “angels” is also translated ‘messengers’ or ‘followers’ (e.g. Mt. 11:10). It doesn’t always refer to cosmic beings. Jude is building an argument based upon the example of Israel in the Old Testament, and so he is referring to historical incidents found there rather than to any myths of Angels sinning in Eden. The allusion here is to the earth opening to swallow Korah and his rebels (Num. 16:32).

:12 *Love-feasts* – A reference to the breaking of bread service, which is intended to celebrate the love of Christ in dying for us.

darkness has been reserved forever. ¹⁴ And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying: Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones, ¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. ¹⁶ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaks great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of personal advantage. ¹⁷ But you, beloved, remember the words which have been spoken previously by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸ how they said to you: In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own

ungodly lusts. ¹⁹ These are they who make divisions, sensual, having not the Spirit. ²⁰ But you, beloved, build up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. ²² On those who are in doubt have mercy. ²³ And others save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some, have mercy with fear, hating even the underclothing stained by the flesh. ²⁴ Now to him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, before all time, and now and for always in the future. Amen.

:15 People are condemned because of their words – how we think and speak is of huge importance to Jesus (Mt. 12:37).

:23 *The fire* – Fire is used here symbolically, as often in the Bible, for condemnation. People aren't literally on fire as we see them fall away from the faith; they are however effectively falling into condemnation and losing their hope of eternal life. We should urgently do all we can to pull them out of this rather than saying nothing or pretending not to notice.

:24 We will be seen by Jesus at the last day as “without blemish” in His eyes, because His righteousness has been imputed to us.

REVELATION

CHAPTER 1 Jun.21 Dec. 21

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass; which he sent and put into sign by his Angel to his servant John; ² who testified of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. ³ Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein; for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia. Grace to you and peace, from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne. ⁵ And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him that loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and who made us kings and priests to his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn

over him. So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. ⁹ I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and the kingdom and patience of Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying: ¹¹ What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches. To Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

A Vision of the Glorified Jesus

¹² And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks. ¹³ And in the midst of the candlesticks- one like a Son of Man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire. ¹⁵ And his feet were like bronze refined in

1:1 Revelation speaks of things future to the time of John in the first century. Therefore the later references to events concerning Satan, the adversary, aren't descriptive of anything which happened in earlier history, e.g. in the garden of Eden.

1:6 We will be King-priests in the future Kingdom of God on earth (5:10), but by status we have been given this position now in that we are even now redeemed in Christ.

1:7 The return of Christ will be literal and visible to all (Acts 1:9-11). Those who crucified Jesus will see Him again – because they will be resurrected to judgment at His coming.

1:12 The candlesticks represent the churches; yet the voice and person of Jesus came from them. This shows how closely Jesus is associated with His people.

a furnace, and his voice was like the voice of many waters. ¹⁶ And he had in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, and his countenance was as the sun shines in its strength. ¹⁷ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying: Fear not. I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ the living one; and I was dead, but behold, I am alive for always, and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. ¹⁹ Therefore write the things which you see, and the things which are, and the things which shall hereafter come to pass. ²⁰ This is the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

CHAPTER 2 Jun. 21 Dec. 21

The Letter to Ephesus

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: ² I know your works and your toil and patience, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and did test them that call themselves apostles, and yet are

not, and found them false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you left your first love. ⁵ Therefore remember from where you have fallen and repent, and do the first works. Or else, unless you repent, I will come to you and move your candlestick out of its place. ⁶ But this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, I will permit him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The Letter to Smyrna

⁸ And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write these things: The first and the last, who was dead and lived again, says: ⁹ I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich!) and the blasphemy of those that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear the things which you are about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison, you may be tried have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ He

1:20 Not only do we as individuals have guardian Angels, but groups of believers, churches, have a specific guardian Angel also.

2:4 *First love* – Greek ‘agape’. Their defence against false teachers and hard works (v. 2) had been done without *agape* love. If we lose love as our motivation, all defence of the faith and labour for Christ becomes meaningless and places Jesus “against” us (see 1 Cor. 13); we have “fallen” from the true faith.

2:10 The Greek word translated ‘devil’ is *diabolos* and means ‘a false accuser’. The ‘devil’ here is clearly the anti-Christian local authorities, and not any cosmic being.

that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

The Letter to Pergamum

¹² And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ I know where you live, where Satan's throne is, yet you remained loyal to my name and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. ¹⁵ So have you also some that hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. ¹⁶ Therefore repent, or else I will come to you quickly, and I will make war against those with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the

churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

The Letter to Thyatira

¹⁸ And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire and his feet are like to burnished bronze: ¹⁹ I know your works and your love, faith, ministry and patience; and that your last works are more than the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you: you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time that she should repent, and she does not want to repent of her fornication. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, into great tribulation, and those that commit adultery with her— unless they repent of their works. ²³ And I will strike her children dead. And all

2:11 When Christ returns, the responsible dead will be raised and judged, and the unworthy amongst them will die again. This will therefore be for them their “second death”.

2:13 The ‘satan’ [‘adversary’] here refers to the local Roman authorities who were against the Christians.

2:17 In Semitic thought, a name refers to a personality or character. There will be something very intimate between Jesus and us throughout eternity, which only He and us can enter into; we will enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus for eternity.

2:21 Jesus doesn't react against sin immediately, He gives time for people to repent and respond. We should be the same in dealing with people.

2:23 Jesus searches our minds, what we are thinking, and repays us for our works. Thus our thoughts are paralleled with our actions. Constantly, even as we sleep, Jesus is searching our hearts. To be spiritually minded is therefore of utmost importance in our Christian life.

the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will repay each of you as your works deserve. ²⁴ But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, who do not know the so-called deep things of Satan: I will not impose any other burden ²⁵ apart from that which you have: To hold fast until I come. ²⁶ And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works to the end, to him will I give authority over the nations. ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

CHAPTER 3 Jun.22 Dec. 22

The Letter to Sardis

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful and establish the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. ³ Therefore remember how you have received,

and did once hear and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall not know what time I will come upon you. ⁴ But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their clothes, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. ⁵ He that overcomes shall thus be dressed in white garments, and I will in no way blot his name out of the book of life; and I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels. ⁶ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Letter to Philadelphia

⁷ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens. ⁸ I know your works (behold, I have set before you an open door, which none can shut), you have a little power and did keep my word and did not deny my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and they are not, but do lie-behold, I will make these come to you and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Be-

3:4 The faithful in the church in Sardis are recognized by Jesus as such; He doesn't rebuke them for not having separated from the others who were obviously weak.

3:5 Our names are written in the book when we are baptized, but we can turn away and thus have our names blotted out. When Moses asked for his name to be blotted out of the book so that Israel could enter the Kingdom, he was therefore offering to lose his place in eternity (Ex. 32:32). Whilst God doesn't operate on the basis of substitution, this incident shows the selfless extent of spiritual love for others to which it is possible for a man to rise.

cause you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the time of trial which is to come upon the whole world, to test them that dwell upon the earth. ¹¹ I come suddenly. Hold fast to what you have, that no one takes your crown. ¹² He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall leave there no more, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God; and my own new name. ¹³ He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Letter to Laodicea

¹⁴ And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. ¹⁵ I know your works, how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot. ¹⁶ As you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich; and to clothe yourselves with white

garments, that the shame of your nakedness be not revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve so you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him and he with me. ²¹ He that overcomes, I will allow him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne. ²² He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

CHAPTER 4 Jun. 22 Dec. 22

The Heavenly Throne Room

After these things I looked, and beheld a door opened in heaven; and the first voice that I heard, as if a trumpet was speaking to me, was as one saying: Come up here, and I will show you the things which hereafter must come to pass. ² Immediately I was in the Spirit, and beheld a throne set in heaven; and one sitting upon the throne. ³ And he that sat on it was to look upon like a jasper stone, and a sardius; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. ⁴ And round about the throne were twenty four thrones; and upon the

3:12 Jesus even after His resurrection and glorification still speaks of God as “my God”. Yet He parallels “my new name” with the Name of God. Jesus was given the Name of God after His resurrection – hence He calls it a “new name”, which He had only recently been given at the time He gave the Revelation. As God’s Son He operates in the Name of God, but this doesn’t mean He is God Himself in person.

3:15 Jesus like any lover hates indifference and passivity on our part; an appearance of commitment to Him which is only external (3:1).

thrones I saw twenty four elders sitting, dressed in white garments, and on their heads were crowns of gold. ⁵ And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ And in front of the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. ⁷ And the first creature was like a lion, the second creature like a calf, the third creature had the face of a man and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four living creatures each had six wings, full of eyes round about and within; and they have no rest day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come. ⁹ And when the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty four elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne and shall worship him

that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ¹¹ Worthy are you, our Lord, to receive the glory and the honour and the power. For you did create all things, and for your sake they existed and were created.

CHAPTER 5 Jun. 23 Dec. 23

Opening the Scroll

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to undo the seals of it? ³ And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, or to look thereon. ⁴ And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll, or to look thereon. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered; he can open the scroll and the seven seals of it. ⁶ And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the

4:8 *Full of eyes* – Through the cherubim Angels, God knows all that is happening on earth and in our lives. They were full of eyes “within” – perhaps indicating their total self-knowledge. One of the greatest joys of being immortalized with God’s nature is that we shall know ourselves fully.

4:8 *Day and night* – In the Kingdom, we will praise God and serve Him every single moment. Our service of Him in this life cannot be a mere occasional hobby; if we are seeking to eternally serve Him every moment, then this will be our desire in this life; and our life decisions relating to education, career and use of our personal time will reflect this.

5:1 This scroll is the book of life; the opening of the possibility of eternity for those written in it was made possible by the death of Christ (v. 9).

5:4 John’s weeping suggests our frustration at not being able to enter eternity by our own merits. Hence his and our extreme gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ.

midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had just been slain. The lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. ⁷ And he came and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sing a new song, saying: Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open the seals of it. For you once were slain, and did purchase for God a people with your blood, people of every tribe, tongue and nation, ¹⁰ and made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they shall reign upon the earth.

Praise to the Lamb

¹¹ And I looked, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. ¹² They were saying with a great voice: Worthy is the Lamb that has been slain

to receive the power, riches, wisdom, might, honour, glory and blessing. ¹³ And I heard every created thing in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be blessing, honour, glory and might, for ever and ever. ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said: Amen. And the elders fell down and worshiped.

CHAPTER 6 Jun. 23 Dec. 23

Six Seals

And I looked when the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder: Come! ² And I looked and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow, and there was given to him a crown, and he came forth conquering and to conquer. ³ And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying: Come! ⁴ And another horse came forth, a red horse, and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, that they should slay one another. And there was given to him a great sword. ⁵ And when he opened the third seal,

5:10 Our hope is to be the future King-priests in God's Kingdom upon earth – no mention is made of eternity in Heaven after death.

5:11 This may be a vision of the Angels welcoming the resurrected Jesus into Heaven after His ascension.

6:1 If the scroll is the book of life, the seals represent what stood in the way of the book being opened. The book will be opened at Christ's return (20:12). They refer to various periods of history between the time John was given the vision and the return of Christ, and the events within them all have special relevance to God's people. They were opened on account of Christ's death. Thus He became the Lord of history; all history and world political events occur under His control and all play a part in bringing on the day when He shall return and open the book of life.

I heard the third living creature saying: Come! And I looked and beheld a black horse, and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. ⁶ And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A measure of wheat for a denarius and three measures of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine. ⁷ And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying: Come! ⁸ And I looked and beheld a pale horse, and he that sat upon him. His name was Death, and Hades followed behind him. And there was given to them authority over a quarter of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the wild beasts of the earth. ⁹ And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰ And they cried with a great voice, saying: How long, O Master, the holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood? ¹¹ And each one was given a white robe, and they were told that they should wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been, was completed. ¹² And I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There

was a great earthquake, the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon turned the colour of blood. ¹³ And the stars of the heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts her unripe figs when she is shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴ And the sky was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth, the princes, the chief captains, the rich, the strong and every slave and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ And they said to the mountains and to the rocks: Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him that sits on the throne, and from the anger of the Lamb. ¹⁷ For the great day of their anger comes, and who is able to stand?

CHAPTER 7 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

Sealing God's Servants

After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree. ² And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³ saying: Do not

6:9 Although the Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious, God remembers the dead and is in a sense outside of time as we know it; therefore "all live unto Him" (Lk. 20:38). So here the Bible speaks about the unconscious dead as if their blood, their lives, demand from God a response in judging their murderers.

7:3 The seal is on the forehead, representing the mind. God identifies who is really His by their attitude of mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity.

hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. ⁴ And I heard the number of those that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel. ⁵ Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand. ⁶ Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand. ⁷ Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand. ⁸ Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. ⁹ After these things I saw and beheld a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation, comprised of all tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and with palms

in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cry with a great voice, saying: Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! ¹¹ And all the angels were standing round about the throne and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God, ¹² saying: Amen. Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power and might to our God for ever and ever. Amen. ¹³ And one of the elders asked me: These that are dressed in white robes, who are they and from where did they come? ¹⁴ And I replied: My lord, do you know? And he explained to me: These are they that came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more. Neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor

7:4 Most numbers in Revelation are symbolic; 144 is 12 x 12, perhaps suggesting that the community of the redeemed will be based upon the twelve tribes of Israel in that the Christian hope is "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20), "salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22) in that the promises which comprise the Gospel of the Kingdom were made to Abraham and his children (Gal. 3:8).

7:9 People from every language and ethnic grouping will be redeemed in Christ when He returns. This means that the Gospel must go to every ethnic group on earth before Christ returns. The internet has hastened this possibility; for since the time of Christ the majority of those groups were ignorant of Christianity. In this context we must understand the Lord's teaching that once the Gospel goes into all the world, then He will return (Mt. 24:14). In this sense our world-wide preaching can hasten His return.

7:14 This could imply that during the great tribulation just before Christ returns, the persecution will result in the Gospel going out to every ethnic group and gaining converts (see v. 9 note); just as persecution led to the spreading of the Gospel to the Gentiles in the first century (Acts 11:19,20).

any heat. ¹⁷ For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of living water, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

CHAPTER 8 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

The Seventh Seal

And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² And I saw the seven angels that stood before God; and there were given to them seven trumpets. ³ And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. ⁵ And the angel took the censer, filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it upon the earth. There followed thunders, voices, lightnings and an earthquake.

The First Four Angels Sound

⁶ And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. ⁷ And the first sounded,

and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood; and they were cast upon the earth. The third part of the earth was burnt up, as was the third part of the trees; and all green grass was burnt up. ⁸ And the second angel blew his trumpet and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. ⁹ And there died the third part of the creatures (even they that had life) which were in the sea, and the third part of the ships were destroyed. ¹⁰ And the third angel blew his trumpet, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch; and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of the waters. ¹¹ And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and one third of the waters became bitter-tasting; and many men died because the waters were made so bitter. ¹² And the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck and a third of the moon and a third of the stars. This meant that the third part of them were darkened; and the day would not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner. ¹³ And I saw and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice: Woe, woe, woe, for those who dwell on the earth,

8:5 The visual image of incense smoke ascending to Heaven and then fire and Angelic activity ensuing shows the power of prayer – the silent words of a man praying at a bus stop really reach Heaven itself, and call forth Angels running hither and thither, causing dramatic events on earth.

8:13 Terrible things are to come upon earth in the very last days, but those who have kept the Lord's word will be kept from them (3:10). The Hebrew and Greek words translated "earth" can just as well refer to 'the land' – of Israel. Perhaps these Angelic judgments are specifically to occur in the land of Israel.

by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

CHAPTER 9 Jun. 24 Dec. 24

The Fifth Trumpet

And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star from heaven fall to the earth; and there was given to him the key to the pit of the abyss. ² And he opened the pit of the abyss and smoke went out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only such men as do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were told that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented for five months; their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. ⁶ And in those days men shall seek death and shall in no way find it, and they shall desire to die and death will flee from them. ⁷ And the shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for war, and upon their heads as if crowns of gold, and their

faces were as men's faces. ⁸ And they had hair as the hair of women and their teeth were like that of lions. ⁹ And they had breastplates, like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. ¹⁰ And they have tails like scorpions and stings, and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. ¹¹ They have over them as king the angel of the abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he has the name Apollyon. ¹² The first Woe is past. Behold, hereafter there come two other woes.

The Sixth Trumpet

¹³ And the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ one saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet: Release the four angels that are chained at the great river Euphrates. ¹⁵ And the four angels were released, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill a third of all mankind. ¹⁶ And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those that sat on them, having breastplates as of fire and of

9:4 The seal is on the forehead, representing the mind. God identifies who is really His by their attitude of mind. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christianity.

9:11 Not only does each believer have a guardian Angel, but groups of people on earth, including armies of unbelievers, have a representative Angel in the court of Heaven. We can take comfort from this that man is not alone, but the exact situations we are in on earth are represented accurately before God in Heaven through means of His Angels.

hyacinth and of sulphur, and heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire, smoke and sulphur. ¹⁸ By these three illnesses was one third of all mankind killed, by the fire and the smoke and the sulphur, which proceeded out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For the power of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails. For their tails are like those of serpents and have heads, and by means of them they wound. ²⁰ And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these illnesses, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons and the idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood-which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. ²¹ And they did not repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

CHAPTER 10 Jun.25 Dec. 25

An Angel with Seven Thunders

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, his face was as the sun and his feet as pillars of fire. ² And he had in his hand a little scroll that was opened, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left

upon the earth. ³ And he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying: Keep secret the things which the seven thunders uttered and do not write them down. ⁵ And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, ⁶ and swore by Him that lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be no more delay. ⁷ But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good news which He declared to His servants the prophets. ⁸ And the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard it again speaking with me, and saying: Go, take the book which is opened in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth. ⁹ And I went to the angel, saying to him that he should give me the little book. And he said to me: Take it and eat it up; it shall make your belly bitter

9:20 Demons therefore refer simply to idols, not to any actual cosmic beings.

9:21 These awful judgments aren't simply the wrath of an offended Deity; their intention is to lead even the wicked people of the last days to repentance. God's passion is for human repentance; when we repent we therefore so thrill Him.

10:6 *No more delay* – In one sense the coming of Christ is delayed, just as the bridegroom delays in Mt. 25:5, because God is so passionate for as many people as possible to come to repentance and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). In another sense we can hasten the coming of Christ by our spiritual development (2 Pet. 3:11,12) and spreading the Gospel worldwide (Mt. 24:14). But the apparent delay in Christ's return can lead His people to selfish behaviour (Mt. 24:48); and we must beware of this danger.

but in your mouth it shall be as sweet as honey. ¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey. But when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. ¹¹ And they said to me: You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

CHAPTER 11 Jun. 25 Dec. 25

The Two Witnesses

And there was given to me a reed like a measuring rod, and I was told: Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those that worship therein. ² But the court which is outside the temple, do not measure it. For it has been given to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty two months ³ And I will give power to My two witnesses, and they shall prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ And if anyone desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies, and if anyone shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. ⁶ These have

the power to shut the heaven so that it does not rain during the days of their prophecy, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire. ⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them and overcome them and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. ⁹ And from among the peoples, tribes, tongues and nations do men look upon their dead bodies for three and a half days, and they will not allow their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. ¹⁰ And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry, and they shall send gifts to each other, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. ¹¹ And after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon those that saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying to them: Come up here! And they went into heaven in the cloud,

10:10 God's word is indeed sweet, but it can have bitter consequences if we seriously accept His demands of carrying the cross of Christ and upholding His standards in this wicked world.

11:2 42 months is the same as 1260 days or three and a half years, all time periods which occur in the various prophecies of the last days. It could be that there will be a literal three and a half years of tribulation immediately before Christ's return; and it's possible that if this tribulation is largely spiritual, that this period has already begun.

11:6 Closing the skies through prayer is an allusion to the work of Elijah, who prayed and stopped rain coming for three and a half years (James 5:17). The same period of 42 months is in view here too (v. 2). This suggests that there will be an Elijah ministry in the last days, seeking to prepare Israel to accept their Messiah (Mk. 9:12; Malachi 4:5).

and their enemies saw them. ¹³ And in that hour there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. ¹⁴ The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe comes quickly.

The Seventh Angel

¹⁵ And the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the twenty four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshiped God, saying: ¹⁷ We give You thanks O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was; because You have taken Your great power and have reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry, and Your anger came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and the time to give reward to Your servants the prophets and to the saints, and to those that fear Your Name, the small and the great, and to destroy those that destroy the earth. ¹⁹ And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven, and there

was seen in His temple the ark of His covenant, and there followed lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail.

CHAPTER 12 Jun.26 Dec. 26

The Woman and the Dragon

And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. ² She was with child, and was crying out with labour pains and the agony of giving birth. ³ And there was seen another sign in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems. ⁴ And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and he did throw them to the earth; and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to give birth, so that when she gives birth he may devour her child. ⁵ And she gave birth to a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. ⁶ And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that there they may nourish her one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ⁷ And there was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought

11:15 The Kingdom of God will subsume the kingdoms of men; therefore, the Kingdom of God shall come literally on this earth at Christ's return.

12:7-9 Bible teaching about Satan is explained in the doctrinal summary at the end of this Bible.

Note:

- The language of "cast down" and "cast out" does not require literal downwards movement – Babylon is "thrown down" in Rev. 18:21. 'Cast out of Heaven' means a loss of power

with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels retaliated. ⁸ But he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying: Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹ And they overcame him be-

cause of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they did not love their life even to death. ¹² Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea! Because the Devil has gone down to you, having great anger, knowing that he has but a short time. ¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that had brought forth the man child. ¹⁴ And there was given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times

- After the drama of :7-9, v. 10 says that *now* is the Kingdom of our God. These verses speak of the future rather than telling us what happened in Eden (1:1). There is rejoicing that the devil has been cast to earth. Why should there be rejoicing if his coming to earth was the start of sin and disaster for man?

- The dragon had “seven heads and ten horns” (:3), therefore it was not literally the serpent. It being called “that old serpent” shows that it had the characteristics of that serpent in Eden, in the sense of being a deceiver, as the serpent was. Thus the devil is not literally the serpent, it is a political power, manifesting sin. Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon (Ez. 32:2).

- The dragon drew a third of the stars of heaven to the earth with his tail (:4). If this is read literally, the sheer size of the dragon is immense – a third of the whole universe could be contained just on his tail. There is no way planet earth would be big enough to contain such a huge creature sprawling over it. And remember that all this happened, or will happen, after the first century A.D., when this prophecy was given.

- “Heaven” can figuratively refer to a place of power. Revelation being such a symbolic book, we would expect this to be the case here. The woman in “heaven” then delivered her child, who was “caught up unto God and to his throne” (:5). God’s throne is in heaven. If the woman was already in heaven, why would her child have to be “caught up” to heaven? She must have been a symbol of something on earth, although in a figurative “heaven”. She then flees “into the wilderness” (:6). If she was in literal heaven, this means there is a wilderness in heaven. It is far more fitting for her to be in a figurative heavenly place, and then fleeing to a figurative wilderness on the earth. As all other references to “heaven” in Revelation 12 are figurative, it seems only consistent that the “war” was in a figurative heaven. There can be no rebellion or sin in literal heaven (Mt. 6:10; Ps. 5:4-5; Hab. 1:13).

The conflict in figurative heaven – i.e. a place of authority – was therefore between two power groups, each with their followers, or angels.

and half a time from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood. ¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman; the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon grew angry with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.

CHAPTER 13 Jun. 26 Dec. 26

The Sea Beast

And I stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads were names of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were as the feet of a bear, his mouth as the mouth of a lion; and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. ³ And I saw one of his heads as though it had a mortal wound; but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marvelled as they followed the beast. ⁴ And they worshiped the dragon, because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying: Who is like to the beast? And who is able to war with

him? ⁵ And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and there was given to him authority to continue for forty two months. ⁶ And he opened his mouth to blaspheme against God, to blaspheme His Name and His tabernacle, even those that dwell in the heaven. ⁷ And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. ⁸ And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, every one whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain from the foundation of the world. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

The Earth Beast

¹¹ And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. ¹² He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. He makes the earth and those who dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose wound had been healed. ¹³ And he does great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

13:10 This alludes to Christ's teaching that whoever takes the sword shall perish by the sword (Mt. 26:52). Those who follow Christ do not use violence to anyone but seek to love their enemies.

13:11 *Like a lamb* – There will be a power system in the last days which is a false imitation of Jesus, the true lamb. He 'plays God' by appearing to be able to do the work of creation which God alone can do, giving life to a dead body as He did to Adam (:14).

¹⁴ And he deceives those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which were given to him to do in the sight of the beast, saying to those that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast who was wounded by the sword but lived. ¹⁵ And he was permitted to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast should speak, and cause to have killed as many as would not worship the image of the beast. ¹⁶ And he causes all, the small and the great and the rich and the poor and the free and the bondservant, to be given a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; ¹⁷ so that no one should be able to buy or to sell, unless he has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty six.

CHAPTER 14 Jun. 27 Dec. 27

The Lamb on Mount Zion

And I looked, and beheld the Lamb standing on mount Zion,

and with him one hundred and forty four thousand, each having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and the voice which I heard was as the voice of harpers playing their harps. ³ And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song save the hundred and forty four thousand, they that had been purchased out of the earth. ⁴ These are they that were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no lie. They are without blemish. ⁶ And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good news to proclaim to those that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. ⁷ He said with a great voice: Fear God and give Him glory! For the hour

13:14 Even if a person appears to be able to do miracles, we should not follow them if they are not teaching according to God's word (Dt. 13:2).

13:16 The forehead represents the mind. The mark may not be anything literal, but rather an attitude of mind. God's people are likewise sealed on their foreheads (7:3; 9:4). The difference between the believer and the world comes down to where our inner heart is.

14:1 144,00 – see on 7:4.

14:4 The true believers are engaged to be married to Christ; to unite ourselves with the world is to be unfaithful to Him and lose our virginity.

14:5 *Was found* – The believers have of course been sinful and blemished. But they are seen by Jesus as perfect; for love imputes perfection to the beloved, and the love of Christ is the ultimate love. He will see us as if we are perfect. We can rightly rejoice in His love.

of His judgment comes, and worship Him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters. ⁸ And another, a second angel, followed, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication. ⁹ And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice: If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives the mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, ¹⁰ he also shall drink of the wine of the anger of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of His anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name. ¹² Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ¹³ And I heard the voice from heaven saying: Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from this time forward. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours. For their works follow them.

The Harvest of the Earth

¹⁴ And I looked and beheld a white cloud, and on the cloud I saw one sitting like a Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵ And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud: Send forth your sickle and reap. For the hour to reap comes. For the harvest of the earth is ripe. ¹⁶ And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth and the earth was reaped. ¹⁷ Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸ And another angel came out from the altar, he that has power over fire, and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth. For her grapes are fully ripe. ¹⁹ And the angel cast his sickle into the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great winepress of the anger of God. ²⁰ And the winepress was trodden outside of the city; and there came out blood from the winepress, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as a sixteen hundred stadia.

14:7 *Him that made* – The silent reality of creation ought to be an imperative to both us and the world to repent and turn to our maker.

14:10 Fire destroys; it doesn't burn anything for eternity. The allusion is to the destruction of Sodom with fire and sulphur; this is described as "eternal fire" in Jude 7. But Sodom isn't literally burning today; eternal fire refers to total destruction which has eternal consequences. In this manner Jerusalem is described as having been destroyed with eternal fire (Jer. 17:27). The punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

14:15 When human sin has reached a certain point, Christ will come and judge it. That day cannot surely be far off.

CHAPTER 15 Jun.28 Dec. 28***The Seven Last Plagues***

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous. Seven angels having seven illnesses which are the last woe, for in them is finished the anger of God. ² And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those that had conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. ³ And they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, singing: Great and marvellous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are Your ways, You King of the ages. ⁴ Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your Name? For You only are holy. For all the nations shall come and worship before You. For Your righteous acts have been revealed. ⁵ And after these things I saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened. ⁶ And there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven illnesses, dressed with precious linen, pure and bright and golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the anger of God, who lives for ever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His

power, and no one was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

CHAPTER 16 Jun. 28 Dec. 28***The Seven Bowls***

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels: Go and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God into the earth. ² Harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³ And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died, even the things that were in the sea. ⁴ And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying: Righteous are You, who is and who was, You Holy One, because You did thus judge. ⁶ For they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have You given them to drink. They are worthy. ⁷ And I heard another angel out of the altar saying: Yes, O Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments. ⁸ And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. ⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and

15:3 We shall sing this song, by God's grace! As Moses rejoiced that God's people had escaped from Egypt, so we shall rejoice that we have finally and irreversibly left behind the flesh and this world.

16:9, 11 Again, even the very final judgments of God upon sinners are intended to bring them to repentance rather than simply express the wrath of an offended deity. God is so passionate for human repentance; including our own, today.

they cursed the Name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give Him glory. ¹⁰ And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain because of the pain. ¹¹ They cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds. ¹² And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates, and the water of it dried up, so that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the east. ¹³ And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, that looked like frogs. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, who work signs. These go to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ (Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!) ¹⁶ And they gathered them together into the

place which is called in Hebrew Har-magedon. ¹⁷ And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying: It is done! ¹⁸ And there were lightnings and voices and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since men came upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. ¹⁹ And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His anger. ²⁰ And every island fled away and the mountains were not found. ²¹ And great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, came down out of heaven upon men, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail. For the plague was so severe.

CHAPTER 17 Jun. 29 Dec. 29

The Judgment of Babylon

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls and spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the judgment

16:15 The allusion is to the virgins who were tempted to fall asleep because it seemed that Christ, the bridegroom, delayed His return (Mt. 25:5). The garments refer to the white clothing of Christ's righteousness which we were given at baptism (19:8). We keep these garments on by continuing to believe that this is truly how we stand before God, and thereby keeping awake in our watching joyfully for Christ's return. Our eagerness for His coming can only be maintained if we are humbly confident of our acceptance by Him then.

16:19 So many cities are built on fault lines, this may have a literal fulfilment.

17:1 Babylon appears to refer to a political or religious system which the rulers of the earth [or, 'the land', the area promised to Abraham] give material support to in return for benefit and temporary pleasure. This system will persecute God's people, both natural and spiritual Israel.

of the great prostitute that sits upon many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, ⁵ and upon her forehead a name written of a mystery: Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations. ⁶ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. ⁷ But the angel said to me: Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸ The beast you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into destruction. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, they whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation

of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was and is not, and shall come. ⁹ Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ And they are seven kings. The five are fallen, the one is, the other is yet to come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while. ¹¹ And the beast that was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into destruction. ¹² And the ten horns you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings with the beast, for one hour. ¹³ These are of one mind; and they give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him, called and chosen and faithful, these also shall overcome. ¹⁵ And he said to me: The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns which you saw: they and the beast, these shall hate the prostitute and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and shall burn her completely with fire. ¹⁷ For God did put it in their hearts to do his mind and to be of one mind, and to

17:16 The victory of Jesus against this system (:14) will be through the various members of the coalition turning on themselves; internal division was how God so often destroyed His enemies in the Old Testament. If we choose to be divided, we are choosing and living out Divine condemnation for ourselves.

17:17 *Put it in their hearts* – God confirms sinful people in the desires of their mind. If we wish to be fleshly in our thinking, God will psychologically confirm us in this; and He will do the same in response to our endeavours to be spiritually minded.

give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. ¹⁸ And the woman whom you saw is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

CHAPTER 18 Jun. 29 Dec. 29

The Fall of Babylon

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lit with his glory. ² And he cried with a mighty voice, saying: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the great, and has become a habitation of demons, a refuge of every unclean spirit, and a refuge of every unclean and hateful bird. ³ For by the wine of the anger of her fornication all the nations are fallen; for the kings of the earth had committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich by the power of her greed. ⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Come out of her My people, lest you take part in her sins, and partake of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached even to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Give to her even as she gave, and repay her double according to her deeds. In the cup in

which she mixed, mix for her a double portion. ⁷ As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says: I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see. ⁸ Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death and mourning and famine; and she shall be completely burned with fire. For strong is the Lord God who judges her. ⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing far away for the fear of her torment, saying: Woe, woe, the great city! Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour does your judgment come. ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more. ¹² Merchandise of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all kinds of scented wood, and every vessel of ivory and every vessel made of most precious wood and of brass and iron and marble, ¹³ and cinnamon and spice and incense and ointment and frankin-

18:4 To leave the system of the world in the last days will be difficult and painful, just as it was for the Jews to respond to the initial historical call to leave Babylon and return to rebuild the ruins of Judah. Many of them were doing well in Babylon and preferred to remain there; the same temptation will occur for the believers in latter day, symbolic Babylon.

18:6 To be given a cup of wine to drink from God is a double symbol – both of condemnation and of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16). This is why when we take the cup of wine at the breaking of bread meeting, we must examine ourselves – for we drink either blessing or condemnation to ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28,29). This makes the breaking of bread an intense experience, as we face up to the only two possible destinies which we face.

cense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep and horses and chariots and slaves and the souls of men. ¹⁴ And the fruits which your soul lusted after are gone from you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are lost to you, never to be found again! ¹⁵ The merchants of these things who were made rich by her shall stand far away, for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, ¹⁶ saying: Woe, woe, the great city! She that was dressed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! ¹⁷ For in an hour so many great riches are laid waste. And every shipmaster and everyone that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living at sea, stood far away, ¹⁸ and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying: What city is like the great city? ¹⁹ And they cast dust on their heads and cried, weeping and mourning, saying: Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her expense! For in one hour she is made desolate. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you saints, and you apostles, and you prophets. For God has judged your judgment on her. ²¹ And a strong angel took up a stone, as it were a great millstone,

and cast it into the sea, saying: Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall never be found again. ²² And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute players and trumpeters shall never be heard again in you, and no craftsman of whatever craft shall ever be found again in you, and the voice of a mill shall never be heard again in you. ²³ The light of a lamp shall never shine again in you, and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall never be heard again in you. For your merchants were the princes of the earth; and with your sorcery were all the nations deceived. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

CHAPTER 19 Jun. 30 Dec. 30

Praise to God!

After these things I heard what seemed to be a great voice of a great crowd in heaven, saying: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power, belong to our God. ² For true and righteous are His judgments. For He has judged the great prostitute, she that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged the blood of His servants shed by her. ³ And a second

18:21 This figure of a millstone being cast into the sea is used by Jesus to describe the fate of those who cause His little ones to stumble (Mt. 18:6). To do this means that we are just as bad as Babylon with all her apparently more gross sins. Those who do this will be “condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32), i.e. they will be resurrected, judged, and sent back into ‘Babylon’ to share her judgment.

19:3 *For ever and ever* – Babylon herself will be totally destroyed by fire, not eternally subject to conscious torture (18:8). But the smoke, the reminder of the eternal

time they said: Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up for ever and ever. ⁴ And the twenty four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God that sits on the throne, saying: Amen. Hallelujah! ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God all you His servants, you that fear Him, the small and the great. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great crowd, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying: Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to Him. For the marriage of the Lamb comes, and his wife has made herself ready. ⁸ And it was given to her that she should dress herself in fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ And he said to me: Write, Blessed are they that are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me: These are the true words of God. ¹⁰ And I fell down before his feet to worship him, and he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers that hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The Victorious Jesus

¹¹ And I saw the heaven open; and beheld a white horse, and he that sat thereon was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems, and he has a name written which no one knows but him. ¹³ And he is dressed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. ¹⁵ And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should strike down the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treads the wine-press of the fierceness of the anger of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying: To all the birds that fly in mid heaven, come, be gathered together to the great supper of God. ¹⁸ Eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of those that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond-servant and small and great. ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth

consequence of her destruction and the eternal future she missed, will be with God's people for ever throughout the ages of eternity.

19:7 We are the betrothed wife of Christ, the lamb. We should be preparing ourselves in this life for the great day of marriage. There's no uncertainty about it – He loves us and is eager to marry us!

19:19 When Christ returns there will be organized mass opposition to Him – because people simply prefer their lives and world to carry on as it is, for all their complaints

and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet, who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. ²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

CHAPTER 20 Jun. 30 Dec. 30
*The Last Judgment and the
 Thousand Years*

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a

thousand years; ³ and threw him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished. After this he must be released for a little time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand

about it and apparent desire for something better. The same mentality is at work today when people refuse the Lordship of Jesus in their lives.

19:21 The word of Jesus is so powerful. Yet we read that same word in the New Testament today, and should allow it to have its power in our lives.

20:2, 3 It seems that the first part of the Kingdom of God on earth will last for a “thousand years”, during which time the “devil” – power of sin and all opposition to Christ – will be greatly restrained. We will reign on earth as King-priests (5:10), ruling over the ordinary mortal people who are alive on earth at the time of Christ’s return. In this sense we will be given towns to rule over (Lk. 19:17). There will then be a rebellion at the end of the thousand years (‘the Millennium’) which will be put down. The mortal people who die during the Millennium will be resurrected at the end of it and judged; the wicked amongst them will die a “second death” and the faithful will receive eternal life. Sin and death will then finally be no more.

20:5 *The rest of the dead* – This is from the perspective of the end of the Millennium, looking at “the dead” as the sum total of all humans who have ever died. The dead who died “in Christ” during this age will be resurrected at His return. The mortal people alive at the time of His return who live and die during the Millennium will be resurrected at the end of it.

years. ⁷ And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be released from his prison, ⁸ and shall come to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war. The number of them is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the Devil that deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where are also the beast and the false prophet, and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and every man was judged according to

their works. ¹⁴ And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

CHAPTER 21 Jul. 1 Dec. 31

The New Jerusalem

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride, adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of the throne, saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴ And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things are passed away. ⁵ And he that sits on the throne said: Behold! I make all things new. And he said: Write! For these words are faithful and true. ⁶ And he said to me: They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning

20:14 The lake of fire is therefore symbolic of death – which the Bible defines as total unconsciousness.

21:1 Heaven and earth are often used in the Bible to describe a system of things on earth; the ‘heaven’ can refer to those in power, and the ‘earth’ to the ordinary people. There is no need for God to destroy and replace literal Heaven where He dwells.

21:3 This is the hope which Job had – to actually see God in person (Job 19:27). God therefore exists in a personal form; and ultimately we shall see Him. Heaven will be transferred to earth – hence the Kingdom of God on earth is sometimes spoken of as “the Kingdom of Heaven”. Not the Kingdom *in* Heaven, but Heaven’s Kingdom coming onto earth.

and the end. I will freely give to him who is thirsty from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ He that overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he shall be my son. ⁸ But for the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their share shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur; which is the second death. ⁹ And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying: Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. Her light was like a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal. ¹² She had a wall great and high, having twelve gates; and at the gates were twelve angels, and the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written thereon. ¹³ On the east were three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates and on the west three gates. ¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city

and the gates of it, and the wall of it. ¹⁶ And the city is laid out as a square, its length is as great as its breadth, and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand stadia. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured the wall of it, one hundred and forty four cubits according to the measurement of a man, which is also an angel's measurement. ¹⁸ And the building of the wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like pure glass. ¹⁹ The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper. The second, sapphire. The third, chalcedony. The fourth, emerald. ²⁰ The fifth, sardonyx. The sixth, sardius. The seventh, chrysolite. The eighth, beryl. The ninth, topaz. The tenth, chrysoprase. The eleventh, jacinth. The twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each of the separate gates was of one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, as if it were transparent glass. ²² And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it. For the glory of God did light it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb. ²⁴ And the nations shall walk by the light of it, and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. ²⁵ The gates of it shall in

21:17 *A man... an Angel* – In the Kingdom of God, we shall be made equal to the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36), who cannot sin any more and who share God's eternal nature.

21:24 When Christ returns, we shall be resurrected, judged, and made the rulers in His Kingdom which He will establish upon earth (5:10). We will rule over the ordinary mortal people who are alive on earth at the time of His return. The rulers of this world

no way be shut by day (for there shall be no night there).²⁶ And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it.²⁷ There shall in no way enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

CHAPTER 22 Jul. 1 Dec. 31

Eden Restored

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,² in the midst of the street thereof. And on both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.³ And there shall be no curse any more, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein, and his servants shall serve him.⁴ They shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.⁵ There shall be night no more, so they do not need the light of a lamp, nor the light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Final Charges

⁶ And he said to me: These words are faithful and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show His servants what must soon take place.⁷ And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.⁸ And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things.⁹ And he said to me: You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you, and with your brothers the prophets, and with those that keep the words of this book. Worship God!¹⁰ And he said to me: Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book. For the time is at hand.¹¹ He that is unrighteous, let him continue to do unrighteousness, and he that is filthy, let him remain filthy, and he that is righteous, let him continue to do righteousness, and he that is holy, let him remain holy.¹² Behold, I come suddenly; and my reward is with me, to repay everyone for what he has done.¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the

will bow before us and give all their glory to us – we who in this life are as nothing. We shall be the light of the world in that we shall teach the nations the light of Christ, who is the light of the world. But we must be and want to be the light of the world now if we are to be it in the future age.

22:3 Eden will be restored. The curse that came upon the earth and all creation as a result of Adam's sin will be removed. Again we see that God's plan is to establish His Kingdom here on earth – hence the language of paradise restored.

22:12 The coming of Christ will be "sudden" and we must therefore remind ourselves throughout each day that Christ really might come any time – and be prepared for Him. Christ brings the reward to us, from Heaven to earth (1 Pet. 5:4); we don't get the reward on death by going to Heaven.

beginning and the end. ¹⁴ Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to eat of the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside it are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and lovers and practisers of falsehood. ¹⁶ I Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say: Come! And he that hears, let him say: Come! And he that is thirsty, let him come.

Let him that desires take the water of life freely. ¹⁸ I testify to every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, that if anyone shall add to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book. ¹⁹ And if anyone shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written of in this book. ²⁰ He who testifies these things says: Yes. I come quickly. Amen. Come Lord Jesus. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

22:15 *Lovers and practisers* – People can love sin without personally practicing it by loving to watch and read of these things, participating in them from a distance.

22:17 If we grasp the wonder of the eternal future made possible, our natural reaction will be to invite the person next to us to come and share in it too. Good news about something doesn't remain silently within anyone.

BIBLE BASICS: REDUCED VERSION

A free hard copy of Duncan Heaster's book *Bible Basics* is available from biblebasicsonline.com or bible-basics.info ; or email info@carelinks.net .

The following is a highly reduced version.

All quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise stated.

Part 1: THE BIBLE

The Bible we hold in our hands today has an amazing history and is nothing short of a miracle. It claims to be the Word of God and presents us with a challenge to search out the Truth of its message and to confirm for ourselves that this is indeed the only revelation available from our Creator.

God's Spirit

The Bible is an expression of God's spirit. His spirit was seen at work in the creation: "By His Spirit He adorned the heavens" (Job 26:13). The spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Genesis 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of the Lord" the world was made (Psalm 33:6); Genesis records how "God said" and things were created. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His Word. Likewise our words express our inner thoughts and desires – the real 'us' – very accurately. David spoke of how God's Word and His heart are parallel: "For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things." (2 Samuel 7:21). So God's mind / spirit is expressed in His Word. God achieved the miracle of expressing His spirit in written words by the process of **inspiration**. This term is based around the word "spirit":

In-spirit-ation.

"Spirit" means "breath" or breathing. "Inspiration" means "in-breathing". This means that the words which men wrote while under "inspiration" from God were the words of God's spirit.

Paul encouraged Timothy not to let his familiarity with the Bible lead him to forget the wonder of the fact that it is the words of God's spirit, and therefore provides all that we need in order for a true knowledge of God: "*From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

The Bible Fully Inspired

This unwillingness to accept the huge spiritual power which is in God's Word has led many Christians to question whether all the Scriptures are fully inspired by God. They have suggested that much of what we read in the Bible was just the personal opinions of the writers. But Peter effectively disposes of such erroneous reasoning: *"We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it ... above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:19-21 NIV).

We must "above all" believe that the Bible is inspired. The doctrine of inspiration is so often emphasised in the Bible text:

- *"For God commanded, saying ..."* (Matthew 15:4)
- *"For David himself said by the Holy Spirit ..."* (Mark 12:36;)
- *"... which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David ..."*
(Acts 1:16);
- *"The Holy spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet ..."*
(Acts 1:16);
- *As the Holy Spirit says ..."* (Hebrews 3:7; see also 9:8; 10:15).

If these men were only partly inspired, we do not have access to the true Word or spirit of God. If what they wrote really was the Word of God, then it follows that they had to be completely taken over by God's spirit, during the period of inspiration – otherwise the product would not have been God's Word in purity.

Inspired Words Can Motivate

An acceptance that God's Word is completely His, provides us with more motivation to read and obey it: *"Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it"* (Psalm 119:140). A comparison of 2 Timothy 3:16 with 4:2,3 shows how an appreciation of an inspired Bible can motivate action from us:

Because the inspired word is profitable ...

for doctrine *therefore*

preach the word; be ready in season and out of season (i.e.; whether you naturally feel in the preaching mood or not).

for reproof *therefore*

convince (reprove)

for correction *therefore*

rebuke

for instruction in righteousness *therefore*

exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

What it can Mean to Us

If we believe that the Bible is inspired, we will feel the passion and power of it the more, and thereby its impact upon us will be the greater. Take for example the quote from the Old Testament: *“You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven (therefore) you shall not make anything to be with Me – gods of silver ...”* (Exodus 20:22,23).

Because of the wonder of having heard God’s voice, therefore idolatry of any form will be meaningless for us.

The Apostle Paul felt the passion of God’s word. It wasn’t just black print on white paper to him. Thus he speaks of how *“Isaiah is very bold and says ... Isaiah also cried out concerning Israel ...”* (Romans 9:27; 10:20). Paul had meditated deeply upon Isaiah’s words, even to the point of considering the tone of voice in which he first spoke them.

It was because the rulers of Israel *“did not know ... the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath”* (Acts 13:27) that they crucified the Lord. Paul speaks of the prophets’ *“voices”* rather than merely their words. The men who crucified Jesus didn’t feel the wonder of inspiration in their attitude to the Bible – even though they would have devoutly upheld the position that the Bible texts were inspired. Here we have a lesson for ourselves. Although we might agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God, it is quite possible that we might fail to feel this as we should when we read it.

Part 2: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The focus of the true Christian hope is the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The Lord’s prayer shows this: *“Your kingdom come (that) your will be done on earth, as it is (now) in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). At Christ’s return, *“the kingdoms of this world (will) become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”* (Revelation 11:15). Then God’s will and desires will be completely and openly performed in this earth.

The Kingdom on Earth

The *“kingdom of God”* is a phrase interchangeable with *“the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 13:11 cp. Mark 4:11). The Bible never speaks of *‘the kingdom in heaven’*; it is the kingdom *of* heaven which will be established by Christ on earth at His return. As God’s will is completely obeyed by the angels in heaven (Psalms 103:19-21) so it will be in the future kingdom of God. Entering the kingdom of God at Christ’s return is the end result of all Christian endeavour in this life (Matthew 25:34; Acts 14:22); as such, it is important to have a correct understanding of it. The doctrine of the Kingdom of God forms a vital part of the Gospel message (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23,31). *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:22),

it is the light at the end of the tunnel of this life, and therefore the motivation to make the sacrifices which the true Christian life involves.

Old Testament Prophecy of the Kingdom of God

Daniel 2 is one of many prophecies in the Old Testament which speak of the Kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, wanted to know the world's future. He was given a vision of a great statue, composed of different metals. Daniel interpreted the head of gold as representing the king of Babylon (Daniel 2:38). After him there was to come a succession of major empires in the area around Israel, until there would be a situation in which "as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly fragile" (Daniel 2:42). This speaks of the present balance of power in the world split between many nations, some strong and some weak. Daniel then saw a little stone hit the image on the feet, destroying it. The stone grew into a great mountain which filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34,35). This stone represents Jesus (Matthew 21:42, Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8). The "mountain" which will fill the earth represents the everlasting kingdom of God, which will be established at His return to the earth. Thus the kingdom will be on earth, not in heaven: "*And in the days of these kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ... it shall stand forever*" (Daniel 2:44).

Christ the King

Christ will be the king and His personal return to earth will mark the start of the Kingdom of God. He will reign as supreme ruler over all the earth.

- "*He will reign ... forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end*"
(Luke 1:32,33).
- "*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*" (Revelation 11:15).
- "*He (Christ) shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*" (Psalm 72:8).

Co-rulers

Christ will share His rulership over the earth with His followers: "[Christ has] made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). "A king (Jesus) will reign in righteousness, and princes (the believers) will rule with justice" (Isaiah 32:1; Luke 19:17; 2 Timothy 2:12).

The Capital

Christ will reign from Jerusalem, the capital of the future Kingdom. Whilst people will be praising God at various places worldwide (Malachi 1:11), Jerusalem will be the focal point of the world's worship (Jer. 3:17). Nations "shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts" around the temple in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). This annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem is also prophesied in Isaiah 2:2,3: *"In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains ... and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways ... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"*.

There will be worldwide enthusiasm to learn the ways of God. People will be so motivated by this desire that they will travel from all ends of the earth to Jerusalem in order to gain more knowledge of God.

One Universal Legal System

Instead of the confusion and unfairness created by man's legal systems there will be one universal legal code – "the law, and the word of the Lord", which will be pronounced by Christ from Jerusalem. "All nations shall flow unto" these teaching sessions. The true knowledge of God will lessen the friction between nations. Respect will be paid to those who reflect God's characteristics of love, mercy, justice etc. in contrast with the present exaltation of the proud and self-assertive: "In His days the righteous shall flourish" (Psalm 72:7).

Agricultural and Environmental Change

The absolute authority of Christ and total justice of His arbitration in disputes will result in the nations willingly changing their military hardware into agricultural machinery: "Nations ... shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4). The Bible describes the dramatic solution to the current environmental crises the earth currently faces. We will see a fertile, fruitful earth in God's kingdom: "There shall be an abundance of grain in the earth on the top of the (once barren) mountains; its fruit shall wave like (the crops of) Lebanon" (Psalm 72:16). "The wilderness ... shall be glad ... the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall ... rejoice even with joy and singing ... for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool" (Isaiah 35:1-7). Even the natural aggression between the animals will be removed: "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together", and children will be able to play with snakes (Isaiah 65:25; 11:6-8). Life

spans will be increased (Isaiah 65:20). Women will experience less sorrow in childbirth (Isaiah 65:23). “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah 35:5,6). This will be due to the miraculous Spirit gifts again being possessed (cp. Hebrews 6:5).

The Ultimate Purpose of the Kingdom

The ultimate purpose of the Kingdom of God is to give glory to God. “Truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Numbers 14:21; Habakkuk 2:14). Glory to God means that the inhabitants of the earth will appreciate, praise and copy His righteous attributes. “The meek shall inherit the earth (in the Kingdom), and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalms 37:11). Possessing eternal life will almost be incidental to the real reason for our being in the Kingdom – which is to glorify God. Just a few years of living in the joy of absolute perfection and good conscience with God would be worth all the trauma of this life. That this glorious state will last forever takes us beyond the limits of human comprehension!

An Outline of Events at Christ’s Return

1. The responsible dead (those who know God’s ways) will be raised and taken, together with the responsible living, to the judgment seat.
2. Those who knew of God’s ways but refused to obey will be punished with death, and the righteous given eternal life. Judgment will also be given to the nations who resist Christ.
3. The righteous will then rule over those people who are then alive, but who are not responsible to God; they will teach them the Gospel as “kings and priests” (Revelation 5:10).
4. This will last for 1,000 years. During this time all the mortal people will hear the Gospel and therefore be responsible to God. These people will live much longer and happier lives.
5. At the end of the Millennium there will be a rebellion against Christ and the saints, which God will put down. (Revelation 20:8,9).
6. At the end of the 1,000 years, all those who have died during that time will be resurrected and judged (Revelation 20:5,11-15).
7. The wicked amongst them will be destroyed, and the righteous will join Christ and His saints in having eternal life.

The Meaning of the Kingdom for us Today

Being in the Kingdom of God should be a believer’s supreme motivation to despise worldly advantage and materialism. Everything which we can now imagine and strive for is incomparable to the ultimate fulfilment of being in God’s Kingdom. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:30-34). A believer needs to seek “(God’s) righteousness”, i.e. try to develop a love of God’s character. We want to be in God’s Kingdom because righteousness will be glorified there, because we want to be completely morally perfect; rather than just because we, personally, want to escape death and live an easy life for eternity.

If we are “seeking first the Kingdom of God” our perspective about this life will change. We will shun materialism and the effort which it demands. If we selfishly build up our own possessions through ignoring the needs of others, we have denied God’s ways – even if we understand all the doctrines of God (1 Timothy 5:8; 6:10).

The fact that the Kingdom will be on *earth* not in heaven, means that we will not strive for present possession of it, neither will we be swayed by the pressure groups and political parties who only look at the state of the world as it now is (1 John 3:13).

By having this hope, we “draw nigh to God” (Hebrews 7:19). The Hope we have compels us to God’s service. And that same Hope inspires us to repentance, too. For if Christ is soon to return, what manner of persons ought we to be? We will want to tell others of this hope (Matthew 10:7; Mark 6:12).

If we will eternally walk in God’s ways in the Kingdom, we should strive to do so now: “We labour and strive because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men” (1 Timothy 4:10 RV). The Kingdom of God is not just a time of personal, physical benefit. Jesus Christ spoke of it as a time of peace, a time when God’s principles would triumph over men’s selfish desires. This can begin right now in a quiet way, in the hearts of those who will be in the future Kingdom. If we believe we really will be there, then we will look more earnestly for the day to come. We can never be truly enthusiastic about the Lord’s return if we are unsure He will accept us into God’s Kingdom. The Apostle Paul encourages those who take on the hope of the Kingdom: “When Christ ... appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth; fornication ...” etc. (Colossians 3:4,5). The salvation God offers is by grace. This enables us to look forward with eagerness rather than uncertainty to Christ’s coming and our lives are thereby changed: “The grace of God ... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts ... looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ” Titus 2:11-13).

Part 3: GOD'S PURPOSE REVEALED IN PROMISES

The Bible gives a consistent message of the purpose of God. His plan is to fill the earth with men and women who show His character and give Him glory. He has given great promises which show the way this will be accomplished when His kingdom will be established in the earth.

In order for God's purpose to be achieved, He provided His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Christ's life, death and resurrection, men and women have a way of being part of God's great kingdom if they respond and believe in Him.

The Promise in Eden

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Both they and the serpent were punished. Men and women would die, and would be unable to save themselves from this. But a ray of hope for man comes into this dark picture when God says to the serpent: *"I will put enmity (hatred, opposition) between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He (the woman's seed) shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel"* (Genesis 3:15).

A "seed" means a descendant or child, but it can also refer to the people associated with the particular "seed", e.g. we become the seed of Abraham if we are "in" Jesus by baptism (Galatians 3:27,29).

The Seed of the Serpent

The serpent, because of his lie, came to represent a sinful way of thinking. The seed of the serpent refers to those with the family likeness of the serpent, those who distort God's Word, lying and leading others into sin. They allow these characteristics to rule their life. In the time of Christ the corrupt religious rulers were referred to as a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7).

The Seed of the Woman

The seed of the woman refers to one who would bruise or crush the serpent's head, i.e. sin, dealing it with a death-blow. This was a prophecy of Jesus Christ and his work: *Jesus Christ, who has (by the cross) abolished death (and therefore the power of sin – Romans 6:23), and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"* (2 Tim. 1:10). *"God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh"* (Romans 8:3; see also 1 John 3:5; Matthew 1:21).

Christ was 'wounded in the heel' through his death for three days. Yet His resurrection proved that this was only a temporary wound, compared to the death-blow that He gave sin.

What does this mean to us?

On the cross Jesus destroyed the power of sin in Himself. He has invited us to share in His victory. If we are “baptized into Christ” we can share in the promises about Jesus, like that in Genesis 3:15. No longer are they just interesting parts of the Bible, they are prophecies and promises which are made directly to us! Although sin and death are still experienced by true believers, by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27-29), they can have forgiveness of their sins now and eventually be saved from death. God has promised a time when the righteous will be raised from the dead and given eternal life: *“The dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:52-54).*

Jesus was the true ‘seed of the woman’, but we can be part of that seed of the woman too by being baptized into Christ. Our lives will then reflect the words of Genesis 3:15 – there will be a constant sense of conflict (“enmity”) within us, between right and wrong. The great apostle Paul described a conflict between sinful thoughts and the love of God’s ways that raged within him (Romans 7:14-25). But he concludes this by saying: *“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24-25).*

So right from the beginning God promised Christ as a Saviour. This incredible promise given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden has been fulfilled in Christ, and we too can benefit from it.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

The Gospel preached to Abraham

The Gospel taught by Jesus and the apostles was also given in a series of promises to Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel. God, through the promises, “Preached the gospel to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8). If we can understand what was taught to Abraham, we will then have a very basic picture of the Christian Gospel. There are other indications that the Gospel is not something which began at the time of Jesus: *“We declare to you glad tidings (the Gospel) – that promise which was made to the (Jewish) fathers, God has fulfilled” (Acts 13:32,33; see also Romans 1:1,2; Hebrews 4:2).*

Two Themes

The promises to Abraham have two basic themes:

1. Things about Abraham’s seed (special descendant)
2. Things about the land which was promised to Abraham.

The New Testament comments on these promises. By letting the Bible explain itself, we can combine the teachings of both Testaments to give us a complete picture of the promises made to Abraham.

Abraham – a Man of Faith

Abraham originally lived in Ur, a prosperous city in what is now Iraq. An extraordinary call of God came to him – to leave that sophisticated life and embark on a journey to a promised land. This required faith because exactly where he was to journey was not made completely clear. It turned out to be a 1,500 mile journey. The land was Canaan – modern Israel.

During his life, God appeared to Abraham and repeated and expanded His promises to him. Those promises are the basis of Christ's Gospel, so that same call comes to true Christians as it did to Abraham, to leave the transient things of this life, and go forward in a life of faith, taking God's promises at face value and living by His Word. *“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out (from Ur) to the place (Canaan) which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8).*

By showing a similar faith and acting upon it, we can have the same honour as Abraham – to be called the friends of God (Isaiah 41:8), to find the knowledge of God (Genesis 18:17) and to have the sure hope of eternal life in the Kingdom. To truly believe in the Christian message we, too, must firmly believe what God promised to Abraham. With eager eyes we should therefore read and re-read the dialogues between God and Abraham.

The Land

1. “Get out of your country. To a land that I will shew you” (Genesis 12:1).
2. Abraham “went on his journey....as far as Bethel (in Central Israel). And the Lord said to Abram. Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are – northward, southward, eastward and westward: for all the land which you see I give to you, and your descendants forever...walk in the land....for I give it to you” (Genesis 13:3,14-17).
3. “The Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18).

4. “I will give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8).
5. “The promise that he (Abraham) would be the heir of the world” (Romans 4:13).

We see here a progressive revelation to Abraham:

1. ‘There is a land which I would like you to go to’.
2. ‘You have now arrived in the area. You and your children will live here for ever.’
3. The area of the promised land was more specifically defined.
4. Abraham was not to expect to receive the promise in this life – he was to be a “stranger” in the land, although he would later live there for ever. The implication of this is that he would die and then later be resurrected to enable him to receive this promise.
5. Paul, under inspiration, saw the promises to Abraham as meaning his inheritance of the whole earth.

Abraham did not receive the fulfilment of the promises in his lifetime: *“By faith he sojourned (implying a temporary way of life) in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents” (Hebrews 11:9)*. Abraham *“died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13)*.

Notice the four stages:

1. Knowing the promises;
2. Being “assured of them”;
3. Embracing them – by being baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27-29);
4. Confessing to the world by our way of life that this world is not our real home, but we are living in hope of that future age to come upon the earth.

God “gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But ...He promised to give it to him for a possession” (Acts 7:5). God keeps His promises. There will come a day when Abraham and all who have those

promises made to them will be rewarded. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises. God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us” (Hebrews 11:13,39,40).*

All true believers will therefore be rewarded at the same point in time, i.e. at the judgment seat at the last day (2 Timothy 4:1,8; Matthew 25:31-34). In order to be judged, Abraham and others who knew those promises must be resurrected just before the judgment.

The Seed

As with the promise of a seed in Genesis 3:15, this seed of Abraham applies primarily to Jesus and, secondarily, to those who are “in Christ” and therefore are also counted as the seed of Abraham:

1. “I will make you a great nation, I will bless you...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2,3).
2. “I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered ... all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever” (Genesis 13:15,16).
3. “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be. To your descendants I have given this land” (Genesis 15:5,18).
4. “I give to you and your descendants after you, the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (Genesis 17:8).
5. “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:17-18 KJV).

Again, Abraham’s understanding of the “seed” was increased as God gave him further promises.

1. Firstly he was just told that somehow he would have an extraordinary number of descendants, and that through his “seed” the whole earth would be blessed.
2. He was later told that he would have a seed who would come to include many people. These people would spend eternal life, along with himself, in the land at which he had arrived, i.e. Canaan.
3. He was told that his seed would become as many as the stars in the sky. This may have suggested to him that he would have many spiritual descendants (stars in heaven) as well as many natural ones (as “the dust of the earth”).

4. The previous promises were underlined with the additional assurance that the many people who would become part of the seed could have a personal relationship with God.
5. The seed would have victory against his enemies.

Notice that the seed was to bring “blessings” to be available to people from all over the earth. In the Bible the idea of blessing is often connected with forgiveness of sins. After all, this is the greatest blessing a lover of God could ever want. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven” (Psalm 32:1).

The only descendant of Abraham who has brought forgiveness of sins to the world is Jesus, and the New Testament commentary on the promises to Abraham provides solid support. *“He (God) does not say, ‘And to seeds’, as of many (i.e. in the plural), but as of one (in the singular), ‘And to your seed’, who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). “...the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus (i.e. the seed), sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3:25,26).*

Notice here how Peter quotes and interprets Genesis 22:18:

The seed = Jesus

The blessing = forgiveness of sins.

Joining the Seed

The basic elements of the Gospel were understood by Abraham. But these vital promises were to Abraham and his seed, Jesus. Can anyone else be involved? Even physical descent from Abraham would not automatically make someone part of that one specific seed (John 8:39). To share these promises we have to become intimately part of Jesus. This is by baptism into Jesus (Romans 6:3-5); frequently we read of baptism into His name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5). *“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s (by baptism into him) then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27-29).*

The promise of eternal life on earth, through receiving the “blessing” of forgiveness through Jesus, is by being baptized into Christ, the seed, so that we can share the promises made to him. Romans 8:17 calls us “joint heirs with Christ”. The blessing was to come on people from all parts of the earth, through Christ’s work. The seed was to become a world-wide group of people, like the sand of the sea shores and the stars of the sky.

In Summary

We can summarise the two strands of the promises given to Abraham:

1. The Land

Abraham and his seed, Jesus, and those in Him will inherit the land of Canaan and by extension the whole earth, and live there for ever. In this life they would not receive it, but would do so when Jesus returns.

2. The Seed

This was primarily Jesus. Through Him the sins (“enemies”) of mankind would be overcome, so that the blessings of forgiveness would be made available world-wide.

By baptism into the name of Jesus we become part of the seed and share in the promises to Abraham.

The Hope of Israel

Paul could define his hope as “the hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20). The true Christian hope is the original Jewish hope, the promises made to Abraham the father of the Jewish people (see also John 4:22).

The Early Christians preached:

1. “The things concerning the Kingdom of God and
2. The name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

These were the very two things explained to Abraham under slightly different headings:

1. Promises about the land and
2. Promises about the seed.

The good news about this Kingdom which was preached to Abraham played a big part in the early preaching of the Gospel (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31).

A Life of Faith

Just technically being Abraham’s seed through baptism does not mean that we are acceptable with God. The Jews are Abraham’s seed naturally speaking, but this does not mean that they can be saved without being baptized and conforming their lives to Christ and the example of Abraham (Romans 9:7,8; 4:13,14).

The “seed” must have the characteristics of its ancestor. If we are to be the true seed of Abraham we must therefore not only be baptized but also have a very real faith in God’s promises, just as he had. Abraham was *“the father of all those who believe, who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had”* (Romans 4:11,12; see also Galatians 3:7).

Real faith must then show itself in action, otherwise, in God’s eyes, it isn’t faith (James 2:17).

THE PROMISE TO DAVID

David, like Abraham and many other recipients of God’s promises, did not have an easy life. After many trials of faith he eventually became king of Israel. To show his appreciation of God’s love toward him during his life, he decided to build God a temple. The reply from God was that David’s son, Solomon, would build the temple and that God wanted to build David a house (2 Samuel 7:4-13). Then followed a detailed promise which repeats much of what was told Abraham, and which also filled in some other details:

- *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the blows of the sons of men: But my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established for ever”* (2 Samuel 7:12-16).

The promise in Eden (Genesis 3:15) and the promises to Abraham (Genesis 26:4; 28:14) talk of a promised “seed” coming. Having seen that the “seed” in those promises pointed forward to Jesus, it would be logical to assume that the seed promised to David is none other but the Lord Jesus Christ also. The Bible presents a consistent message and the promises of Christ are a key theme of the Old Testament. His description as the son of God (2 Samuel 7:14) confirms this, as do many other references in other parts of the Bible:-

- *“(Jesus), born of the seed of David according to the flesh* (Romans 1:3).
- *“From this man’s seed (David’s), according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a saviour – Jesus”* (Acts 13:23; see also Revelation 22:16).

- The angel told the virgin Mary concerning her son, Jesus: *“The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and of his Kingdom there will be no end”* (Luke 1:32,33). This is applying the promise of David’s seed, in 2 Samuel 7:13 to Jesus.

With the seed firmly identified as Jesus, a number of details now become significant:-

1. The seed

“Your seed, who will come from your body. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son.” “I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body” (2 Samuel 7:12,14; Psalm 132:10,11).

Jesus, the seed, was to be a literal, bodily descendant of David, and yet have God as his Father. This could only be achieved by the virgin birth as described in the New Testament. Jesus’ mother was Mary, a descendant of David (Luke 1:32), but he had no human father. God acted miraculously upon Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit in order to make her conceive Jesus, and so the Angel commented, “therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the son of God” (Luke 1:35).

2. The house

“He shall build a house for My name” (2 Samuel 7:13).

This shows that Jesus will build a temple for God. God’s “house” is where He is willing to live, and Isaiah 66:1,2 tells us that He will come to live in the hearts of men who are humble to His word. Jesus is therefore building a spiritual temple for God to dwell in, made up of the true believers. Descriptions of Jesus as the foundation stone of God’s spiritual temple (1 Peter 2:4-8) and of Christians as the temple stones (1 Peter 2:5) now slot into place.

3. The throne

“I will establish the throne of his (Christ’s) kingdom forever...your (David’s) house and your kingdom. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:13,16; see also Isaiah 9:6,7).

Christ’s kingdom will therefore be a re-establishment of David’s kingdom of Israel. To fulfil this promise, Christ must reign on David’s “throne” which was literally in Jerusalem. The kingdom must be established here on earth in order to fulfil these promises.

4. The kingdom

“Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you” (2 Samuel 7:16).

David would witness the establishment of Christ’s eternal kingdom. He must therefore be resurrected at Christ’s return so that he could see with his

own eyes the kingdom being set up world-wide, with Jesus reigning from Jerusalem.

Salvation promised

These things which were promised to David are absolutely vital to understand. David joyfully spoke of these things as “an everlasting covenant...this is all my salvation and all my desire” (2 Samuel 23:5). These things relate to our salvation too; rejoicing in them should likewise be all our desire.

These doctrines are important and it is a tragedy that Christendom teaches doctrines which contradict these marvellous truths:

- If Jesus physically ‘pre-existed’, i.e. he existed as a person before he was born, then this makes nonsense of these promises that Jesus would be David’s ‘seed’ or descendant.
- If the kingdom of God will be in heaven, then Jesus cannot re-establish David’s kingdom of Israel, nor can he reign from David’s “throne”. These things were literally on the earth, and so their re-establishment must be in the same place.

The Implications of the Promises

Through baptism, the promises to David and also the other great promises of the Bible can apply to us – we too can have the hope of salvation in God’s Kingdom. We can become spiritual Israel, and therefore the people of God, separated from this world. Abraham, the natural father of the Jewish race, can become our spiritual father.

Separation

Having looked at this promise, and also the promise to Abraham, implications emerge in relation to the way we live if we accept them through baptism. For example, we become a separate people. We become spiritual Jews. What God spoke to men like Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, He therefore spoke to us (Hosea 12:5; Genesis 28:15; compare Hebrews 12:5,6). We therefore will seek all our associations only among the people of God, with whom we will share the kingdom of God.

Abraham’s example of consciously shunning the things of this world will be matched in his ‘children’. If we truly believe the promises, we too will separate ourselves “from the corruption that is in the world” (2 Peter 1:4). We should be happy to have a light hold on possession of property, knowing that this earth is ours. For now, we are just passing through it, surveying it, like Abraham did.

Commitment

All those in true covenant relationship with God will realize the fullness of commitment which He has entered, and will make a whole-hearted response

and sacrifice (Malachi 2:4,5). Psalm 103:18 parallels “such as keep his covenant” with “those that remember his commandments to do them”. The extent of the implication of being in covenant with God ought to preclude the possibility of worshipping any other god. The covenant we can enter into demands loyalty.

If we take part in the promises of God, it should enable us to live godly lives now in this evil world. We can be sure of God’s mercy and truth towards us, so that whatever happens to us in this life we can have confidence that God will bring us to His kingdom.

Unity

Galatians 3:27-29 explains that through baptism into the covenant made with Abraham, there is a special unity between all in that covenant. Slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile are all thereby united, as they were in the early church. Through the power of the most basic facts of the Gospel preached to Abraham, this incredible unity is possible amongst believers. Believers are all united in Christ as ‘Abraham’s seed’, therefore they must show kindness, patience, etc.

Present and Future Blessings

By being baptised we can have the blessings of forgiveness now (Acts 3:25,26), and also look forward to the blessings of the future Kingdom of God. In Galatians 3:15-20 Paul is pointing out that the promises to Abraham offer eternal inheritance in the Kingdom on the basis of faith and grace, and neither the Law of Moses nor any other form of legalism can change that basis. An appreciation of the promises will enable us to see the wonder of salvation by grace, to the point that we will reject all forms of legalism and seeking to justify ourselves by works achieved.

The Promise to Abraham can be ours

Abraham was promised that his seed would have the Almighty God as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. If we acknowledge Abraham’s God as our God and can see in faith that God has promised the true believer the world, we will live now in the confidence that one day these promises will be completely fulfilled and by God’s grace and mercy we can share in them. The time is coming when God’s purpose from the beginning will be complete, and the “earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Part 4: THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE

Immortality Conditional

Immortality is conditional, and is not something which we naturally possess, as the following passages prove:

- “Christ has....brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 John 1:2).
- “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life (inherent) in you. Whoever eats My flesh...has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:52-54) – to give him this “eternal life”. Christ’s reasoning throughout John chapter 6 is that He is the “bread of life”, and that only through correct response to him, is there immortality (John 6:47, 50, 51, 57, 58).
- “God has given to us (believers) eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11). There can be no hope of immortality for those not “in Christ”. Only through Christ has immortality been made possible; He is “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Hebrews 5:9; Acts 3:15 A.V. margin). Therefore immortality for men came through the work of Christ.
- The true believer seeks for immortality, and will be rewarded by the gift of eternal life – something he does not naturally possess (Romans 2:7; 6:23; John 10:28). Our mortal body “must put on immortality” at the return of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:53); thus immortality is something promised, not now possessed (1 John 2:25).
- God alone has inherent immortality (1 Timothy 6:16).

What is the Soul?

In the light of the foregoing it ought to be inconceivable that man has an ‘immortal soul’. The Hebrew ‘Nephesh’ and Greek ‘Psuche’, which are translated ‘soul’ in the Bible are also translated as: *body, breath, creature, heart, mind, person, himself*. The ‘soul’ therefore refers to the person, body or self.

There is no difference between people and animals in our fundamental nature and death:

- *“For what happens to the sons of men also happens to beasts: one thing befalls them (note the double emphasis): as one dies, so dies the other....man has no advantage over beasts....All (i.e. man and animals) go to one place (the grave): all are from the dust, and all return to dust.” (Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20)*

Death of the Soul

A very basic fact is that all “living creatures” eventually die. About a third of the words translated ‘soul’, are associated with the death and destruction of the soul. This shows that the soul cannot be something which is immortal. For example: “*The soul who sins shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:4). God can destroy the soul: “*fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body*” (Matthew 10:28. See also Ezekiel 22:27; Proverbs 6:32; Leviticus 23:30; Numbers 15:27-31; Isaiah 53:10).

That the ‘soul’ refers to the person or body rather than some immortal spark within us is shown by the majority of verses where the word occurs. Some examples: “The blood of the souls” (Jeremiah 2:34). “If a soul sin....if a soul touch any unclean thing....if a soul swear” (Leviticus 5:1-4 A.V. See also Psalm 103:1, 2, 5; Mark 8:35).

This is proof that the soul does not refer to any spiritual element within man; here, ‘soul’ just means one’s physical life.

The Spirit of Man

The Hebrew (‘Ruach’) and Greek (‘Pneuma’) words for ‘spirit’ are also translated in the following ways: life, spirit, mind, wind, breath.

God uses His spirit to preserve the natural creation. The spirit of God within man is therefore the life force within him, as these verses demonstrate:

- “The body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26).
- God “breathed into his (Adam’s) nostrils the breath (spirit) of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

The spirit of life is given to us at birth, and remains as long as our body is alive.

The Removal of God’s Spirit

When God’s spirit is withdrawn from anything, it immediately perishes. If God “should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust” (Job 34:14-15). When God takes away His spirit from us at death, not only does our body die, but our entire consciousness ceases. “Do not put your trust in princes.... His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day his plans perish” (Psalm 146:3-4).

At death, “the dust will return to the earth as it was; and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When we die we ‘breathe our last’ in the sense that God’s spirit within us departs from us. That spirit is absorbed

into God's spirit which is all around us; so at death "the spirit will return to God".

Death is Unconsciousness

The Bible makes it clear that we have no consciousness during the death state: "(Man's) spirit departs, he return to his earth; in that very day his plans perish" (Psalm 146:4). "The dead know nothing....their love, their hatred, and their envy, have now perished" (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; see also verse 10).

Death is repeatedly referred to as a **sleep** or **rest**, both for the righteous and the wicked: "And many of those who **sleep in the dust** of the earth shall awake"; "But you, go your way till the end; for **you shall rest**, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:2, 13. See also Job 3:11, 13, 17). Sufficient evidence has been produced for us to bluntly state that the notion of the righteous going to a state of bliss in heaven at death, is simply not found in the Bible.

Resurrection

The Bible emphasizes that the reward of the righteous will be at the resurrection, at the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Paul said that if there is no resurrection, then all effort to be obedient to God is pointless (1 Corinthians 15:32). Surely he would not have reasoned like this if he believed that he would also be rewarded with his 'soul' going to heaven at death? The implication is that he believed the resurrection of the body to be the only form of reward.

Christ encouraged us with the words "you shall be repaid at **the resurrection** of the just" (Luke 14:14). At his return, Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:20-21). As he now has a literal bodily form, energized purely by Spirit rather than blood, so we will share a similar reward.

Our Hope – Life with an Immortal Body

At the judgment we will be rewarded for how we have lived this life in a bodily form (2 Corinthians 5:10). The ungodly retain their present mortal body, which will then rot back to dust. Those who have tried to overcome the mind of the flesh with that of the Spirit "will of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8) in the form of a Spirit-filled body.

There is ample evidence that the reward of the righteous will be in a bodily form. Once this is accepted, the vital importance of the resurrection should be apparent. Our present body clearly ceases to exist at death; if we can only experience eternal life and immortality in a bodily form, it follows that death

must be a state of unconsciousness, until such time as our body is re-created and then given God's nature. Our present body will then be changed to an immortal one (Philippians 3:21).

Through baptism we associate with Christ's death and resurrection, showing we believe we too will share the reward which He received through His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). Through sharing His sufferings now, we will also share His reward (2 Corinthians 4:10; Romans 8:23). This hope of a literal bodily reward has been understood by God's people from earliest times (Isaiah 26:19). Job knew that although his body would be eaten by worms, he would, in a bodily form, receive his reward: "my redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last **on the earth**: and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in **my flesh** I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26).

The Place of Reward: Heaven or Earth?

The following passages show that **earth**, not heaven will be the location of God's Kingdom.

- The 'Lord's Prayer' asks for God's Kingdom **to come**, whereby God's desires will be done **on earth** as they are now done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). We are therefore praying for God's Kingdom to come **on the earth**.
- "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit **the earth**" (Matthew 5:5). See also Psalm 37, especially verses 11, 22, 34, 35) – **not** '..... for their souls shall go to heaven'. Living in the earth forever means that eternal life in heaven is an impossibility.
- "David...is both dead and buried.... David **did not ascend into the heavens**" (Acts 2:29, 34). Peter explained that David's hope was the resurrection from the dead at Christ's return (Acts 2:22-36).
- The righteous will say at the judgment: Christ has "made us kings and priests to our God: and we shall reign **on the earth**" (Revelation 5:9, 10).

Hell

The Bible teaches that hell is the grave, where all men go at death. The Hebrew word 'sheol', translated 'hell', means 'a covered place'. A good translation of this word is 'grave'. The following examples of 'sheol', should torpedo the popular conception of hell as a place of fire and torment for the wicked:

- "Let the wicked.....be silent in the grave" (Psalm 31:17); they will not be screaming in agony.
- "God will redeem my soul from the power of the **grave**" (Psalm 49:15) – i.e. David's soul or body would be resurrected from the grave, or 'hell'.

Seeing that ‘hell’ is the grave, the righteous will be saved from it through their resurrection to eternal life. The supreme example is that of Jesus, whose “soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31 KJV) because he was resurrected. That Christ went to ‘hell’ should be proof enough that it is not just a place where the wicked go.

What happens to unrepentant sinners?

God does not impute sin to those ignorant of His word (Romans 5:13). Those in this position will remain dead. Those who have known God’s requirements will be resurrected and judged at Christ’s return. If wicked, they will be punished with death and stay dead for ever (Revelation 2:11; 20:6). It is in this sense that the punishment for sin is ‘everlasting’, in that there will be no end to their death. It is one of God’s principles that the punishment for sin is death (Romans 6:23; 8:13; James 1:15). Death is a state of complete unconsciousness. Sin results in total destruction, not eternal torment. (Matthew 21:41; 22:7; Mark 12:9; James 4:12).

Unconsciousness – the Practical meaning of Death

There can be no activity in the grave.... Therefore **now** is the time to live a life active to the absolute maximum in the Lord’s service (Ecclesiastes 9:10-13). Moses pleaded with God to make time-frittering Israel see the implications of their mortality; having eloquently spoken of the tragedy of our mortality, he concludes: “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). The tragic brevity of life means that we should quit time wasting follies. The fact we are going to die relatively soon, and lie unconscious, drives the man who seriously believes it, to faith in the God of resurrection. Death being like a sleep, it follows that judgment day is our next conscious experience after death. Because death is an ever more likely possibility for us, our judgment is effectively almost upon us. And we must live with and in that knowledge.

Part 5: WHO IS GOD?

There is Only One God

Deuteronomy 6:4,5 states: “The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength”. So the LORD’s unity is strongly linked with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It was the unity of God, and the imperative from it to love Him with all the heart, which was programmatic for the Jews’ daily living. This is why it was Jewish practice to recite these words several times a day, and also on their deathbed.

If there is only “one” God, as this passage clearly maintains, where does this leave the popular doctrine of the trinity? The trinity is one of the greatest false doctrines of all time, in its claim that there are three “persons” in the Godhead. The word trinity is never even found in the Bible. The Bible teaches that God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is His special power. Three separate entities – not “three in one” – as the confusing doctrine of the trinity would have us believe.

MORE ABOUT GOD...

God is from Everlasting to Everlasting

See what Habakkuk 1:12 builds upon the fact of God’s everlasting nature: “Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die”. If we truly believe that we are His people, not those of this world, and that we are truly part of His eternal family, then His eternity becomes a guarantee of our eternal salvation.

God is the Creator

Because of God’s awesome creation and the power of the Word that formed it all, we should likewise stand in awe of Him and recognize the power of His word (Psalm 33:6-9). Because we are created in God’s image; the structure of our very bodies is an imperative to give ourselves totally to His cause (Matthew 22:19-21). Whatever bears God’s image – i.e. our very bodies – must be given to Him. “It is He who made us, and (therefore) we are His (Psalm 100:3 NIV). We must be His in practice because He is our Creator. So it is not that we merely believe in creation rather than evolution; more than this, such belief in creation must elicit a life given over to that creator.

God Sees and Knows All Things, Through His Spirit

The Old Testament character of Job knew this, and therefore he commented, it was impossible that he would lust after a woman, if he really believed (as he claimed he did) that God was omniscient: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?... (for) does He (God) not see my ways, and count all my steps?” (Job 31:1-4).

Likewise God had to remind Israel: “Can any hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?” (Jeremiah 23:24). The context is appealing to the people to quit their sins. We should labour to enter the Kingdom, because God knows absolutely our every thought and action of ours and will ultimately judge them (Hebrews 4:11-13).

God is a Real, Personal Being

God is a real person, as the following points prove:

- It is a fundamental tenet of Christianity that Jesus is the Son of God. If God is not a real being, then it is impossible for Him to have a Son who was the ‘image of His person’ (Hebrews 1:3)
- Further, it becomes difficult to develop a personal, living relationship with ‘God’, if ‘God’ is just a concept in our mind. It is tragic that the majority of religions have this unreal, intangible conception of God.
- As God is so infinitely greater than we are, it is understandable that many people’s faith has balked at the clear promises that ultimately we will see Him: “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).
- Jesus tells us that we should not swear, because “he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it” (Matthew 23:22).
- “God said, Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the angels. Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object, of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous of which we cannot conceive.
- The faithful are promised that they will inherit God’s nature (2 Peter 1:4).
- We will be given a body like that of Jesus (Philippians 3:21), and we know that he will have a physical body in the Kingdom.

The personality of God is, therefore, related to the Gospel of the Kingdom. There can be no sensible concept of worship, religion or personal relationship with God therefore until it is appreciated that God is a real being and that we are made in His image. We need to develop His mental likeness now, so that we may be made fully like Him in the Kingdom of God.

What Does This Mean for Me?

There is a vast difference between having a vague notion that there is a higher power, and actually being certain of what He is offering in return for faithful service to Him. Hebrews 11:6 makes this point, we “must believe that He (God) is” *and* “that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”.

An awareness within us that there is a God, does not mean that we are automatically acceptable to God. If we seriously agree that we really do have a creator, we should “therefore keep His... commandments” (Deuteronomy 4:39,40). As we search the Scriptures in order to do this, we will find that our faith in God’s existence is strengthened.

Part 6: THE REAL CHRIST

True Christian faith is centred around the work of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. His life, death and resurrection form the basis for God's plan of salvation. It is vital to understand the real reason for Christ, his true status as Son of God and how we can benefit from his work. Jesus prayed to his Father just before his cruel death: "This is eternal life, that they (true believers) may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

The Virgin Birth

Over 2000 years ago the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary with this message: "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest... Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? (i.e. she was a virgin). And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31-35).

Through the Holy Spirit (God's breath / power) acting upon her, Mary conceived Jesus while still a virgin. Thus Joseph was not the true father of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit acting upon the womb of Mary, Jesus, the Son of God, could not have come into existence. Jesus was "begotten" by God (John 3:16), rather than created as Adam was originally. This explains the closeness of God's association with Jesus and also helps explain his natural aptitude for the ways of God his Father.

Christ's Place in God's Plan

God had a complete plan formulated right from the beginning of creation (John 1:1). His desire to have a Son was in His plan from the beginning. The Old Testament reveals different aspects of God's plan of salvation in Christ; from the promises to the Jewish fathers, to the prophecies of the prophets and the types of the Law of Moses. Christ existed in God's mind and purpose from the beginning, although he only came into existence physically through his birth of Mary.

Hebrews 1:4-7, 13,14 stress that Christ was not an angel; whilst in his mortal life he was less than angels (Hebrews 2:7), he was exalted to a far greater honour than them seeing he was God's "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). The Apostle Peter sums up the position: Christ "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times" (1Peter 1:20). Jesus was the central pivot of the Gospel: God "had promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our

Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:1-4).

This summarizes the history of Christ:

1. Promised in the Old Testament – i.e. in God’s plan;
2. Created as a physical person through the virgin birth, as a seed of David.
3. Due to his perfect character (“the spirit of holiness”), shown during his mortal life He was resurrected;
4. Publicly declared to be the Son of God by the apostles’ spirit-gifted preaching.

The Foreknowledge of God

God has complete ‘foreknowledge’. We will be greatly helped in appreciating how fully Christ was in God’s mind at the beginning, while not physically existing, if we can come to terms with the fact that God knows all things which will occur in the ‘future’. God can therefore speak and think about things which do not exist, as though they do. God “calls those things which do not exist as though they did” (Romans 4:17). He declares “the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Because of this, God can speak of the dead as if they are alive, and can speak of men as if they were alive before birth. The “counsel”, or word of God, had prophesied Christ from the beginning; he was always in God’s purpose or “pleasure”. It was therefore certain that at some time Christ would be physically born; God would fulfil His stated purpose in Christ.

Biblical Hebrew has a ‘prophetic perfect’ tense, which uses the past tense to describe future things which God has promised. Thus David said, “This *is* the house of the Lord God” (1 Chronicles 22:1), when as yet the temple was only promised by God. Scripture abounds with examples of God’s foreknowledge. God was so certain that He would fulfil the promises to Abraham, that He told him: “To your descendants I *have given* this land...” (Genesis 15:18) at a time when Abraham did not even have descendants (see also Genesis 17:5). Christ was spoken of as existing from the beginning in God’s mind and plan, although physically he could not have done so. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Jesus did not die then literally; he was the “Lamb of God sacrificed about 4,000 years later on the cross (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7). In the same way as Jesus was chosen from the beginning, (1 Peter 1:20), so were the believers (Ephesians 1:4; the same Greek word for “chosen” is used in these

Differences Between God and Jesus

There is a fine balance to be drawn between those passages which emphasize the degree to which “God was in Christ” (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:19), and those which highlight his humanity. The latter group of passages makes it impossible to justify from the Bible the idea that Jesus is God Himself. One of the clearest summaries of the relationship between God and Jesus is found in 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is **one** God, **and** one **mediator** between God and men, the **man** Christ Jesus.”

Reflection upon the highlighted words leads to the following conclusions:

1. The Father is God. (1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8).
2. In addition to this one God, there is the mediator, the man Christ Jesus – “...**and** one mediator...,” indicating a difference between Christ and God.
3. “Mediator” means that Christ is a go-between. A mediator between sinful man and sinless God cannot be sinless God Himself; it had to be a sinless man, of human nature – “the *man* Christ Jesus.”

The Nature of Jesus

The word ‘nature’ refers to what we naturally, fundamentally are. The Bible speaks of only two natures – that of God, and that of man. By nature God cannot die, be tempted etc. Christ was not of God’s nature during his life, he was totally of human nature. It was vital that Christ was tempted like us (Hebrews 4:15), so that through his perfect overcoming of temptation he could gain forgiveness for us.

The wrong desires, which are the basis of our temptations, come from within us (Mark 7:15-23), from within our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Christ should be of human nature so that he could experience and overcome these temptations.

“As the children (us) are partakers of flesh and blood (human nature), he (Christ) also himself likewise took part (i.e. “partook”, R.S.V.) of the same (nature); that through death he might destroy...the devil...For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the (nature of the) seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest...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 2:14-18 KJV)

This passage emphasizes the fact that Jesus had human nature: “*He also himself likewise*” partook of it (Hebrews 2:14). This phrase uses three words

all with the same meaning, just to drive the point home. Christ was the seed of Abraham (2:16), who had come to bring salvation for believers. In every way he had “to be made like unto his brethren” (2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice.

Forgiveness

Whenever baptized believers sin, they can come to God, confessing their sin in prayer through Christ (1 John 1:9); God is aware that Christ was tempted to sin exactly as they are, but that he was perfect, overcoming that very temptation which they fail. Because of this, “God for Christ’s sake” can forgive us (Ephesians 4:32 KJV). *“God, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).*

“Sin” refers to the natural proneness to sin which we have by nature. We continue to sin, and “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). To get out of this predicament, man needed help. God therefore intervened and gave us His own Son, who had our “sinful flesh”, with all the promptings to sin which we have. Unlike every other man, Christ overcame every temptation

The Humanity of Jesus

The Gospel records show how completely Jesus had human nature. He was weary, and had to sit down to drink from a well (John 4:6). “Jesus wept” at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35). Most supremely, the record of his final sufferings should be proof enough of his humanity. “Now my soul is troubled”, he admitted as he prayed for God to save him from having to go through with his death on the cross (John 12:27). He “prayed, saying, O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup (of suffering and death) pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39).

From childhood “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (i.e. spiritual maturity, cp Ephesians 4:13), and in favour with God and men”. (Luke 2:52), see also 2:40). This shows Christ’s physical growth as being parallel to his spiritual development. Obedience to God’s will is something which we can all learn over a period of time. Christ also had to go through this process of learning obedience to his Father. “Though he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and having been perfected (i.e. spiritually mature), he became the author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:8,9; see also Phil. 2:7,8.).

Jesus had to make a conscious, personal effort to be righteous; he was not forced by God, which would have resulted in him being a mere puppet. Jesus truly loved us, and gave his life on the cross from this motive. The constant emphasis upon the love of Christ for us would be hollow if God forced him

to die on the cross (Ephesians 5:2,25; Revelation 1:5; Galatians 2:20). That Jesus *did* have the option whether to obey or not, makes us able to appreciate his love, and to form a personal relationship with him. It was because of Christ's willingness to voluntarily give his life, that God was so delighted with him. "Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:17,18).

What Does This Mean For Me?

The Lord Jesus can become real to us in our common, everyday lives because He too faced the temptations we face. We can really believe that forgiveness is possible through the work of such a representative; his example can be a living inspiration to rise above our lower nature. Appreciating the doctrines of salvation through Christ enables us to pray acceptably; "we have boldness and access with confidence by *the Faith*" – not just 'by faith', but as a result of *the Faith* (Ephesians 3:12 KJV). After being baptized into Christ we can come boldly before God's throne in prayer, with a true heart and clear conscience (Hebrews 4:16). This "boldness" will be reflected in our being 'bold' in our witness (2 Corinthians 3:12; 7:4). 'Boldness' characterized the early church (Acts 4:13,29,31; Philippians 1:20).

God existed from infinity, and yet only 2,000 years ago He gave His only and His *begotten* Son. And that Son was a human being in order to save humans – only a few million of us (if that), who lived in a 6,000-year time span. That the only Son of God should die for a very few of us here, we who crawl on the surface of this tiny planet for such a fleeting moment of time, is wondrous indeed.

Christ died so that God could work out our salvation. The love of God for us is likened to a young man marrying a virgin (Isaiah 62:5) with all the intensity and joyful expectation and lack of disillusion. And more than this, Jesus Christ died for you, in the shameful way that He did. When this is fully appreciated we are left in total wonder and gratitude for God's love.

The Trinity – Unscriptural

The Bible's clear teaching about Christ gives no support for the doctrine of the Trinity. Consider the following:

Luke 1:31-35: Jesus *would be* the Son of God. Note the many future tenses in these verses. Jesus did not pre-exist before his birth of Mary.

John 3:16: Jesus was the "only *begotten* Son" of God. He 'began' when he was 'conceived' (idea of beginning, Luke 1:31) in Mary's womb. If Jesus was begotten by God, then his Father is older than he is. God has no beginning (Psalm 90:2) and therefore Jesus cannot be God Himself.

Mary is described in the Gospels as Christ's "mother". Jesus did not exist before his birth of Mary.

The word ‘Trinity’ never occurs in the Bible.

1 Timothy 2:5: “There is *one* God, *and* one *mediator* between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus.” (see also 1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8). “God is not a man” (Numbers 23:19; Hosea 11:9); yet Chris was “the son of man”.

Christ is “the *Son* of the Highest” (Luke 1:32). God only has ultimate highness; Jesus as “the Son of the Highest” cannot have been God Himself in person.

The language of Father and Son, used about God and Jesus, shows they are not the same. A son may have certain similarities to his father, but cannot be one and the same person.

Jesus was “made like his brethren” (Hebrews 2:17) so that God could grant us forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice. To say that Jesus was not totally of human nature denies the good news of Christ.

There are a number of obvious differences between God and Jesus, which clearly show that Jesus was not God Himself.

GOD

“God cannot be tempted”
(James 1:13)

God cannot die – He is immortal by nature (Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 6:16).

God cannot be seen by men
(1 Timothy 6:16; Exodus 33:20)

JESUS

Christ “was in all points tempted as we are” (Hebrews 4:15).

Christ died for three days (Matthew 12:40; 16:21).

Men saw Jesus and handled him (1 John 1:1 emphasizes this).

In some ways Christ’s ‘will’, or desires, was different from that of God (Matthew 26:39; John 5:30).

From childhood “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men” (Luke 2:52). This would not be possible if Jesus was ‘God the Son’.

Christ did not know the exact time of his second coming, although the Father did (Mark 13:32).

God was pleased with Christ’s willing obedience which is hard to understand if Jesus was God, living out a life in human form as some kind of tokenistic association with sinful man (Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5).

Part 7: THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Hebrew word translated “spirit” in the Old Testament strictly means “breath” or “power”; thus God’s spirit is His “breathing”, the very essence of God, reflecting His mind. It is not a separate person from God. It is a common Bible teaching that how a man thinks is expressed in his actions (Proverbs 23:7; Matthew 12:34). A little reflection upon our own actions will confirm this; we think of something and then we do it. God likewise thinks and therefore does things. “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand” (Isaiah 14:24).

Many passages clearly identify God’s spirit with His power. In order to create the earth, “. . .the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light” (Genesis 1:2,3). God’s spirit was the power by which all things, e.g. light, were made. A comparison of Matthew 12:28 and Luke 11:20 shows that “the finger of God” and “the spirit of God” are parallel – God in action is His spirit. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6). God’s spirit is therefore described as follows:

- His breath
- His word
- His finger
- His hand

It is therefore His power by which He achieves all things. The spirit given to us, and all creation, is what sustains our life. We have “the breath of the spirit of life” within us (Genesis 7:22) given to us by God at birth (Psalm 104:30; Genesis 2:7). God is the life force which sustains all creation. His spirit is present everywhere (Psalm 139:2,7,9,10).

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

At various times in His dealings with men, God gave the use of His power (“Holy Spirit”) to men. However, this was never in the form of a “blank cheque”, as it were, enabling them to do what they wished; always the use of this Holy Spirit was for a specific purpose. When it was accomplished, the gift of the Holy Spirit was withdrawn. We must remember that God’s spirit acts in a way which fulfils the purpose which is in His mind. The gifts of Holy Spirit were always to achieve specific things at specific times. The making of the tabernacle is an example. Early in Israel’s history; they were commanded to make an elaborate tent (“tabernacle”) in which the altar and other holy items could be kept; detailed instructions were given concerning how to make all the items which would be necessary for the worship of God. To accomplish

this, God gave His spirit to certain men. They were, “filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron’s garments...” etc. (Exodus 28:3).

Reasons for the Gifts in the First Century

Remembering the basic principles which we have already learnt about the gifts of God’s spirit, we now come to the New Testament record of the spirit gifts which were possessed in the early church (i.e. the groups of believers who lived in the generation after the time of Jesus).

Christ’s last command was for the apostles to go throughout the world preaching the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). This they did, with the theme of Christ’s death and resurrection foremost in their message. But remember that then there was no New Testament as we know it. As they stood in market places and synagogues speaking about this man Jesus of Nazareth, their story could have sounded bizarre – a carpenter from Israel who was perfect, who died and was then resurrected in accurate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and who was now asking them to be baptised and follow His example.

In our day we appeal to the New Testament records of the work and doctrine of Jesus in order to prove that our message is from God; but in those days, before it was written down and available, God allowed His preachers the use of His Holy Spirit in order to underline the truth of what they were saying. This was the specific reason for the use of the gifts in the sight of the world; the absence of the written New Testament would have also made it difficult for the new groups of believers to grow in their faith.

As ever, these reasons for the granting of the Holy Spirit were made abundantly plain:

- “When he (Jesus) ascended up on high (to heaven), he...gave (spirit) gifts unto men... for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry (preaching), for the edifying of the body of Christ (i.e. the believers)” (Ephesians 4:8,12 KJV).
- So Paul wrote to the believers at Rome, “I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established” (Romans 1:11).

Concerning the use of the gifts to confirm the preaching of the Gospel, we read: “God also bearing witness (to the message of salvation) both with signs and wonders, with various miracles” (Hebrews 2:4). “Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done (a miracle), being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:12). All this is summarized by the comment on the apostles’ obedience to the command to preach: “And they

(the disciples) went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20).

The Withdrawal of the Gifts

The miraculous gifts of God’s spirit will be used again by the believers in order to change this present world into God’s Kingdom, after the return of Christ. The gifts are therefore called “the powers of the age to come” (Hebrews 6:4,5); and Joel 2:26-29 describes a great outpouring of the spirit gifts after the repentance of Israel. The very fact that these gifts will be given to the believers on Christ’s return is proof enough that they are not possessed now. To any Christian, with eyes open to both Scripture and world events, the Lord’s return must surely be soon.

From all the Biblical records of the use of spirit gifts, it is clear that they were given at particular times for particular purposes and were withdrawn by God when His purpose was accomplished: “Whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues (the ability to speak foreign languages, in order to preach), they will cease...but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). As the Good News Bible clearly states: the gifts “are temporary”.

Ephesians 4:8-14 helps us understand this further. This passage explains that the gifts of the first century were to be given until the perfect, or mature, man was reached. Making such a fuss about possessing the spirit gifts is therefore not a sign of spiritual maturity. The progress each reader of these words should now make, is towards a deeper appreciation of the written Word of God, to rejoice in the completeness of God’s basic revelation of Himself to us through it, and to respond to it in humble obedience.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 teaches that response to “all scripture” enables the man of God to be “perfect”, complete, and mature. So once the New Testament was completed, towards the end of the first century, the gifts were no longer needed. They had achieved their purpose, of enabling the church to become “fully equipped” (Ephesians 4:8 Weymouth). When the Bible was completed, the church was indeed fully equipped to preach the gospel of salvation.

Present Claims of Spirit Possession

A number of other points have to be made concerning the repeated claims of those who think they now possess the miraculous gifts. Whatever one makes of the above arguments for the withdrawal of the gifts, the reality is that the present claims to Spirit gift possession are sadly in conflict with the nature of the gifts as recorded in the New Testament. Whatever is being done today is different from that which happened in the early church.

Present “speaking in tongues” tends to repeat the same short syllables over and over again, e.g. “Lala, lala, lala, shama. Jesus, Jesus.....”. This is not in the syntax associated with any language; when one hears someone speak in a foreign tongue, it is usually possible to discern that they are communicating something by the pattern of the words they use, although we may not understand those words. Yet modern tongue-speaking does not feature this, underlining the fact that it is not building up the church, which was the purpose of the first century gifts.

Some Pentecostals claim that speaking in tongues is a sign of being “saved” and will therefore accompany every true conversion. This claim runs into serious difficulty with the description of the early church as a body, in which those possessing different gifts were like the different parts. Not everyone was an arm or leg, and so likewise not everyone possessed any one gift, e.g. tongues. 1 Corinthians 12:27-30 makes this clear. Another problem for the Pentecostal argument is that Philip converted many people in Samaria – i.e. they were baptised in water after understanding the Gospel, but they did not receive the spirit gifts; because after this, Peter and John came to them: “When they had come down, (they) prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit...through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given” (Acts 8:4-18).

It is possible that the passing on of the Spirit gifts was only by this laying on of hands, which is not frequently practised by modern claimants. Thus Paul wanted to visit the Romans in order to give them the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:11 cf. Ephesians 4:12). It would therefore follow that once the generation who had this power passed away, there was no way of continuing the gifts. If indeed they are obtainable purely by prayer, it is difficult to understand why Paul had to visit Rome to transfer the gifts to believers there. The only answer must be that “through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given”.

Part 8: BAPTISM

Baptism is one of the most basic Bible doctrines (see Hebrews 6:2 for example). True baptism can only occur after a correct grasp of the basic truths which comprise the Gospel. If you wish to become truly associated with the great hope which the Bible offers through Jesus Christ, then baptism is an absolute necessity. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) in the sense that the promises concerning salvation were made only to Abraham and his seed. We can only have those promises made to us if we become *in* the Seed, by being baptized *into* Christ (Galatians 3:22-29). Jesus therefore clearly

commanded His followers: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel (which is contained in the promises to Abraham – Galatians 3:8) to every creature. He who believes **and** is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16).

Baptism – Start of a New Life

Baptism is not just an optional extra, it is a vital prerequisite for salvation. Baptism must be followed by a lifetime of continued obedience to God’s Word. Jesus emphasized this: “Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “Born of water” refers to baptism: after this, one must be born again of the spirit. This is an ongoing process “Being born again....through the word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). Thus it is through our continued response to God’s spirit word that we become born of the spirit.

Baptized Into Christ

We are “baptized *into* Christ” (Galatians 3:27), *into* His name (Acts 19:5; 8:16; Matthew 28:19). Note that we are baptized into *Christ* – not into any church or any human organization. Without baptism we are not “in Christ”, and therefore not covered by His saving word (Acts 4:12).

True Belief Compels Baptism

The book of Acts of the Apostles shows the vital importance of baptism and emphasizes how *immediately* people were baptized after accepting the Gospel (e.g. Acts 8:12, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15). This emphasis is understandable once it is appreciated that without baptism our learning of the Gospel is in vain. The prison keeper at Philippi was suddenly plunged into the crisis of his life by a massive earthquake which completely broke up his high security prison. The prisoners had ample opportunity to escape – something which would have cost him his life. His faith in the Gospel then became real, so much so that “the same hour of the night....immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16:33). Many a hesitant candidate for baptism can take true inspiration from that man. That he could make such an act of faith in the middle of huge immediate problems is proof enough that he already had a detailed knowledge of the Gospel, seeing that such real faith only comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17 cp. Acts 17:11).

Acts 8:26-40 records how an Ethiopian official was studying his Bible whilst riding in a chariot through the desert. He met Philip, who extensively explained the Gospel to him, including the requirement of baptism. Humanly speaking, it must have seemed impossible to obey the command to be baptized in that waterless desert. Yet God would not give a command which He knows some people cannot obey. “As they went down the road, they came to some water”, i.e. an oasis, where baptism was possible (Acts 8:36).

The apostle Paul received a dramatic vision from Christ which so pricked his conscience that as soon as possible he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). Paul later talked about his life after baptism like this: “I press toward the goal for the prize....” (Philippians 3:7,8,13,14). This is the language of an athlete straining forward to break the finishing tape. Such concentration of mental and physical endeavour should characterize our lives after baptism. Baptism is the beginning of a race toward the Kingdom of God; it is not just a token of having changed churches and beliefs, nor is it a passive entrance into a relaxed life of easy-going adherence to a few vaguely stated Christian principles. Baptism associates us in an ongoing sense with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:3-5).

As was true for Paul, so it is for all who have been properly baptized; baptism is a decision which one will never regret. All our lives we will be aware that we made the correct choice. Of few human decisions can we ever be so certain. The question has to be seriously answered: “Why should I not be baptized?”

How Should We Be Baptized?

There is a widely held view that baptism can be performed, especially on babies, by sprinkling water on their foreheads (i.e. ‘christening’). This is in stark contrast to the Biblical requirement for baptism. The Greek word ‘baptizo’, which is translated ‘baptize’ in the English Bible, does *not* mean to sprinkle; it means to completely wash and immerse in a liquid. This word is used in classical Greek concerning ships sinking and being ‘baptized’ (i.e. submerged) in water. It is also used with reference to a piece of cloth being dyed from one colour to another by ‘baptizing’, or dipping it into a dye. To change the colour of the cloth, it is evident that it had to be fully immersed under the liquid, rather than have the dye sprinkled upon it. That immersion is indeed the correct form of baptism is borne out by the following verses:

- “John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was **much water** there” (John 3:23).
- Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan: “Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway **out of** the water” (Matthew 3:13-16 KJV). His baptism was clearly by immersion – he “went up...**out of** the water” after baptism. One of the reasons for Jesus being baptized was in order to set an example, so that no one could seriously claim to follow Jesus without copying his example of baptism by immersion.
- Philip and the Ethiopian official “went down **into** the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up **out of** the water...” (Acts 8:38,39).
- Baptism is a burial (Colossians 2:12), which implies a total covering.

- Baptism is called a ‘washing away’ of sins (Acts 22:16). The point of true conversion is likened to a ‘washing’ in Revelation 1:5; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22 etc. This language of washing is far more relevant to baptism by dipping than to sprinkling.

There are several Old Testament indications that acceptable approach to God was through some form of washing (Priests: Leviticus 8:6; Exodus 40:32; Israelites: Deuteronomy 23:11; Naaman a Gentile: 2 Kings 5:9-14). So baptism refers to a complete dipping in water after first understanding the basic message of the Gospel.

The Meaning of Baptism

One of the reasons for baptism by immersion is that going under the water symbolizes our going into the grave – associating us with the death of Christ, and indicating our ‘death’ to our previous life of sin and ignorance. Coming up out of the water connects us with the resurrection of Christ, relating us to the hope of resurrection to eternal life at His return, as well as to living a new life now, spiritually triumphant over sin on account of Christ’s victory achieved by his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

Because salvation has been made possible only through Christ’s death and resurrection, it is vital that we associate ourselves with these things if we are to be saved. The symbolic dying and resurrecting with Christ, which baptism gives, is the only way to do this. Sprinkling does not fulfil this symbol.

A New Way of Life

At baptism, “our old man (way of life) is crucified” along with Christ on the cross (Romans 6:6); God “made us alive together with Christ” at baptism (Ephesians 2:5). However, we still have human nature after baptism, and the fleshly way of life will keep raising its head. The ‘crucifixion’ of our flesh is therefore an ongoing process which only *begins* at baptism, hence Jesus told the believer to take up his cross each day and follow Him, as it were, in the procession towards Calvary (Luke 9:23; 14:27). Whilst a life of true crucifixion with Christ is not easy, there is unspeakable consolation and joy through being also united with Christ’s resurrection. Christ brought about “peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20. See also Philipians 4:7; John 14:27; 2 Corinthians 1:5).

There is also the freedom which comes from knowing that our natural self is really dead, and therefore Jesus is very actively living with us through our every trial. The great apostle Paul could speak from much experience of this all down the long eventful years of his life: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

Saved By Christ's Resurrection

Association with Christ's resurrection to eternal life gives a person access to the same at His return. It is through sharing in this resurrection, then, that we can finally be saved (1 Peter 3:21). Jesus stated this in very simple terms: "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). Paul likewise: "We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...we shall be saved by His life" (resurrection; Romans 5:10). By associating ourselves with Christ's death and sufferings in baptism, and our subsequent way of life, we will surely share in His glorious resurrection. (2 Timothy 2:11,12; 2 Corinthians 4:10,11,14; Philippians 3:10,11 compare with Galatians 6:14).

Luke 3:12 records how the "tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, Teacher, what shall we do?" There is a parallel between desiring baptism and realizing that we must *do* something concrete in our lives. The baptism process brings us into the realm of God's gracious forgiveness and redemption, and into living contact with the real Christ. There is no way we can be passive to this and do nothing about it.

Baptism is Vital for Salvation

When we are baptized we should try not to continue in sin, seeing we are "dead" to it (Romans 6:2). This is one of the most basic implications of baptism. We will realise that the unbaptized world (including those who have not been baptized properly) has no hope and we will try with all our heart to persuade others to be baptized. Baptism can never be undone; we for evermore live our lives with a sense of responsibility to God (1 Peter 1:17-19).

Carrying Christ's Name

The wonder of being baptized into Christ means that like the early brethren, we will rejoice to suffer shame for the sake of carrying Christ's Name (Matthew 10:24,25). It will be "enough" for us that we know something of our Lord's sufferings. The more we reflectively read the Gospels, the more we will know the nature and extent of His sufferings, and the more we will see in our own something of His.

Loving One Another As Ourselves

Paul reasons that we are the body of Christ by baptism; and nobody hates their own body. He feeds and cares for it. This not only means that the Lord will likewise care for us (Ephesians 5:29-30). It means that we now have the basis of self-respect and a healthy love of self (the kind the Lord had in mind when he said we should love our neighbour *as* we love ourselves). Because we are to count ourselves as the body of *Christ*, we no longer need to wallow

in the feeling that we are so unworthy, we aren't worth making the effort with. And therefore we should truly love our brother.

“One Man In Christ”

By being baptized into Christ, all that is true of him becomes true of us. We must aspire to be united, because “ye are all one man in Christ” (Galatians 3:28 RV). We “are all sons of God” (3:26) because of our baptism into the Son of God. And so Paul goes on to reason that just as Christ was “the heir”, who is “master of all”, “even so we” were kept under the law for a time (Galatians 4:1-3). The basis of our unity is that there is only one Jesus, and by being in Him we are living lives committed to the imitation of that same man. The unity between baptized believers is enough to witness to the world and arrest their attention – that this is all something true and valid.

APPENDIX: THE DEVIL AND SATAN

Many religions believe there is a monster called the Devil or Satan, who is the originator of all problems and is responsible for the sins we commit. But the Bible teaches us that God is all-powerful and that the Angels cannot sin. This means it is impossible that there is any supernatural being that is opposed to God. We are questioning the supremacy of God Almighty by believing that such a being does exist.

The Source of Evil

There is a belief that good things come from God and bad things from the Devil or Satan. The ancient Babylonians believed in a god of good, and a god of evil. God's response was, “I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides me ... I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create calamity. I, the LORD, do **all** these things” (Isaiah 45:5-7,22). God is the Author, the Creator of “calamity” and disaster. There is a difference between calamity and sin. Sin entered the world as a result of man not God (Romans 5:12). God tells the Babylonians, “There is **no** God beside me.” There is no source of power apart from Him. Thus a true believer in God cannot accept the idea of a supernatural devil or demons.

God: The Creator of Disaster

There are many examples of God bringing “evil” into people's lives. Amos 3:6 says that if there is calamity in a city God has done it.

- Micah 1:12 says that “disaster came down from the Lord to the gate of Jerusalem”.

- Job recognised that, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away” (Job 1:21). He does not say, “The Lord gave and Satan has taken away”. Job commented, “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10). Job’s friends comforted him over “all the adversity that **the LORD** had brought upon him” (Job 42:11 cp. 19:21; 8:3).

So God is the source of “evil” in the sense of being the ultimate permitter of problems in our lives.

The Orthodox Devil – Illogical

“For whom the LORD loves He chastens ... If you endure chastening ... afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:6-11). This shows that trials given by God eventually lead to our spiritual growth. To say that the devil forces us to sin while at the same time bringing problems which lead to our developing “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” is inconsistent. Here the orthodox idea of the devil runs into problems. For example, the passages which speak of delivering man to satan “that his spirit may be saved”. (1 Corinthians 5:5), or “that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Timothy 1:20). If Satan is really a being bent on causing men to sin, why do these passages speak of “Satan” in a positive light? The answer: an adversary, a “Satan”, or difficulty in life, can often result in positive spiritual effects on a believer’s life.

The Origin of Sin

Sin comes from *inside* us. It is *our* fault that we sin. Remember, “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) – sin leads to death. If it is the devil’s fault that we sin, then a just God should punish the devil rather than us. But the fact that we are judged for our own sins, shows that we are responsible for them. “There is **nothing** that enters a man from outside which can defile him ... For from **within**, out of **the heart** of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders ... All these evil things come from within and defile a man” (Mark 7:15-23).

The idea that there is something sinful **outside** of us which causes us to sin is incompatible with the teaching of Jesus. From **within**, out of the heart of man, come all these evil things. James 1:14 tells us how we are tempted: “Each one is tempted when he is drawn by his **own desires** and enticed”. We are tempted by our **own** evil desires, not by anything outside of us. “Where do wars and fights come from among you?” James asks; “Do they not come from **your** desires for pleasure?” (James 4:1). Each of us has temptation generated by our own evil desires.

Paul identifies the source of sin

Paul laments: “In me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells ... For the good that I will to do, I do not do ... if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:18-21). Paul does not blame his sinning on an external being called the devil. He located his own evil nature as the real source of sin: “it is no longer I that do it, but **sin that dwells in me**. I find then a law, **that evil is present** with (i.e. within) me, the one who wills to do good” (Romans 7:20-21). So he says that the opposition to being spiritual comes from something that he calls “sin that dwells in me”.

The word ‘Satan’ in the Bible

1 Kings 11:14 records that the LORD raised up an adversary (same Hebrew word elsewhere translated “satan”) against Solomon. Hadad the Edomite”, “And God raised up another adversary (another satan) ... Rezon ... He was an adversary (a satan) of Israel” (1 Kings 11:23,25). God stirred up ordinary men, not a supernatural being, to be satans/adversaries to Solomon. Another example: Peter tried to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die. Jesus turned and said to Peter “Get behind Me, **Satan!** ... you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:23). Thus Peter was called a satan by Christ.

God can be termed a ‘satan’

Because the word ‘satan’ just means an adversary, a good person, even God Himself can be termed a ‘satan’. There is nothing necessarily sinful about the word itself. God can be a satan to us by:

- *Bringing trials into our lives.*
- *Obstructing a wrong course of action we may be embarking upon.*

But the fact that God can be called a ‘satan’ does not mean that He Himself is sinful.

The books of Samuel and Chronicles are parallel accounts of the same incidents. 2 Samuel 24:1 records “**the LORD** ... moved David against them (Israel)” to make him take a census of Israel. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1 says that “**Satan** stood up against Israel, and moved David” to take the census. In one passage God does the provoking, in the other Satan does it. Therefore God acted as a ‘satan’ or adversary to David.

The Word ‘Devil’ in the Bible

Similarly with the word ‘devil’. Jesus said “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spoke of Judas Iscariot...” (John 6:70-71) who was an ordinary, mortal man. The word ‘devil’ here simply refers to a wicked

man. Another example is in 1 Timothy 3:11. The wives of church elders were not to be ‘slanderers’; the original Greek word here is ‘diabolos’, which is the same word translated ‘devil’ elsewhere. Thus Paul warns Titus that the aged women in the ecclesia should not be “false accusers” or ‘devils’ (Titus 2:3 KJV).

The words ‘devil’ and ‘satan’ do not refer to a fallen Angel or a sinful being outside of us.

Sin, Satan and the Devil

The words ‘satan’ and ‘devil’ are sometimes used figuratively to describe the **natural sinful tendencies** within us. These are our main ‘satan’ or adversary. They are also personified, and as such can be spoken of as ‘the devil’ – our enemy, a slanderer of the truth. This is what our natural ‘man’ is like – the very devil. The connection between the devil and our evil desires – sin within us – is made explicit in several passages:

- “As the children (ourselves) have partaken of flesh and blood. He (Jesus) Himself likewise shared in the same, that through (His) death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The **devil** is here described as being responsible for death. But Romans tells us that **sin** is responsible for death “the wages of **sin** is death” (Romans 6:23). Therefore sin and the devil must be parallel.
- Similarly James 1:14 says that our evil desires tempt us, leading us to sin and therefore to death, but Hebrews 2:14 says that the devil brings death. The same verse says that Jesus had our nature in order to destroy the devil.
- Contrast this with Romans 8:3: “God by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (that is, our human nature, ... He (Jesus) condemned sin, in the flesh.” This shows that the devil and the sinful tendencies that are naturally with human nature are effectively the same.

It is vitally important to understand that Jesus was tempted just like us. Misunderstanding the doctrine of the devil means that we cannot correctly appreciate the nature and work of Jesus. It was only because Jesus had our human nature – the ‘devil’ within him – that we can have the hope of salvation (Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15). By overcoming the desires of his own nature, the Biblical devil, Jesus was able to destroy the devil on the cross. If the devil is a personal being, then he should no longer exist.

‘Our sins’ = ‘the works of the devil’

“He who sins is of the devil” (1 John 3:8), because sin is the result of giving way to our own natural, evil desires (James 1:14,15), which the Bible calls ‘the devil’. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). If we are correct in saying that the devil is our evil desires, then the works of our evil desires, i.e. what they result in, are our sins. This is confirmed by 1 John 3:5, “He (Jesus) was manifested to take away our sins”. This confirms that “our sins” and “the works of the devil” are the same. Acts 5:3 provides another example of this connection between the devil and our sins. Peter says to Ananias, “Why has **Satan** filled your heart?” Then in verse 4, Peter says “Why have **you conceived** this thing in your heart?” Conceiving something bad within our heart is the same as Satan filling our heart.

Personification

However, the Bible does talk as if the devil is a person! Hebrews 2:14 speaks of “him who had the power of death, that is, the devil”. The Bible often uses personification – speaking of an abstract idea as if it is a person. Thus Proverbs 9:1 speaks of a woman called ‘Wisdom’ building a house, and Romans 6:23 likens sin to a paymaster giving wages of death.

Our devil, the ‘diabolos’, represents our evil desires. Yet you cannot have abstract diabolism, the evil desires that are in a man’s heart cannot exist separately from a man; therefore ‘the devil’ is personified. Sin is often personified as a master (e.g. Romans 5:21; 6:6,17; 7:3). It is understandable, therefore, that the ‘devil’ is also personified, seeing that ‘the devil’ also refers to sin. In the same way, Paul speaks of us having two beings, as it were, within our flesh (Romans 7:15-21):

- *the man of the flesh, ‘the devil’,*
- *fights with the man of the Spirit.*

Yet it is evident that there are not two literal, personal beings fighting within us. This sinful part of our nature is personified as “the evil one” (Matthew 6:13) – the Biblical devil. The devil is a common figure for our own nature; sin and temptation originate from within. The real arena of spiritual conflict is the human heart.

Practical Implications

If we grasp this, we will battle daily for control of the mind; we will strive to fill our mind with God’s word, we will read the Bible daily, we will be cynical about our motivations, we will examine ourselves, we will appreciate

the latent liability to sin which we and all men have by nature. We won't take the weakness of others towards us so personally; we will see it is their 'devil'. Belief in a personal devil is so popular because it takes the focus away from our own struggle with our innermost nature and thoughts.

Duncan Heaster

If you would like to study the Gospel more in order to be baptized, or if you have any questions about these teachings, please contact the publishers or email info@carelinks.net or dh@heaster.org.