

The Life of the Messiah in His Jewish Context

Volume 2

Based upon

Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's

teaching of

The Life of Messiah from a Jewish Perspective

available as a DVD series from

www.ariel.org.

Eric Vear

2017-03

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This work began in 2010, and is based on Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's DVD series *The Life of the Messiah from a Jewish Perspective*. And Dr. Fruchtenbaum is the primary source for the understanding of the Jewish context of the gospels found herein. The outline and much of the content are taken from His teaching. These are used with his permission.

In 2016 and 2017 Ariel Ministries published the first two volumes of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum's *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*. Two more volumes are scheduled to be published, along with a single volume abridged version. *Ariel's Harmony of the Gospels* is a companion to these volumes and is also available on their website www.ariel.org.

As my understanding of what he teaches has grown, and my understanding of the gospels themselves has grown, I have edited the text to reflect that new understanding. I have also changed the presentation of the material to suit the needs of my students and my teaching style.

This is still a work in progress as you will be able to observe when you read it. So I trust you will download a more up to date copy from time to time. You can find it at www.lifeofmessiah.vear.info.

I also have a harmony of the gospels that matches these notes. You can find it at www.gospelharmony.vear.info

You can contact me at eric.vear@gmail.com

My hope and prayer is that you will find it useful, both in your own understanding of the Life of the Messiah, and in your teaching of it to others.

Last updated 2017-03-08

*May God,
Who inspired the gospel writers,
give you understanding of what they wrote.*

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IV The Training of the Twelve by the King, § 72-95

In the first three divisions of His life we saw:

1. The introduction of the King or the coming of the King.

Here we found the birth narratives, His infancy, baptism, and temptation.

This is God's official presentation of Jesus as the Messianic King.

2. The Authentication of the King.

Jesus began to present Himself to Israel as the promised Messiah and authenticated Himself with miracles, signs, and wonders. He went from city to city and synagogue to synagogue, proclaiming His messiahship and offering the messianic kingdom to Israel.

However, He was opposed the Pharisees.

3. The Controversy over the King.

The leadership of Israel officially rejected Him, because, while He kept the Mosaic Law perfectly, He rejected Pharisaic Judaism.

In response to His rejection, He changed the nature of His ministry radically.

Now we come to the fourth major division of the Messiah's life where the focus is on the training of the twelve by the King. Now He is training them for their future mission, which we find recorded in the book of Acts. This training will continue until we reach section 94 where He journeys to Jerusalem.

A. The Feeding of the 5,000, § 72, Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13

He begins His training of the twelve in section 72 with the feeding of the 5,000.

Occasion

What was the occasion for this miracle?

Read Luke 9:10 and Mark 6:30-32.

What were the apostles doing here?

Jesus had sent them out in pairs to proclaim the message of the mystery kingdom. Now they have returned to Jesus, and they give an account of *all that they had done and taught*.

Why does Jesus take the disciples away to a secluded place?

Mark adds in verse 31 that there were so many people coming and going that they did not even have time to eat. Therefore, Jesus, taking the apostles with Him, went away in a boat to a secluded place at a city called Bethsaida on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

The Crowd

Read what happens next in Mark 6:33 and John 6:2.

How did the crowd respond to their departure?

They actually ran around the sea to arrive at Bethsaida ahead of Jesus in the boat!

The fact that it is a large crowd here indicates that the interest of the people is still quite high in spite of their leaders' rejection of Jesus.

Why were they following Him?

John gives us some insight into their motivation in verse 2. They are following Him primarily because of *the signs which He was performing on those who were sick*. We will learn more about their motives in section 76, the discourse on the Bread of Life, where we will see that they are following Him for the wrong motive.

Jesus response to the crowd

Read Mark verse 34 and Luke verse 11b.

Mark says that *He felt compassion for them*. And he gives the reason: *because they were like sheep without a shepherd*.

How are they like sheep without a shepherd?

They have not yet decided whether to follow their old shepherds, or to follow this new one. We saw this in section 70 when Jesus sent the apostles out in pairs. Because the people are not yet following their leaders in rejecting Jesus, and they are in a state of indecision about His Messiahship, therefore they are like sheep without a shepherd.

How does Jesus respond to them?

Luke says, *He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing*.

Feeding

Jesus also recognises their personal need for food.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell us that the events that follow occurred as the day was drawing to a close and the sun began to set.

They are responsible to feed the people

Read Mark verses 35-37

Now the disciples ask Jesus to send the crowds away to the surrounding villages to buy food for themselves. And Jesus responds by saying to them: *They do not need to go away; you give them something to eat*.

By saying this He makes them responsible to feed the people. *You give them something to eat*.

Private

Now read John verses 3-6.

There are several important details here, details which are often overlooked.

Where does Jesus go, and who does He take with Him?

Jesus goes up on the mountain and sits down with His disciples. Consequently, although there is a crowd of at least five thousand, the conversations with His disciples are quite private, and the lesson He is teaching is specifically for them.

Passover

Secondly, notice that John says: *Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.*

Why does John mention this detail?

This is the third Passover to occur during Jesus' ministry. And since His ministry began at the time of Passover, this event marks the beginning of the third year of His ministry.

However, this is not John's primary reason for mentioning how near the Passover is.

Therefore ...

This statement is followed by the word *therefore*.

What does that indicate?

John tells us about the Passover because it explains the reason for what Jesus is about to say and do. It means that the miraculous feeding of the crowd that follows is going to happen because the Passover is near.

Now why would that be?

This crowd has been following Him all day without food and so they would be quite hungry. Not only that, it is a three day journey up to Jerusalem where they are about to go for the Passover. Therefore, they would need a good meal before they begin that journey.

Philip's test

Why did Jesus question Philip: *where are we to buy bread, so that these may eat?*

John says that Jesus *Himself knew what He was intending to do*. He knew He was going to perform a miracle to provide food for the crowd. Therefore, the purpose of the question was not to find out where there was bread, but to test Philip, as John also records.

In fact, He is pointing out to the disciples that there just isn't enough bread to be bought!

Therefore, by asking this question, He is drawing their attention to the lack of bread and to the lesson He is about to teach them.

Purpose

His purpose is not limited to satisfying the need of the crowd for food.

His purpose is to teach them the nature of the ministry He will be entrusting to them, and to instruct them concerning divine provision for that ministry.

They are incapable of doing it themselves

Now why did Jesus direct this question specifically to Philip?

This is his home territory, and so Philip knows that there just is not enough food available to purchase for the crowd.

Now read verses 7-9 in John's account to see Phillip's response.

He says it would cost more than 200 denarii and there still would not be enough bread! One denarius was one day's wages, so to feed all these people would cost more than 200 day's wages.

Then Andrew pipes up and says that they have *five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people.*

In this way, Jesus has made them responsible to feed the crowd, but all they have is two fish and five loaves. They are incapable of doing it themselves.

The miracle

Now Jesus performs the miracle to feed the crowd.

Read Luke's account here, verses 14b – 17, noticing how He does it.

How did He feed the crowd?

Jesus gave thanks, and broke the bread and fish, and then He kept giving it to the disciples who distributed it to the people until they were all satisfied. He provided the food and gave it to the disciples, who in turn gave it to the people.

Therefore, He gives the apostles the responsibility to distribute what He provides.

Twelve baskets full

All four gospels record that the people were filled or satisfied and when they gathered the leftovers it turns out that there were twelve baskets full of the pieces of bread and fish. It began with just five loaves and two fish and there ends up being twelve basketsful left over.

Matthew 14:21 points out *there were about five thousand men who ate, besides women and children.* So the crowd was much bigger than 5,000.

Jesus' purpose

We see here that Jesus had two purposes in performing this miracle. And when we get to section 76, where He gives a discourse on the Bread of Life, we will see that there was also a third purpose.

Firstly, Mark tells us that He had compassion on the people, so one of His purposes was to feed the people.

Secondly, He used the miracle as an object lesson for the disciples, drawing their attention to three things they were to learn from it.

1. Firstly, they are responsible to feed the people (Luke 9:13).
2. Secondly, they are incapable of doing it themselves (John 6:5-9).
3. Thirdly, they are responsible to distribute what He provides (Matthew 14:19).

B. Messiah's Rejection of the Galileans Offer to make Him King, § 73, Mark 6:45–46; Matthew 14:22–23; John 6:14–15

Disciples sent away

Read Matthew verses 22-23.

Matthew and Mark both begin *immediately*. As soon as the baskets full of left over pieces of bread and fish had been collected, He sent the disciples away in a boat to cross over to the other side of the sea.

Mark adds that they were to go to Bethsaida. But, you ask, were they not already at Bethsaida? Yes! In fact, there are two cities named Bethsaida. The one where the five thousand were fed is in Gentile territory on the north eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. The one they are now going to is on the north western side of the sea in Jewish territory, near Capernaum. As we will see in the next section, John gives their destination as Capernaum.

King!

Read John's account, verses 14-15.

Why does John begin by saying, *therefore*? What is he pointing back to as the reason for what follows?

The people have just eaten as much bread and fish as they wanted, until they were filled. Jesus miraculously provided all this food for them.

How do they respond to this?

They now want to make Jesus the king of Galilee. Moreover, as John points out in verse 15, they intended to make Him king by force.

However, He rejects the offer and departs for the mountains to pray.

Reasons

Why did He reject their attempt to make Him king?

He rejected the offer for three reasons.

1. *Time*

The unpardonable sin has already been committed. The nation has passed the point of no return and the unpardonable sin remains unpardonable.

He has already withdrawn His offer to establish the Messianic Kingdom from this generation.

2. *Place*

The Messiah was to be enthroned in Jerusalem, not in the Galilee. Psalm 2:6, for example says: "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."

3. *Motive*

Their motivation is wrong as we will see more fully in section 76, which records Jesus' discourse on the Bread of Life.

So it was the wrong time, it was the wrong place, and it was the wrong motive.

C. The Training through the Storm, § 74, Mark 6:47-52; Matthew 14:24-33; John 6:16-21

In this section we have the fifth of John's seven signs. And as we will see, this is a lesson for the disciples about dependence on the Messiah.

The situation

Read John 6:16-18; then Mark verse 47 and Matthew verse 24; and notice the circumstances in which the disciples find themselves.

1. We see in John 6:16-17 that they started to cross the sea when evening came, that is at about sunset.
2. John notes that it was already dark. And Matthew says they were *a long distance from land*.
3. Then a storm suddenly blew up, as is typical of this sea. And the boat is being *battered by the waves*.

Now read Mark verse 48.

4. Mark and Matthew both record that it was now the fourth watch of the night. That would be between 3 and 6 in the morning. They set out in the first watch. And a watch is 3 hours long. So, if they are now in the fourth watch they have been on the sea for about 9 hours.
5. Now Mark says that Jesus saw them *straining at the oars, for the wind was against* them.

Actually the Greek is far more graphic than our translation indicates. The word for straining is *basanizo*, which is the verb form of the noun, *basanos*, which means an examination by torture or torment. So the verb means to torture, afflict with pain, vex, or harass. It is also used metaphorically as it is here, and indeed, as Matthew uses it when we read that the boat was being *battered by the waves*. Literally, that would be *the boat was being tortured by the waves*.

And Mark's expression would literally be, *Seeing them being tortured at the oars...*

And John notes that they had only *rowed about three or four miles*.

Jesus comes, walking on the water

Now Mark, in verse 48, says that seeing them in this situation, *Jesus came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass them by*. Notice that this is His response to their impossible situation and urgent need of help. He intends to come to them, *walking on the sea*, and to *pass them by*.

Why, do you suppose, He intended to pass them by?

Surely, He meant it to be an encouragement and a help to them. However, how would it do that?

Remember, He is teaching them and training them for the ministry that lies ahead for them after Pentecost. What has He already taught them?

1. He has already shown them, in an earlier storm, that He has power over the winds and the waves.
2. And they have just come from the feeding of the five thousand, where He demonstrated to them that He will provide for them, and He taught them that they will have a future ministry where they are responsible to feed the people what He provides for them.

Surely, He meant to remind them of these things by His presence, walking on the water. Therefore, **the lesson He is teaching them here is to depend on the Messiah in the face of impossible circumstances.**

Disciples' response

How did they respond?

Read verses 49 and 50 to find out.

They did not recognise Him and they thought they were seeing a ghost and they were terrified.

So Jesus tells them, *take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.*

Peter walks on water

Now see how Peter responds. Read Matthew verses 28-31.

When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, in faith he asked permission to duplicate the miracle. Jesus said to him, *"Come!"* Then he was able to get out of the boat and he was walking on the water. As long as he kept his eyes on the Messiah he was able to do it rather well.

However, when he took his eyes off the Lord and looked at the wind and the waves he began to sink. He cried out to the Lord, *"Lord, save me!"* And Jesus did save him.

Peter's lesson

What is the lesson here for Peter?

Jesus' question, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* gives us a clue.

The lesson has to do with faith and doubt, which is the opposite of faith. As long as Peter was believing Jesus he was able to obey Him and walk on the water. But when he began to focus on the wind and the waves he began to doubt, became frightened, and began to sink.

It was his believing Jesus that enabled him to do the impossible.

So one aspect of the lesson, then, is that he must not only start out in faith, he must also continue in faith and dependence on Him.

Now Jesus commanded Peter to come to Him, but He did not remove the wind and the waves. Not only was Peter going to do what was ordinarily impossible, but the fearsome wind and waves remained a constant distraction to his faith.

The lesson here, both for Peter and for us today, is that **we can depend on Him to enable us to obey His command regardless of the circumstances as they appear from our perspective.** Our focus needs to be on the Lord and not on the circumstances.

Peter learned his lesson well, for in Acts 12:6 we find him sleeping soundly, chained to two guards in prison the night before Herod expects to publicly execute him. The angel needs to hit him hard in the side to awaken him.

The miracle

Now read all three accounts of what happened next.

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind stopped, and, John adds, immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Disciples' response

Read about the response of the disciples in both Mark and Matthew.

Mark points out that *they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened*. They should have understood from the miracle of the loaves that He would provide for them, and He would protect them. And the fact that He has a future mission for them means that they would not be destroyed by the storm.

But their heart was hardened and therefore they didn't gain any insight from that lesson.

Matthew records that when Jesus got into the boat and the wind stopped they *worshiped him, saying, "you are certainly God's Son!"*

Notice that they have good theology here. They recognise that Jesus is the Messianic Son of God.

However, they have not yet learned to apply that theology in their daily living. Consequently, they were filled with fear.

Summary

So in summary and to reiterate, Jesus purpose in this miracle is to teach His disciples to depend on Him in the face of impossible circumstances.

D. The Reception in Gennesaret, § 75, Mark 6:53–56; Matthew 14:34–36;

Read Mark's account.

Now he is back on the Jewish side of the lake, at Gennesaret. (Not to be confused with Gadara or Gergasa on the north-eastern shore where the Gerasene demoniac was healed.)

Gennesaret.

Area on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Magdala, where many of Jesus' healing miracles took place (Mt 14:34; Mk 6:53).

The Plain of Gennesaret, as the district was called, curves along a distance of about four miles with an average width from sea to mountains of approximately one mile. The topography is generally level, with the land rising slowly as it nears the bordering mountains. The unusually fertile soil is laced with flowing streams and rivers and noted for its productivity. Temperatures ranging from hot to mild allow for a long growing season and abundant crops. The fruits of Gennesaret were so exceptional that the rabbis did not allow them in Jerusalem during feast observances, fearing many would attend only to enjoy their succulence. Rabbis termed this area the Garden of God. During Jesus' lifetime, the area was considered the garden spot of Palestine. Trees such as the walnut, palm, olive, and fig, which require a wide diversity of growing conditions, all flourished here. Rich harvests of grapes, walnuts, rice, wheat, vegetables, and melons, as well as wild trees and flowers, were common. Later, centuries of neglect caused the plain to be largely overgrown with thorn bushes, although in more recent years, certain areas have been cleared and productivity restored.

In Luke 5:1, the Sea of Galilee is referred to as the Lake of Gennesaret, the alternate name undoubtedly derived its origin from the bordering plain.

Gennesaret (more accurately termed Ginnesar) was also the later name of the town Chinneroth (Jos 11:2), an ancient city which had long since fallen into ruin by Jesus' day.¹

Personal need and faith

There are those there who believe in Him, and their faith is shown by their response to His presence. They *ran about that whole country* bringing the sick to where He was, and they were *imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak*.

And, just as it was for the haemorrhaging woman, touching the hem of His garment was the outworking of their faith. And not the touching of His garment, but their faith healed them.

We see again here that they were coming to Him with personal needs for healing, and they were coming in faith.

As a result, they were healed.

Tassels

And again the reference to the fringe of His garment again is to the tassels which Jesus wore in obedience to the Mosaic Law.

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (p. 856). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

E. Instruction Concerning the Bread of Life, § 76, John 6:22–71

This section is the third of John's seven discourses, the discourse on the Bread of Life. It is also the first of the seven I AM's. In verse 35 he says "*I am the bread of life*". Let's look at how the conversation unfolds.

The crowd seeking Jesus

Read how John sets the scene in verses 22 – 25.

John begins by telling us that it is *the next day*. The next day after what?

It is the day after Jesus fed the five thousand and sent the disciples away in a boat to return to Galilee.

What were the three things that the crowd noticed that day?

They notice that He is no longer there, that He did not enter the boat with His disciples, and that there was no other boat for Him to have used. Therefore, when other boats arrive from Tiberias they get into them and go to Capernaum looking for Him.

This is the same crowd which had run around the lake to get to Bethsaida ahead of Him.

When they finally find Him, what is uppermost on their minds?

They can't understand how He got there so soon so they ask Him, "*Rabbi, when did You get here?*"

Jesus' response

How does Jesus answer them?

Read verses 26 – 27 to find out.

Truly, truly, I say to you

He begins with the words, *truly, truly, I say to you*. These words serve to focus their attention on what He is about to say. He will use them four times in the course of this discourse, and each time they highlight something that is pivotal in the development of His argument. Think of them as a spotlight shining on the words that follow to make sure you notice them.

Their motive – His starting point

What is it that Jesus emphasises here with these words?

He actually ignores their question, and highlights their motive for seeking Him.

Notice that He tells them two things about their motive for seeking Him. What are they?

1. Signs

First, He tells them what is not motivating them.

They are not seeking Him because they *saw signs*.

Which signs is Jesus referring to?

The signs He did to verify His Messiahship.

Therefore, they are not seeking Him because they saw His signs and believed.

2. *Bread that satisfies*

Then He tells them what is, in fact, motivating them.

They are seeking Him because He provided bread for them and they were satisfied.

Two kinds of bread

Now He has their attention focused on what really matters to them, food for their stomachs, He introduces a contrast between two kinds of food.

Notice that He tells them two things about each kind of food:

1. The food they are seeking is food that they have to work for, and it perishes.
2. However, the food He tells them to seek, is freely given to them by the Son of Man, and it endures to eternal life.

Work

Jesus is directing their attention away from food that perishes and for which they need to work, to food that is available as a gift and endures forever. But they miss the point, as we are about to see.

Read verses 28-29.

Instead of focusing on the food which is freely available as a gift, what are they focusing on?

Work!

Therefore, Jesus tells them,

This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.

This, in fact, is the subject and purpose of the whole discourse.

Notice here a salvation by work! What kind of work saves and results in eternal life? Only faith! Believing in the Messiah whom God has sent is the only work that will result in eternal life.

Request for a sign

Now, how do they respond to His statement that they must believe in the Him whom God has sent?

Read verses 30-33.

Still focusing on work, they ask for a sign!

He began the discourse pointing out to them that they did not come seeking Him because of the signs by which He authenticated His Messiahship. In spite of these many signs, they now ask for another sign so that they can believe in Him!

Moreover, specifying what that sign should be, they ask to be fed miraculously, just as their fathers were fed manna in the wilderness.

How does Jesus respond to them?

The Bread of God

Again Jesus focuses their attention on the answer He is about to give with His words, *truly, truly, I say to you*. And again He uses a contrast to make His point.

What is the contrast?

He contrasts what Moses has given and what God, the Father, gives; and the contrast is between ordinary bread and *true bread*.

Then He describes the *true bread*: *For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world*.

Of course, He is describing Himself. He is the One who came down from heaven and *gives life to the world*.

The Bread of Life

Read verses 34-35.

How do they respond to Him?

Now they want this life giving bread that He is talking about, and they want it, not only now, but always, meaning perpetually.

So He declares to them:

I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

The bread of life satisfies both hunger and thirst.

This is reminiscent of His statement in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:6; *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied*.

Unbelief

Read verses 36-40.

In verse 36, He points out their unbelief. Although they have seen Him, they do not believe.

The will of God

Then in verse 37, He declares that there will be those who come to Him, and those who come to Him are those who believe in Him. The close relationship between believing in Him and coming to Him is introduced in verse 35 and will be developed in what follows. Jesus has more to say about this at the end of the discourse. Coming to Him is an outward expression of a heart that believes in Him.

Those who come to Him are all those that the Father gives Him. None of those will be left out, or cast out. They will all come and they are secure in Him.

Why is He confident about this?

In verses 38-40, He gives the reason why He is so confident that there will be those who believe and come to Him. This is the very will of God! This is the very purpose for which God sent Him and for which He came!

⁴⁰ *For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I myself will raise him up on the last day.*

The point of these verses is this: In spite of their unbelief, and in contrast with it, He will accomplish the mission for which He was sent, and there will be those who believe, and He will not lose one of them, and He Himself will raise them up on the last day! This is the will of God the Father who sent Him!

Grumbling

Now verse 41 begins, *therefore*. What it describes is the response to what He has just said.

Read verses 41-42.

How did they respond?

They were grumbling. This is an onomatopoeic word (γογγύζω, gongyzo) derived from the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of complaint. It means murmuring, muttering, complaining, or grumbling.

Where have we seen this before? In spite of the manna that God provided in the wilderness, the Israelites murmured. Now, God has provided heavenly bread, the bread of life, and still they murmur. This correlation should not be missed!

Instead of believing, they are murmuring.

Taught of God

Read verses 43-46 where we see Jesus' response to their grumbling.

He continues the thought He has already expressed, those who come to Him are those who are given to Him (verse 39) and drawn to Him (verse 44) by the Father, and they are secure in Him. He will keep them to the very last day when He will raise them up.

Then He comes to the key idea in His response to their grumbling, in verse 45, where He quotes from Isaiah 54:13, speaking of Israel in the Messianic Kingdom: *All your sons will be taught of the Lord*. Jeremiah also expresses the same idea in different words in Jeremiah 31:34 and Jeremiah 38:34.

Then He applies the words of the prophets to the present situation by saying: *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me*.

Here He is saying that everyone who has learned from God will believe in Him and come to Him; and this stands in direct contrast to the response of these Jews to His teaching. As He already pointed out to them in verse 36, they do not believe.

What the main point He is making?

The main point here is this: The very fact that they do not believe indicates that they have not been taught of God. They have not heard and learned from the God the Father. Notice the unstated question implied here: if it is not the Father they have heard from, then who are they following?

Then He reminds them that He is the only one who has seen the Father. He is the one who has come down from heaven, who has seen the Father, who has been sent by the Father. Furthermore, He is the one who will receive those the Father gives Him and will raise them up on the last day.

The Parable of the Bread of Life

And then, in verses 47-51, we find His next *truly, truly, I say to you*.

Read these verses, 47-51.

Here He turns His verbal spotlight onto the parable of the Bread of Life. Remember that a parable is always based upon real life. A parable is an analogy taken from everyday life and experience, which teaches an ethical, moral, or spiritual truth.

Here in this section the eating of bread is the real life experience He is using as an analogy.

The point made by this real life experience is that eating bread sustains our life until we die. The patriarchs ate manna in the wilderness, and they died.

What are the key elements of the parable?

The key elements of the parable are the bread which is eaten, the act of eating the bread, and the outcome of the eating, which is life sustained until death.

What are the spiritual realities represented by these elements?

1. Jesus already declared that He is the bread.
2. The act of eating the bread is the act of believing that He is the Messiah.

At this point in time, they do not have to believe that He died for their sins and rose again for that has not yet happened. But they do have to believe that He is the Messianic person and if they believe that then they will have this new kind of life He is offering.

3. And the outcome of eating the bread of life is that the one who eats will not die, but will live forever. He will have eternal life. Those who believe in Him will not die, and as we will learn when we get to John chapter 11, they will live even if they die. (John 11:25)

The spiritual truth taught by this parable is that those who believe in Him have eternal life and live forever.

The question

Did they understand the parable?

Read John 6:52.

⁵²*Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"*

Clearly, the Jews do not understand the parable, and this is one of the reasons He uses parables.

The parable restated

He answers their question in verses 53-58, but He continues to speak in terms of the parable.

Read verses 53-58.

Again He begins, *truly, truly, I say to you* in order to highlight what He is about to say. Then the end of verse 53 is the negative statement of the parable and verse 54 is the positive statement of it.

Now notice the parallel between verse 40 and verse 54.

⁴⁰ *everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.*

⁵⁴ *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.*

These two verses say the same thing: everyone who does a given thing will have eternal life and Jesus will resurrect him on the last day.

In verse 40 it is those who behold the Son and believe who will have eternal life.

In verse 54 it is those who eat His flesh and drink His blood who have eternal life.

Therefore, this is the key element of the parable and its meaning:

Eating His flesh and drinking His blood is the element of the analogy taken from everyday life, and in the spiritual reality it means to believe in Jesus as the Messiah who was promised.

When He says that those who eat His flesh and drink His blood have eternal life He is saying that those who believe in Him will have eternal life.

Elements of the parable

In verses 55-56 He explains the three elements of the parable.

1. His flesh, He says, represents true food.
2. His blood represents true drink.
3. The act of eating His flesh and drinking His blood represents abiding in Him.

In verse 57, He further explains that the life we receive by believing in Him and abiding in Him comes from Him. He uses His relationship with the Father as an illustration of our relationship with Him. Just as He lives because of the Father, so we who believe in Him *will live because of Him*.

Concluding contrast

Jesus concludes by returning to the contrast between the manna and the living bread. The former will not result in eternal life, but the latter will.

Response of His disciples

Then John records the response of His disciples.

Read verses 59-63.

The disciples referred to here are the larger group beyond the twelve.

Many of these also grumbled in unbelief, and Jesus asked them if His teaching causes them to stumble.

Isaiah 8:14-15 prophesied that, for those who don't believe, the Messiah would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. (This is also referred to in Romans 9:31-33; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24; 1 Peter 2:5-8.)

Because they do not understand that He is speaking to them in a parable, they think He literally means them to eat His flesh, and so they are offended and grumble.

Spiritual life

How does Jesus respond to the grumbling of His disciples?

Aware of their grumbling, He asks them: if this causes you to stumble, what will you make of it if you see Me returning to heaven where I came from? In other words, if they only understand His words literally, how will they accomplish the eating of His flesh when it is removed from them as he ascends into heaven?

Therefore, He argues that a purely literal interpretation of His statement doesn't make sense.

Then in verse 63a, He points out that the life He is talking about comes from the Spirit and not from the flesh. This is just what He told Nicodemus at the outset of His ministry. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* (John 3:6.) Although the statement to Nicodemus is generalized, when He says to these disciples that *the flesh profits nothing*, surely He is referring to His own flesh, which by now is uppermost in their minds.

So again, He argues that the literal interpretation of His statement is not intended.

Then in 63b He says that life comes from the words that He has spoken to them. His words are the way in which the Spirit can and will convey to them the eternal life He is speaking about.

In the parables of the kingdom, we learned that the word of God is sown like a seed into the hearts of men. Furthermore, it has a life of its own, and in the heart of the believer it will germinate and grow of its own accord.

Now here He expresses the same idea when He says, *the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

In verses 61-63, then, He is pointing out to them that His statements cannot possibly be taken literally, and that the source of eternal life is not found in His flesh, but in His words. That is: "It is not My flesh, but My words that will bring you life!"

Consequences of unbelief

Then He continues with the word *but*, which introduces a contrasting idea.

Read what He says in verses 64-65.

Here He points out that some of them do not believe. His words will bring life to those who believe, but some of them do not believe!

Then He tells them that their unbelief has not taken Him by surprise because He knew from the beginning of His ministry who did not believe, and who would betray Him.

He continues, *for this reason*. For what reason?

Because *there are some of you who do not believe*.

Therefore, because some of them do not believe, He said to them *that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him from the father*.

The implication is that it won't be granted to those who do not believe, but only to those who believe. In other words, it is only those who believe who will come to Him.

The results

Now John records three results that follow from His discourse on the Bread of life.

Read verses 66-71.

What are the results of His discourse?

1. In verse 66, there is a response from many of the disciples outside the apostolic group.

⁶⁶*As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.*

2. Secondly, there is a reaffirmation of faith on the part of eleven of the twelve apostles.

⁶⁷ *So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"* ⁶⁸ *Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."* ⁶⁹ *"We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."*

Peter acknowledges what Jesus was declaring in verse 63, that Jesus has the words of eternal life. Then he declares that, unlike those who are leaving, eleven of the twelve apostles have believed in Him.

3. Thirdly, Jesus already knows who will betray Him.

⁷⁰ *Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"*

⁷¹ *Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.*

Truly, truly, I say to you ...

Four times in this discourse Jesus used the words, *truly, truly, I say to you*, to focus the crowd's attention on what He was about to say. Now that we have looked in detail at what He said, let us go back to these words to see how He develops His argument.

1. The first one is in verse 26, where He begins by pointing out that their motivation for seeking Him. They are not seeking Him because they saw the signs that authenticate His Messiahship, but they are seeking Him because they ate the bread and were satisfied.

Then He points out that bread perishes, but the food the Son of Man provides endures to eternal life.

2. The second one comes in verse 32, where He says that true bread is given by the Father, gives life to the world, and is satisfying of both hunger and thirst.
3. The third one comes in verse 47, where He points out that those who believe have eternal life, and that He Himself is the one they must believe in.
4. The fourth one comes in verse 53, where He says that those who believe in Him will have eternal life and He will raise them up on the last day.

Review

In this discourse, He is teaching the crowd in parables because the leaders of Israel have rejected His Messiahship. He speaks in parables so they will not understand, and even many of His disciples do not understand and stop following Him.

With one exception, the apostles understand and believe. However, in Judas we find the beginnings of his apostasy.

What is the key message of the discourse?

The key message of the discourse is that eternal life is given to those who believe in Him.

Furthermore, this is in fact the very purpose for which He was sent by the Father, a purpose that will be accomplished. In spite of their unbelief, there will be those who believe and receive eternal life, and they who believe are secure in Him and will be raised up on the last day.

F. Instruction Concerning Defilement, § 77, Mark 7:1-23; Matthew 15:1-20; John 7:1

Walking in Galilee

The events of section 76 where He teaches about the Bread of Life are another turning point in Jesus' ministry, as we see here.

Read John 7:1

¹*After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.*

John's account points out that Jesus no longer walked in Judea because there were constant conspiracies to try to kill Him. He now mostly stays in the Galilean area unless He travels outside the borders of the land of that day, as He does in the next two sections.

Pharisees from Jerusalem

Read Mark 7:1-5 to see what happens next.

Both Mark and Matthew point out that the Pharisees and scribes came to Him from Jerusalem. That is a three day journey to try to entrap Him. Now they are travelling north because He is not travelling south.

They have already collected a number of issues against Him. Can you recall them?

1. He has gone against their tradition of frequent fasting.
2. They already accused Him of being demonised.
3. They declared Him to be a sinner because He rejected the authority of the Mishnah, and
4. the issue of the proper way to observe the Sabbath rest.

At the trial of Jesus they will have one more major issue: His claim to be the Son of God.

And now they travel from Jerusalem to challenge Him on another issue.

Mark gives added detail

Both Matthew and Mark tell us about this event, but notice that Mark gives us more detail. Why would that be?

Since Matthew is writing to Jews He does not have to specify in detail what the issue is. But Mark is writing to Gentiles who do not know these Jewish traditions, and so he provides more background details to help them understand the issue.

The issue

And what is the issue they are concerned about?

Mark points out, in verse 3, the fact that they are very careful to fulfil the laws of the washing of hands, *thus observing the traditions of the elders*. The terms Pharisaic Law, Rabbinic Law, and Mishnaic Law are all interchangeable, but the New Testament refers to it as *the tradition of the elders* or *the tradition of the fathers*.

In verse 5 the question is: *Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders?* And the evidence is: *they eat their bread with impure hands.*

Why is it *the traditions of the elders* they are concerned about? They do not have any reason to accuse Him of violating the Mosaic Law. He keeps it perfectly down to every jot and tittle. Therefore the only basis they have for accusing Him is the Mishnaic Law. And sometimes the Mishnah was viewed not only as equal with Scripture but as having greater authority than Scripture.

These accusations never make much of an impression on Him because He will readily admit to breaking Mishnaic Law, and as we shall see in a later section, He sometimes goes out of His way to do so.

Jesus response

Now He responds by pointing out three things.

1. Hypocrisy

The first point is in verses 6-7 of Mark. Read these.

⁶*And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.*

Why does He call them hypocrites?

The true nature of their traditionalism is hypocrisy.

And what makes it hypocritical is found in verse 7: *BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.*

We often think of worship only in terms of praising God or singing, but worship includes, Biblically, obedience to the commandments of God. And the commandments of God are found in the Word of God and not in the traditions of men!

The Pharisees believe they are worshiping God by obeying their traditions, but it is vain and it is empty.

That is His first point.

2. Neglecting the commandment of God

The second point is in verse 8:

⁸*"Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."*

Sometimes in order to keep a tradition it is necessary to ignore a divine commandment. And that can be simply an error of omission. They are *neglecting the commandment of God.*

3. Setting aside the commandment of God

But for the next point He goes from passive omission to the active commission of disobedience. Read verse 9.

⁹*He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition.*

Sometimes to keep a tradition they have to actively disobey or set aside a divine commandment.

Corban

He provides an example of how they do this using the principle of corban.

Read verses 10-13.

The word corban means something that is dedicated, something that is given. The way the system works is this. At any point in time a Pharisee could wave his hand and say, "corban".

The meaning of this act is that everything that he owns at that time becomes dedicated and he could do one of two things with it: he could give all or part of it to the temple treasury; or he could keep it for his own private use. But what he could not do with it is to give it away to someone else for their private use. That was not an option.

Now many Pharisees were converts to Pharisaism but their parents were not Pharisees. And there was a reluctance to share things with non-Pharisees, even if those non-Pharisees happened to be their parents.

The Mosaic Law quoted by Jesus here says to *honour your father and your mother*. And part of honouring the parents is helping to take care of their welfare when they become too old to take care of themselves physically or mentally.

If a Pharisee saw his father approaching and knew his father was having certain difficulties, before the father arrives he could say, "corban", dedicated. So that when the father comes in and states his need, his son could say I wish you had seen me earlier, I've already decreed my present possessions as corban and by law I cannot give it away to anyone else to use.

But the intent would not necessarily be to give part of all of it to the temple treasury, because he still had the option to use it for his own private use. So by means of a tradition he actively broke a divine commandment, or as Jesus puts it: they were *thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down*.

Many things such as that

In verse 13 Jesus adds: *and you do many things such as that*. There are many other examples you can find just by reading the rabbinic writings. Here is one more example.

The Sabbath commandment

Let's look at the Sabbath commandment. The way the Mosaic Law said to keep the Sabbath is not as a day of corporate worship which is a common misconception today, but a Sabbath was to be a day of rest. You were not to travel on that day, but you were to stay home on that day. And they developed a concept that you don't go more than a Sabbath day's journey which was roughly a modern day kilometer.

Now Pharisees liked to be in the temple area during the Sabbath to observe the special sacrifices on that occasion. But sometimes they would have to carry on business in a place like Bethlehem about 8-10 kilometres south of Jerusalem. For them to be in Bethlehem on time they would have to leave Jerusalem on Saturday afternoon. But how could they travel on Saturday afternoon which was still the Sabbath?

So when the school of the Sophrim considered that issue they began by asking the question: how do you define what a home is? And the answer they came up with is: home is where your possessions are. And that solved the problem.

If a Pharisee had to travel to Bethlehem on the Sabbath day he could send out 8 of his slaves to stand one kilometre apart along the road to Bethlehem. So as he travelled along the road he was never more than a Sabbath day's journey from his possessions and so he was never more than a Sabbath day's journey from his home. And so by means of a tradition they broke a divine commandment.

Examples of their rules

To give you some idea of how seriously they took the issue of the washing of hands, let me give you some of their rules on this.

1. It is better to walk 4 miles to find water to wash your hands than to incur guilt by neglecting hand washing. In other words if you want to eat even just a small seed and the closest body of water was 4 miles away, take a hike! Don't dare eat it until you wash your hands.
2. One who neglects hand washing is as bad as a murderer.
3. The one who neglects hand washing is as one who went into a prostitute.
4. To eat with unwashed hands is like eating non-kosher food, that is, not in accordance with the Mosaic dietary law.
5. One who eats without washing hands is to be uprooted.
6. Three sins bring poverty after them, one of which is neglecting hand washing. In other words if you don't want to die poor, make sure you wash your hands before you eat.

Parable

Now read verses 14-16.

Here Jesus gathers the crowd together and tells them, as Matthew puts it: *It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.*

Consequences of the unpardonable sin

Now one of Matthew's interests in his gospel is to deal with the consequences of the unpardonable sin which occurred in section 61. So he adds some details that were not relevant to Mark's audience.

Read Matthew verses 12-14.

The disciples tell Jesus in Matthew verse 12 that the Pharisees were offended by what He had to say. In response Jesus points out three things about Pharisaism.

1. They are plants which are not planted by God. Therefore they need to be uprooted. And the apostles are to *let them alone*.
2. They are blind guides that lead the blind.
3. Both will fall into a pit. The pit will be the AD 70 destruction.

Policy

Read verse 17 in Mark's account.

In verse 14 He called the crowd to Himself. And then He spoke to them a parable which no one understands. Even the apostles didn't understand as we see here.

This has been His policy since He was rejected in section 61: publicly He speaks in parables and nobody understands. The apostles don't understand. But when He is alone with them He will explain the meaning of the parables because for them the purpose will be to illustrate the truth.

Explanation of the parable

Then we come to His explanation of the parable. Read verses 18-23.

What is the issue He addresses here? The question is: Where does defilement come from? Where does it really begin?

In Pharisaism you were defiled only when you violated the rule. For example, the Mosaic Law forbids the eating of pork and the Pharisees say you are not defiled until you eat that pork.

But Jesus says no, the defilement begins earlier. Before a Jew under the Law eats the pork he will first of all make a decision to do so, and once that internal decision is made, the defilement has begun. And the act of eating the pork is merely the outward expression of the internal defilement that is already there.

And so defilement begins in the heart of man and the external action is merely carrying out what was already in the heart. So He says at the end of verse 23, *all these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.*

Peter

Notice two more things in this section.

In verse 15, Matthew records that it was Peter who asked Jesus to explain the parable to them. And although it was Peter who asked the question and received an answer, the lesson didn't sink in just yet, and in Acts 10, God will have to teach Peter this lesson all over again.

All foods are clean

And Mark points out at the end of verse 19 that *thus He declared all foods clean.* How can He do that when the Mosaic Law declares certain foods unclean?

Part of His mission will be to bring the Mosaic Law as a rule of life to an end. And as a result it will cease to be the rule of life for the believer. And that will remove the distinction between foods that are clean and foods that are not clean.

G. The Reception in Tyre and Sidon, § 78, Mark 7:24–30; Matthew 15:21–28

Tyre and Sidon

Read Matthew verse 21.

For the third time Jesus moves into Gentile territory. (He was in Gentile territory for the healing of the Gerasene demoniac, and for the feeding of the five thousand.)

Now He goes to the *district of Tyre and Sidon*. These cities are part of the Promised Land, but Israel has never had possession of them.

This is the same area where Elijah was sent by the Lord when he left Israel and went to stay with a widow at Zarephath (1Ki. 17:9).

As we will see, His popularity had also spread to this area which today is Lebanon.

Privacy

Read the second part of Mark verse 24.

What was Jesus' purpose in going to this region?

Mark tells us that He was trying to escape notice. His intention is to have a private time with His disciples.

The SyroPhoenician woman

Read Mark verses 25-26 and Matthew verses 22-25.

Here in Mark verse 26, the word translated Gentile is Hellenis, which literally means Greek. She is a Greek woman of the SyroPhoenician race.

Matthew introduces her as a Canaanite woman. The term Canaanite was a general term and there were many specific Canaanite tribes, such as the Perizzites and Jebusites. And the Phoenicians were a branch of the Canaanites. But by this time it was a Greek speaking area and not Canaanite speaking.

She is a Gentile and that is the key thing to note for what happens here.

Her request

What is she asking Jesus to do for her? – as Mark records, she requests Him *to cast the demon out of her daughter*.

Notice the extra detail that Matthew gives here because he is writing to a Jewish audience.

Son of David

How does she make her request in verse 22?

When she hears of His presence, she comes to Jesus and says: *“Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.”*

What does it mean that she addresses Him this way, as *Son of David*?

This is a Messianic title. So it means that she is addressing Him as Messiah and is asking for a miracle based on His messianic character.

Repeated asking

Mark says she *kept asking Him*. And Matthew says she *began to cry out*. The Greek here actually indicates a continuous or repeated action. She is repeatedly asking Him in these terms, but as Matthew records, *He did not answer her a word*.

Why is that? Why doesn't Jesus answer her until the disciples implore Him to send her away?

There are two reasons:

1. Israel has rejected His Messiahship, and so on that basis He can do nothing for her. He will not act in His role as Israel's Messiah because He has been rejected.
2. His Messiahship was intended for Israel, not for the Gentiles. For He says, *I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*.

For these two reasons He can do nothing for her.

Changed request

Notice how she changes her request in verse 25. What is different about it now?

Matthew says: *she came and began to bow down before Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"*

To *bow down* here is a Greek word meaning to worship, and it is usually translated that way. (See for example in John 4:20-24.)

So now she worships Him. And how does she address Him?

She no longer addresses Him as *Son of David*, but simply as *Lord*. The Greek is *Kurios*, and is equivalent to the Hebrew *Jehovah*.

And her request is simply, *help me!* This is a personal request for help.

So now she is not coming on the basis of His Messiahship, but on the basis of personal need.

A parable

Read how He responds to her new request in verses 26-27.

To make sure she has learned the point and also to see if she has faith He responds to her with a parable.

The word for *dogs* in the Greek means puppies. Just as food intended for the children should not be given to pets with the result that the children go hungry, even so it is not proper to take what was promised to Israel, the Jewish people, and give it to the Gentiles.

Her answer continues the metaphor of the parable and shows that she understood what He was teaching her: *Yes, Lord; but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their masters' table*.

In other words she is not asking for what belongs to the Israel, she is only asking for what did extend to the Gentiles. Even the Jewish Covenants (Genesis 12:3) promise that some of the benefits will extend to the Gentiles.

So she is now showing that she has passed the test. She understands the truth and believes.

The miracle

Now Jesus acknowledges her faith and grants her request. Read verse 28.

²⁸*Then Jesus said to her, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed at once.*

So not on the basis of His Messiahship, but on the basis of her personal need and her great faith He heals her daughter.

H. The Reception in Decapolis, § 79, Mark 7:31–8:9; Matthew 15:29–38

Gentile territory

Now Jesus leaves the region of Tyre and travels south again.

Read Mark verse 31, and notice where He goes, and where He does not go.

He carefully keeps away from Galilee which is the territory of Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas had control over Galilee and Perea. And Pontus Pilate had control of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea.

So Jesus travels from Sidon down the eastern side of the Jordan River until He reaches Decapolis.

Decapolis is a union of 10 Greek gentile cities of which only one was on the west side of the Jordan, city of Scythopolis (Old Testament - Beth-Shan).

So Jesus remains in Gentile territory, and this is His third withdrawal from the Jewish areas.

A Jewish community

This section focuses our attention of two events, one a Jewish event and the other a Gentile event. Even though the Decapolis is a union of 10 Greek gentile cities there were small Jewish communities within these cities.

A Jew healed

We'll follow Mark's account first, to see the Jewish event that he records. Read Mark verses 32-37.

How do we know this man who came for healing was a Jew?

We deduce that he was a Jew because we see Jesus implementing His policy toward Jews which He has adopted since section 61 when He was rejected by them. In verse 36 *He gave them orders not to tell anyone*. So this is most likely a Jew who was brought to Jesus by other Jews.

These ones who brought the deaf man beseech Jesus to heal him by the laying on of hands. The man had a two-fold problem, he was deaf and because of being deaf he also had an impediment of speech.

Since there were Jews present in the multitude, and because of His policy not to do the miracle in public, He takes the man aside *from the crowd* to heal him privately. Remember there are no more signs for the general population but He does respond to personal need on the basis of faith.

The healing

He is asked to lay hands on the man, but instead He performs a six step process which is unique in Scripture.

1. He put His fingers in the man's ears to deal with his deafness.
2. He spits.
3. He uses His own saliva on the tongue to deal with the man's impediment of speech.
4. He looks up to heaven for the Father's help.
5. He sighed.
6. Then He commanded the healing, and the man could both hear and speak.

The result

And then, as we already noted, *He gave them orders not to tell anyone!* So we continue to see His policy being carried out.

However, those who saw the miracle proclaimed it widely! So the news about Him continued to spread.

And Mark records in verse 37 that they were utterly astonished.

Matthew's perspective

Matthew, writing to the Jews, has a different perspective from Mark. And interestingly, while Mark writes about the Jewish event for the Romans to read, Matthew is more interested in telling the Jews what happened among the Gentiles.

Fruit of demoniac's ministry

What happened when Jesus first came to the region of Decapolis? He healed the demonic who had a legion of demons. And as a result the local inhabitants asked Him to leave them (section 66).

And remember that He sent the man back to his people to report to them *what great things the Lord has done for him. And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.*

And now in this section we will see the results of this man's ministry.

Read Matthew verses 30 and 31.

Instead of asking Jesus to leave as they had before, they are coming to Him in large crowds bringing to Him those who need to be healed.

And these Gentiles are glorifying the God of Israel.

So now the Gentiles are accepting the Jewish Messiah because of the testimony of the former demonized man, and Jesus is reaping where the other man did the sowing.

And Matthew's point is that while the Jews have rejected His Messiahship, the Gentiles are accepting Him.

Feeding four thousand

Now we come to the feeding of the four thousand.

Read Mark's account, verses 1-9.

Gentile crowd

While there are a lot of similarities between this event and the feeding of the 5000, the two events are quite different. And one key difference is that the feeding of the 5000 had a Jewish crowd; and the feeding of the 4000 has a mostly Gentile crowd. This crowd is coming as a result of the testimony of the demonized man who was cleansed back in section 66.

Training the twelve

Once again what He does here is part of their training in preparation for the ministry they will have after His ascension.

What was the lesson that Jesus taught the disciples with the feeding of the five thousand?

He taught them that they are responsible to feed the people, that they don't have the resources to do it, and that they are responsible to feed the people what He provides for them.

Did they learn that lesson?

No! When He tells them that He has compassion on the crowd and wants to feed them, they respond that they don't have enough bread, and they isn't even enough bread *in this desolate place to satisfy these people*.

Their response shows that they failed to learn the lesson of the feeding of the five thousand (section 72), that Jesus can provide in these situations.

The miracle

Once again He takes the loaves and the fish, gives thanks, breaks them, and gives them to the disciples to distribute to the crowd until they were all satisfied.

This time there are seven large baskets full of left over pieces and the crowd numbered 4,000 men besides the women and children.

The lessons for the disciples

This lesson repeats the earlier lesson that they are responsible to feed the people, they do not have the resources to do it themselves, and they are responsible to distribute what He provides.

But this is not merely a repetition of the earlier lesson. There is also an extra lesson this time. This time they learn that the Gentiles are to benefit from His ministry. And this is a strong indication that they will be ministering to the Gentiles at a later time, and yes, the Gentiles will also benefit from the coming of the Messiah.

I. The Rejection in Magadan, § 80, Mark 8:10-12; Matthew 15:39-16:4

Return to Galilee

Read Matthew's account 15:39 – 6:4.

After feeding the four thousand, Jesus sends the crowd away, and He and His disciples return to Jewish territory at Magadan (in the region of Dalmanutha) which is probably near Gennesaret, south of Capernaum.

Pharisees and Sadducees

Notice that the Pharisees and the Sadducees are now united in their endeavor to catch Jesus out. They came tempting Him and asking to be shown a sign from heaven.

A sign from heaven

They are demanding an authenticating sign. Even after they have rejected Him in section 61 they still come and ask Him for a sign.

But notice it is a qualified request. They want a sign from heaven! Where do they say His signs come from? Every time He gives them a sign they say it comes from Hell, from Beelzebub.

Signs of the times

Jesus chastises them because they know how to forecast the weather by reading the signs in the sky, but they do not understand the signs of the times.

The sign of Jonah

Then He restates His policy on signs.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and a sign will not be given it, except the sign of Jonah.

This is the same answer He gave them in section 62, when they asked for a sign immediately after they had rejected Him.

For the nation there will be no more signs except the one sign, the sign of Jonah, which is the sign of resurrection. And to repeat, this sign will come to Israel on three occasions:

1. Resurrection of Lazarus
2. Resurrection of Yeshua
3. Resurrection of the two witnesses of Revelation 11.

J. The Warning against Rejection, § 81, Mark 8:13–26; Matthew 16:5–12

Now Jesus leaves the Pharisees and Sadducees at Magadan and crosses the Sea of Galilee again into Gentile territory. And on the way He gives them an important warning.

Watch out and beware

Read Matthew 16:5-12.

What happens here?

Jesus uses the word leaven symbolically, saying: *Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees*. But the disciples take it literally, discussing among themselves that they have no bread.

Then He asks them why they are talking about not having bread. Didn't they learn from the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand that He will provide bread when it is needed?

Then in verse 11, in view of what they should have learned from these miracles, He asks them how is it that they didn't know that He wasn't speaking literally.

Then, at last, they realise that He was warning them about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Leaven

Whenever leaven is used symbolically it is always a symbol of sin. And within the gospels it is specifically the sin of false doctrine or false teaching.

Three types of leaven

And in this warning Jesus warns them about three types of leaven or false teaching. Matthew mentions the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and Mark adds the leaven of Herod, or the Herodians. So He warns them about three kinds of leaven: that of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians.

These three groups are spreading a leaven or false teaching about Jesus, and the disciples are to be careful not to believe any of the material that they are hearing from these groups. And each of the three leavens has a different content:

1. The leaven of the Pharisees is that Jesus is demon possessed.
2. The leaven of the Sadducees is that He is against the temple worship system. Probably this is in light of the fact that Jesus drove the money changers out during the first Passover of His ministry.
3. The leaven of the Herodians is that He is opposed to Roman rule through the house of Herod. The Herodians are in favor of Roman rule, as long as it is through the house of Herod.

A blind man

Now read Mark's account of what happened when they arrive in Bethsaida. Read Mark verses 22-26.

Policy of privacy

So they come again into Bethsaida which is Gentile territory, but also contains a Jewish community.

And notice that Jesus takes the man by the hand and leads him out of the village, so that He can heal him privately. Once again this is in keeping with His policy since section 61 where Israel's leaders rejected Him as their Messiah.

A two stage healing

Also notice that this man is not healed immediately. Jesus heals him in two stages. And this is the only miracle recorded in the gospels that He performs in two stages.

1. In the first stage he spits on the man's eyes and then lays His hands on him, and as a result the man has partial sight. He can now see, but his vision is blurred and he sees men looking like trees walking around.
2. Then Jesus touched his eyes a second time and his sight was fully restored so that he was able to see everything clearly.

Why wasn't the man healed the first time Jesus touched his eyes? Surely He was able to heal him the first time!

Application to the disciples

There is a parallel between this miracle and the developing understanding of the apostles.

1. Section 82 will show that they have partial sight, and section 83 will show that they are still partially blind.
2. By the time of Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit they will have full sight and no blindness.

Application to Israel

There is another parallel with the nation of Israel.

1. Israel has partial sight now - there is a remnant who believes.
2. But they will have full sight when all Israel will be saved after the fullness of the Gentiles is complete.

Read Romans 11:25 - 27, noticing the word "until": *a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

Partial blindness corresponds to the partial hardening. And because it is partial there will always be Jewish people who believe. And when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in then the Jews' blindness will be totally removed and they will see clearly and all Israel will be saved.

Policy of silence

Notice again in verse 26, *He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."* The policy of silence continues.

K. The Confession of Peter, § 82, Mark 8:27–30; Matthew 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21

Now we come to another milestone in Jesus' ministry. Its exam time for the apostles, and we will see His questions and their answers, and what He says to them as a result.

And this section will illustrate the partial sight of the disciples that was illustrated by the two-stage healing of the blind man in the last section.

Background context

But before we continue it will be helpful to take note of the context in which this conversation occurs. And there are two elements of context that are essential to our understanding of what Jesus says here. One is about the geography of the location where this event takes place. And the other is about some Greek words that are used here.

Caesarea Philippi

The first thing to notice is that this event takes place in Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13). This is not in Jewish territory but in Herod Philip's Gentile territory, north of the Sea of Galilee.

Caesarea is also at the foot of Mt Hermon, the highest peak, at 9,166 feet, in the holy land. Caesarea is built at the base of a massive cliff rock at the southern edge of Mt. Hermon. The town was built from this cliff and outward.

Now at the base of the cliff rock is a cave that you can still see today. A river used to pour out of the cave, but an earthquake about 100 years ago changed its course. Today the river is called Banyas. It is one of the four sources that make up the Jordan River. In Jesus' day the river used to gush out from this cave, but now it comes out to the right of it.

And as it shoots out it breaks off little stones and pebbles, and as you look down at the stream it is full of little stones and pebbles that were broken off from the cliff rock where it came out.

Yeshua will say a number of things that relate directly to this geography of the immediate area, so it will be important in our understanding.

Petra and Petros

The second thing that will be important to our understanding of what Jesus says concerns the Greek words that He will use, or that Matthew will use to record what He says.

The Greek word for "huge cliff-rock" is *petra*. The Greek word for "small stone" or "pebble" is *petros*. So *petra* means a "huge, massive cliff-rock" like the one that overshadows Caesarea-Philippi, and *petros* means "small stone" or "pebble" like the ones in the bed of the stream that shoots out from the base of the cliff-rock.

We'll need to be aware both of these Greek words and the geography of Caesarea Philippi as we listen to Jesus talking to Peter later in this section.

Exam time

Now Jesus has been teaching His disciples for a period of time, including the warning against three types of leaven which we saw in the previous section.

And now it is exam time. If you like, it is the end of the school term. Can they pass the test?

In this examination Jesus asked them two questions.

1. Read Matthew 16:13-14 where we will find the first question and the apostles' answer.

The first question is: *Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*

They answered that there was no single opinion about the Person of Jesus, but among the masses there were different opinions.

- a) Some believed that Yeshua was John the Baptist, resurrected from the dead.
- b) Others believed He was Elijah, the one who was to come according to Malachi 4:5-6.
- c) A third opinion was that Jesus was Jeremiah the Prophet.
- d) Fourthly, still others believed that He was one of the prophets, perhaps Isaiah or Ezekiel.

One thing is very clear: in general, the people recognized His supernatural authority; they connected Him with one of these significant characters of the Old Testament, or with John the Baptist of the New Testament.

However, they failed to clearly discern who He really was. He was not John the Baptist; He was not Elijah; He was not Jeremiah; He was not Isaiah or any other prophet.

Specifically, He was Yeshua the Messiah, and no one else.

So concerning the first question of this examination, people generally felt that Jesus had supernatural authority and must therefore be a special Person, but they all guessed wrong in that they did not discern Him to be the Messiah Himself.

2. This leads to the second question. Read verses 15 - 16.

He said to them, *"But who do you say that I am?"*

In the Greek it is more emphatic, and it reads: ***but you, who do you say that I am.*** In contrast to the crowds, who do you say that I am?

Peter spoke for the disciples and answered the second question correctly. *Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

The Greek is much more emphatic here also. The Greek literally reads:

You are the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One!

The disciples concluded the correct answer; they passed the examination; they learned their lessons. They knew Jesus to be not merely a supernatural character; they knew Him to be the Messiah Himself.

The Response of Jesus

Since they have passed the test, Jesus now tells Peter five things. Read verses 17 – 19 and then we will discuss each point in turn.

1. *The Source of Peter's Knowledge*

What is the point Jesus is making in verse 17?

This is His first point: what Peter understood was a result of divine illumination, not something he learned from mere human reasoning.

2. *The Rock and the Church*

The second statement He made to Peter is in verse 18a:

I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church;

Context

As we look for the meaning of this statement, remember three things.

- a) Remember where it was made and what they were looking at as He spoke.

They were standing at the base of a huge cliff-rock, out of which there flowed a stream of water that broke small stones from the cliff-rock, and these stones could be seen in the bed of the stream.

- b) In Greek, which Matthew was writing, the stones are called *petros*, and the rock from which they were broken is called *petra*.

- c) Remember why Jesus was saying it. Peter had just passed Jesus' exam question with flying colours by saying: *You are the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One!*

In this setting He says to Peter:

This was revealed to you, not by human reasoning, but by My Father who is in heaven.

And then He adds,

You are Petros (a small stone), and upon this Petra (this huge rock) I will build My church.

Meaning

Now, what do you think Jesus meant when He said that?

In the stream in front of them are small stones broken off from the huge cliff rock.

Peter, He says, is a small stone broken from a particular huge rock – not any rock, but *this rock*.

Which rock?

In the previous sentence Peter's statement that Jesus is *the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One* is the object in view. It is God the Father who revealed it to Peter.

And in this sentence, Peter's statement is still the object in view. *This rock* in this sentence, and *this*, which was revealed by the Father, in the previous sentence both refer to the fact that Jesus is *the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One*.

Why does Jesus use this illustration to describe Peter?

Jesus describes him as a small stone broken from this huge rock because the Father has revealed Jesus' Messiahship to him and he has believed it. The rock is the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, and Peter's belief that Jesus is the Messiah makes him a small stone chipped from that rock.

Then He adds that this fact, this rock, is the foundation upon which He will build His church.

Rock

This use of rock as a symbol is consistent with its use throughout the Scriptures. Whenever rock is used symbolically in the Scripture, it is always a symbol of the Messiah. So the church is to be built, not upon Peter as some suppose, but upon the Messiah. And even more specifically, it is to be built upon what Peter has just said about the Messiah: *You are the Messiah, the Son of the God, the living one.*

An incorrect interpretation

Catholicism uses this verse to teach that the church was built upon Peter, and they conclude that Peter was the first Pope. And by means of Papal succession all of the popes were the true representatives of God, having received authority from pope to pope all the way from Peter. As a result they say that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church.

When they define this to be the meaning of verse 18, they are implying that Matthew, who wrote of the event, did not know some very simple rules of Greek grammar, which anyone in Greek 101 would quickly learn.

Petros is a masculine noun, and *Petra* is a feminine noun, and the simple rules of Greek grammar are that a masculine modifies a masculine and a feminine modifies a feminine, and a neuter modifies a neuter.

What you cannot have in Greek grammar is a feminine modifying a masculine or vice versa. That is not the way Greek grammar works. So grammatically it cannot possibly mean that the church is being built upon Peter.

Now Jesus was not speaking Greek at the time but Hebrew. And exactly the same rule applies in the Hebrew grammar.

Contrast

Jesus is contrasting Peter with Peter's own statement. Peter you are a small stone like the ones in this stream, but upon the massive cliff rock out of which you are cut, I will build my church. I will build My church upon the statement you have just made about My Messiahship.

So the church is going to be built on the foundation of the Messiahship of Jesus.

3. The Gates of Hell

Then in verse 18 Jesus says: *and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.*

The expression "*gates of Hades*" refers to physical death. This is clearly what it means in places such as Job 38:17; Psalm 9:13; 107:18; Isaiah 38:10; and Jonah 2:6, where it is translated as "gates of death."

What is Jesus saying here?

Physical death itself will not be able to defeat His building of the Church.

When Jesus died it may have appeared that His program for the church was a failure, but it was by His very death, followed by His resurrection, that the foundation of the Church was laid.

His death and resurrection proved His Messiahship, thus establishing Him as that massive rock that serves as the chief cornerstone of the foundation itself.

Will build

Notice He did not say, "I am building My Church," as though the process were already started. He used a future tense, "I will build my church." It was future, it had not yet begun. In fact, the Church only began to be built in Acts 2. (This contradicts the Covenant or Replacement theology teaching that the church has existed since Adam and therefore the true church was always the true Israel, and not ethnic physical Israel.)

Death will not defeat God's purpose

Jesus' death and resurrection is the foundation upon which the Church is built. The death of Jesus did not prevail against the Church, but rather it laid the foundation for it.

And neither did the death of the apostles and the subsequent deaths of believers throughout the centuries succeed in defeating the Church.

The Church prevailed and God's intended program will be fulfilled.

4. The Keys of the Kingdom

Matthew 16:19a. *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*

It is this statement that has originated all the stories, cartoons, and jokes about Peter's standing at the "Pearly Gates," determining who would or would not be allowed to enter into Heaven. However, that is not the meaning of this passage. Peter does not have the authority to decide who will or who will not enter into Heaven. On the contrary, that decision is made upon the basis of the acceptance or rejection of Jesus.

What are keys used for? The purpose of the keys is to open and close doors. The emphasis here is on the opening of the door.

Which door are the keys to open?

In this context, it is the opening of the door of the Church (v. 18). Peter was given "the keys of the kingdom," that is, the keys of the mystery kingdom or the Church.

What does it mean that Peter was given these keys, and how did he use them? We can discover the answer to this question by reading the book of Acts.

He was to open the door to three groups of people living in his day: the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles. It was Peter's responsibility to open the door to each one of these groups. And once he opened the door to that particular group, it stayed open for that group. Peter used the keys to open the door for all three groups in the Book of Acts.

1) First, the door was opened to the Jews.

In Acts 2, Peter preached his first sermon after being baptized by the Holy Spirit and many Jews believed. And it is by Spirit baptism that the Church came into being. This is the reason that all believers are baptized into the Church, the Body of the Messiah, by the Holy Spirit when they believe (I Cor. 12:13).

In Acts 2, Peter opened the door of the Church to the Jews and, from then on, it stayed open for the Jewish people.

2) Next, he opened the door for the Samaritans in Acts 8.

What is interesting is that the first one to preach the gospel to the Samaritans was not Peter, but Philip. Although Philip preached the gospel, and although many of the Samaritans believed it and were baptized by water, none of them were baptized by the Spirit. Thus none of them were able to enter into the Church.

What is the problem? The problem was not that they were not spiritual enough. Far from it! Rather, the problem was that, even though Philip preached the gospel, he did not have the keys.

Later, the Jerusalem Church sent Peter to Samaria and, by the laying on of hands by the Apostle Peter, the Samaritans were baptized by the Holy Spirit and able to enter into the Body of the Messiah. From then on, the door stayed open for the Samaritans.

In Acts 8, Peter used his keys to open the door of the Church to the Samaritans.

3) Finally, the door was opened for the Gentiles.

In Acts 9, Paul was saved and commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles. While Paul received the commission to be the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul did not have the keys.

In Acts 10, Peter preached the gospel to the House of Cornelius, a house of Gentiles. As he was preaching, they believed his message, were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of the Messiah, and became members of the Church.

At that point, Peter opened the door to the Gentiles by the use of his keys. From then on the door stayed open to Gentiles.

Now the way was open for Paul to fulfill his commission. Beginning in Acts 13 and throughout the remainder of the Book of Acts, there is the record of Paul's activities as the apostle among the Gentiles.

Peter had the keys, which meant that he was responsible for opening the door:

- 1) first to the Jews, which he fulfilled in Acts 2;
- 2) then to the Samaritans, which he fulfilled in Acts 8;
- 3) and then to the Gentiles, which he fulfilled in Acts 10.

5. Binding and Loosing

The fifth and final statement Jesus made to Peter at this time is in Matthew 16:19b: ... *and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*

At this point, Peter was given the right to bind and to loose, though later it was given to the other apostles as well.

Bind and Loose

What do the terms "bind" and "loose" mean?

Notice that in this context, it has nothing to do with the binding or the loosing of Satan, as some are in the habit of doing today.

From the Jewish frame of reference, the terms "bind" and "loose" were used in two ways among the rabbis. It was used in a judicial sense and in a legislative sense.

	Judicial Sense	Legislative Sense
Asur (to bind)	To punish	To forbid
Mutar (to loose)	Not to punish	To permit

In a legislative sense, to bind meant "to forbid something," and to loose meant, "to permit something." The Pharisees took upon themselves this authority. They claimed to have the authority to permit that which the Law may have forbidden and to forbid that which the Law may have permitted.

When it was used in a judicial sense, to bind meant "to punish," and to loose meant, "to release from punishment."

Examples

By way of illustration, in ancient times when there were weddings, both the bride and groom would wear a garland, a crown of flowers, and the bride would be carried in a special litter, like an enclosed wagon carried by men on poles. That is no longer permitted in orthodox weddings today. In the Talmud in Sotah 4:19 it spells out exactly when it was forbidden, and notice the terminology that it uses.

"During the war with Vespasian, they bound garland of bridegrooms, and the playing of bells."

So from that time on two things were forbidden. It was forbidden for bridegrooms to wear crowns and the playing of bells was forbidden at weddings.

During the war of Vespasian they also bound that no one should teach his son Greek. In the Bar Kochba war they bound the bride's rides about the village in a litter, so it was forbidden after the second Jewish revolt.

Also in the Talmud, in a section dealing with the subject of vows (*Nedarim* chapters 6:5-7), it says:

"If a person makes a vow to abstain from meat he is loosed to eat broth, water that was cooked with meat in it."

"If a person makes a vow to abstain from wine he is loosed to eat that which is cooked in wine."

Apostles

What Jesus gave to Peter here, and later to the other apostles, was something uniquely given to the apostles. They had the authority to bind and to loose both in the area of legislation and in judicial punishment.

Legislative

First, legislatively, the apostles were given the authority to permit and to forbid. This is the authority they exercised throughout their epistles. In the New Testament Epistles, the apostles used their authority to forbid things, which formerly were permitted, and to permit things which were formerly forbidden.

Judicial

An example of the judicial use of this authority is found in Acts chapter 5 where Peter bound Ananias and Sapphira for punishment because they lied to the Holy Spirit. They were killed because Peter bound them for punishment, using his apostolic authority.

Unique to apostles

This authority to bind and to loose in the areas of both legislation and judicial punishment was part of their authority as apostles.

Later generations of the Church have no right to this kind of authority, even though the Roman Catholic Church has often claimed this type of authority for itself. Apostolic authority was never intended to be passed on in succession.

There is only one area where the church is given authority to bind and to loose, and that is in the area of church discipline as described in Matthew 18:16-20. And in this area, to bind would mean "to excommunicate" and to loose would mean, "Not to excommunicate."

Policy of silence

Now read verse 20 of Matthew's account. *Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.*

Notice the continuation of His policy introduced after His rejection in section 61. Even they are forbidden to proclaim His Messianic claims at this time.

The importance of this section

The confession of Peter and the response of Jesus prepared the way for the establishment of the Church and the recording of New Testament Scriptures through apostolic authority.

Partial sight

This section shows that the disciples do have partial sight. They understand that Jesus is *the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One*. The next section will show that they are also partially blind, and their understanding was incomplete at this time.

L. Instruction Concerning the Death of the King, § 83, Mark 8:31–37; Matthew 16:21–26; Luke 9:22–25

From that time

Read Matthew verse 21.

Notice that it was *from that time* that Jesus began to teach His disciples about His coming death and resurrection. What time is Matthew referring to?

It is only after Peter's confession that Jesus is *the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One* that Jesus begins to spell out His program of death and resurrection. This is the first time He begins to deal with that specific aspect of His mission.

Remember He is now in His last year. The feeding of the five thousand in section 72 marked the beginning of the third year of His ministry. So this milestone, where we see Peter's confession of His Messiahship followed by His beginning to teach them about His death and resurrection, occurs during the third year of His ministry.

Stated plainly

And Mark adds here that *He was stating the matter plainly*.

As we continue through the gospels we shall see that He will say this in more and more detail as the time for the cross draws closer.

We will also see that as much as He tells them, and as often as He tells them, and with all the detail that He gives them, they never understand what He is saying.

So when these things finally do happen it catches them totally by surprise.

Four points

At this point Yeshua keeps it simple by pointing out four steps:

1. He must go to Jerusalem.
2. There He must suffer and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes.
3. He will be killed.
4. The third day He will rise again.

Notice that Matthew and Luke record that He said *on the third day*, and Mark records that He said *after three days*. As far as Jewish writers are concerned, these terms carry exactly the same meaning. He will arise on the third day; He will arise after three days. We will see how this fits when we talk about His resurrection later on.

In all three accounts the three days is emphasised by putting it first in the word order.

Peter's rebuke

Now read Peter's response in Matthew verses 22-23.

Here we see that Peter's understanding was incomplete. His sight was only partial.

The first time Jesus described the program of His death and resurrection, Peter, who has just passed the test in the previous section with flying colours, fails the test in this section.

He took Jesus aside and *began to rebuke him*. The Greek word for rebuke is a very strong word. It means: "to reprove, to censor, to prevent an action from happening, even the use of physical restraint." So you can picture Peter taking hold of Jesus to restrain Him, and rebuking Him, saying: "*God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to you.*"

Notice the paradox in this situation. Immediately before this Peter said to Jesus: *you are the Messiah, the Son of the God, the living one*. And now Peter rebukes the Messiah, the Son of the God, the Living One. Who goes around rebuking the Messiah? Peter, that's who!

Get behind me Satan

Jesus' response is in verse 23: *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me Satan!"*

Now Jesus didn't suddenly have a memory lapse and forget Peter's name. So why does He address Peter this way?

The point is that Peter, in trying to keep Messiah from the Cross, is doing exactly what Satan is trying to do. Satan does want to see Jesus dead, but he doesn't want Him to die at the proper time (at Passover) or in the proper way, which was by crucifixion. So Peter, in trying to keep Jesus from the Cross, is doing the work of Satan.

Lessons on discipleship

Then speaking to the Apostles as a group, He teaches them three lessons in discipleship. Read Matthew verses 24-26.

1. *Identify with Him in His rejection*

The first lesson is in verse 24.

What does it mean to take up a cross and follow Him?

It was the Roman custom to make convicted criminals carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion. So bearing a cross meant carrying their own execution device while facing ridicule and humiliation along the way to death.

Therefore to take up a cross and follow Him means to choose to identify with Him, knowing that the consequence may very well be rejection and humiliation, and even death.

Anyone wishing to be His disciple must identify with Him in His rejection.

The Scriptures draw a clear distinction between salvation and discipleship. Salvation is the mere act of faith exercised in believing that He died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. And that is the only way of salvation given in Scripture.

But discipleship involves a lot more than simply believing in Him, and the first point He makes here is that the disciple must fully identify with His rejection.

2. The second lesson is in verse 25.

Anyone who tries to save his life by not identifying with Him will actually lose his life, and anyone who loses his life as a result of identifying with Him will actually find it. In other words he will live even though he dies!

3. And the third lesson is in verse 26.

The attempt to gain all the world's riches may well cost a man his very soul. And all the riches of the world are insufficient to purchase a man's soul.

Conversely, true believers who become disciples will find both true safety and true riches.

M. Instruction Concerning the Kingdom, § 84-85

1. The Promise of Revelation, § 84, Mark 8:38–9:1; Matthew 16:27–28; Luke 9:26–27

Read Mark's account, 8:38-9:1.

This generation

Notice the emphasis on that particular generation in verse 38: *For whosoever 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.*

The emphasis is on that particular generation. And, even among His believers, those who become ashamed of Him, will find that the Messiah will be ashamed of him at the second coming. This is not a loss of salvation, but the loss of his place of reward in the Messianic Kingdom.

Glory

Also notice that when He comes, He will come *in the glory of His Father*.

The Greek word is *doxa*, which means "brightness," "brilliance," or "splendour". So He will come in the brightness, brilliance or splendour of His Father. This, of course refers to the Shechinah Glory.

Shechinah Glory

The usual title found in the Scriptures for the Shechinah Glory is: the glory of the Lord.

The Hebrew form is *Kvod Adonai*, which means "the glory of the Lord," and describes what the Shechinah Glory is.

The Greek title is *Doxa Kurion*, which is also translated as "the glory of the Lord." And again, *doxa* means "brightness," "brilliance," or "splendour". So the Greek form describes how the Shechinah Glory appears.

Other titles give it the sense of "dwelling," which portrays what the Shechinah Glory does. The Hebrew for Shechinah, from the root *shachan*, means "to dwell." The Greek word *skeinei* means "to tabernacle," and is derived from the Hebrew Shechinah.

Promise

Then Jesus makes another point: that some of his disciples will not die until they see the glory He will have in that Messianic Kingdom. His emphasis is on seeing the power of that kingdom, the glory of that kingdom. The promise made in this section is fulfilled in the next section with the revelation of the kingdom at the transfiguration.

In the next section we will see that the ones who are to see His glory are the three apostles: Peter, James and John. And this promise will be fulfilled to them in the next section.

2. The Transfiguration: The Revelation of the Kingdom, § 85, Mark 9:2–8; Matthew 17:1–8; Luke 9:28–36a

Now we come to the section that describes the transfiguration. Read Luke 9:28.

Timing

In regards to timing, Mark and Matthew say *after 6 days*, and Luke says *approximately 8 days*.

How can we resolve this difference?

Perhaps Luke includes the day of departure and the day of return so as to tell us that they were on the mountain approximately eight days after the sayings of the previous section, while Mark and Matthew record the time of their departure to the mountain.

The mountain

Peter, James and John (the two brothers) are chosen to accompany Jesus onto a mountain, which Luke refers to as a particular mountain, *the mountain*.

Which mountain would that be?

Because Mark and Matthew say it was a high mountain, and Luke refers to it as *the mountain*, and because of where they were at the time, Caesarea Philippi, which was at the foot of one of the ridges of Mt Hermon, this high mountain could be no other mountain than Mt. Hermon.

Mt. Hermon is 9,232 feet above sea level, and 8,632 feet (2,631 metres) above Caesarea Philippi.

However, if you go to Israel today they will take you to the Church of the Transfiguration that has been built on Mt Tabor. This Mt. Tabor site is about 45 miles from the Mt. Hermon site. It was not a high mountain but was a fortified place, for it guarded one of the seven entrances into the Jezreel Valley.

Mt. Hermon fits both geographically and contextually and is a place where they would be alone, without crowds around them. That would not have been true at Mt Tabor.

Transfiguration

Now to see what happened here, read the next paragraph from all three gospel accounts.

What is happening here?

As Matthew says, *his face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as light*. Putting all three descriptions together, both His clothing and His face were changed.

- i. His clothing became radiant, intensely white, as white as light, and they were dazzling.
- ii. And His face shone like the sun.

Shekinah

This is similar to the experience of Moses at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 32-34, where he saw the *Shekinah* glory of God and his face began to shine. His face was shining with reflected glory or light and it was not the source of the light, just as the moon is a reflector and not the source of light. But in Jesus' case He is the *Shekinah* glory, and the shining of His face was much brighter than that of Moses.

What these three apostles see is the *Shekinah* glory that Jesus will have in the Messianic Kingdom, and this is what was promised to them in the previous section.

The physical body of Jesus acted as a veil to veil the brightness of His glory. But here at the transfiguration His glory is unveiled.

Moses and Elijah

Now read what happens next in the next paragraph from Luke's account, verses 30-32.

Suddenly there are two men standing with *Yeshua*, men who are spoken of in the Jewish Scriptures, Moses and Elijah.

The topic of discussion

While all three gospels tell of their appearance, only Luke tells us the content of the conversation which took place. What were they speaking about?

The topic of their discussion was Jesus' coming death in Jerusalem.

The word for *departure* here is *exodos*, the same word used for the departure or exodus from Egypt. And just as the departure of Israel from Egypt meant liberation from slavery, so His departure by death will mean liberation in two ways.

- i. For Jesus it will liberate Him from the limitations of His Humanity; and
- ii. For the believer it will liberate him from his enslavement to sin, the world, and the devil.

Promise fulfilled

At the end of verse 32, when the disciples were fully awake, they saw His glory, fulfilling His promise in section 84.

Tabernacles

Now read about Peter's response in Luke's account, verse 33.

Once again Peter speaks up, and he makes a suggestion to Jesus: *Let us make three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*

Now why would he say that? What do you think could be going through his mind as he says it?

If we consider what Peter knows and understands at the time, we will see that his response actually makes sense. So what is it that he understands at that time, and what is it that he does not yet understand?

What Peter understands

He does understand three things that lead him to suggest he build three tabernacles.

- i. Jesus is the Messiah, and that
- ii. he is seeing the glory the Messiah will have in the kingdom as was recently promised.
- iii. He also knows that the Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom when it will be celebrated each year by all nations.

Read Zechariah 14:16–19:

¹⁶ Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷ And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹ This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

What does Zechariah tell us about the feast of Booths in the kingdom?

It will be celebrated in the kingdom by every nation. By the way, the words *booths* and *tabernacles* are interchangeable.

So, applying what he knows

- (that Jesus is the Messiah,
that he is seeing the Messiah's glory as it will be in the kingdom,
and that the Messianic Kingdom is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles),

Peter concludes that the Messianic Kingdom is about to be established.

In this case it would be perfectly appropriate to build tabernacles to celebrate the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

What Peter does not yet understand

But there are some things that Peter does not yet understand, things that would have told him that it wasn't yet time to establish the kingdom.

And his timing is out by at least 2,000 years because of what he doesn't yet understand.

- i. He doesn't yet understand the death and resurrection program.
- ii. He doesn't yet grasp that there will be two comings of the Messiah.
- iii. He doesn't understand that the Feast of Passover must be fulfilled before the Feast of Tabernacles can be fulfilled.
- iv. And that Passover will be fulfilled by Messiah's death.

Had he understood these things, he would have realised that it was not yet time to establish the kingdom and therefore not yet time to celebrate the feast of tabernacles.

But given the things that he did not understand and the things that he did understand, his response was quite appropriate.

Bat Kol

But God hasn't finished.

Read Luke verses 34-35 and then Matthew verses 5-8.

As Peter is speaking, the Shechinah glory cloud that was once on Mt Sinai comes upon this mountain overshadowing all three persons, and for the second time God the Father speaks audibly out of heaven.

The rabbis called this a bat kol, a voice from heaven.

In the gospels, the first time God the Father spoke audibly was at Jesus' baptism, and now the second time He speaks audibly is at the transfiguration.

Listen to Him

He says the same thing that He said back then only now He adds one small clause, and Matthew records it. Can you spot it?

Listen to Him.

What is the significance of this in the context of the setting in which it was made?

First of all, look again at the setting. Who are Moses and Elijah?

Moses is the one who wrote down the Law and gave it to Israel. And Elijah is the prophet who was taken into heaven in a chariot of fire.

Both the Law and the Prophets speak about the coming Messiah. And here are Moses and Elijah *speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

So Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets. And they are standing there with Jesus when God the Father says to the apostles, *Listen to Jesus.*

The significance of this is that they have heard the Law and they have heard the Prophets, now they must listen to Him.

Final revelation

He will be the final revelation of God to man. Hebrews 1:1-3a also indicates this. Let's read Hebrews 1:1-3a.

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (NIV)

The NIV brings out the contrast quite well. And the contrast is between the past when God spoke at many times and in various ways, and the present when He spoke to us once and in one way, by His Son.

Again, these apostles have heard the law and the prophets and now they are told they must listen to Jesus, God's beloved Son and Chosen One.

And to emphasize that point, in Matthew verse 8, when the cloud lifts, they saw only Jesus. Moses is gone, and Elijah is gone. And only Jesus remains.

Now they have heard the Law and the Prophets and they are gone, for Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets, and now God's instruction is: hear Jesus of whom the Law and Prophets spoke.

Theological implications

Let me give you the five theological implications of the transfiguration.

1. *Messiah*

The transfiguration authenticated the Messiahship of Jesus.

He was rejected by men, but accepted by God the Father. His Messiahship was authenticated here both by the Shekinah glory and by the voice of God the Father.

2. *Kingdom*

It anticipated the coming of the earthly Messianic Millennial Kingdom.

As promised in section 84, they saw the glory He will have in the kingdom.

While at the time Peter thought the kingdom was coming then and there, he later understood this event to be a pre-view of the Messiah's power and majesty in the coming Messianic Kingdom, and he would describe it in his preaching. He wrote in 2 Peter 1:16-18 (NIV):

¹⁶ *For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.* ¹⁷ *He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* ¹⁸ *We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

3. *Prophecy*

The transfiguration is a witness testifying to the fulfilment of all Scripture, and because it is God's witness it guarantees the fulfilment of all Scripture.

Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets. And the content of their discussion was His coming death which is also the content of the writings of Moses and the Prophets.

The presence of Moses and Elijah with Jesus discussing His coming death represents the fact that the Old Testament speaks of His death and that Jesus came to fulfil all that the Law and the Prophets said.

In other words He is the Messiah who was to come, and He will fulfil all that was written about the Messiah.

The point being made here is that the fulfilment of prophecy is certain because the content of prophecy is actually a record of God's intention. And because it is His intention, He will carry it out just as He has described through the prophets.

This is also Peter's deduction, as we read in II Peter 1:19-21 (NIV):

¹⁹ *We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

²⁰ *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The coming of the Messianic Kingdom is certain, and all the prophecies of Scripture are certain to be fulfilled because this is God's intent.

4. *Life after death*

The transfiguration is a pledge of life beyond the grave.

Moses and Elijah are there, Moses was someone who did die, Elijah is someone who did not die. Moses represents the saints that are to be resurrected from the dead. Elijah represents those that will be translated alive.

Either by resurrection or by translation there is life beyond the grave.

Notice that Luke records that Moses and Elijah *appeared in glory*. They have already been glorified. Elijah will come again, but he cannot die again because he has already been glorified. So he is not one of the two witnesses of Revelation.

5. *A measure of His love*

It is a measure of His love for us.

It shows what it cost Him to come. He had to veil His glory twice, first at the incarnation and secondly as He comes down from this mountain.

Only with His ascension was His glory unveiled forever.

When John sees Jesus in his vision of Revelation 1:12-16 (Matthew 24:31-46). He sees Him in the fullness of His Shechinah glory, no longer veiled.

When Jesus returns at His second coming, it too will be with His unveiled glory. He will come with power and great glory in the clouds of heaven. The clouds themselves represent the Shekinah glory.

N. Instruction Concerning Elijah, § 86, Mark 9:9–13; Matthew 17:9–13; Luke 9:36b

Now we'll listen to their conversation as they come down the mountain. Read Mark 9:9-10.

Policy of silence

Now, as they come down from the mountain, Jesus takes the opportunity to give them a command. What does He tell them?

They are to tell no one what they have seen, until He has risen from the dead. So He continues His policy of silence concerning His Messiahship.

Did they obey this order? Read Luke 9:36b.

So they did understand that they were to tell no one about the event on Mt. Hermon.

Rising from the dead

But His command did cause them some confusion as we see in Mark verse 10. What is it that they didn't understand?

They didn't understand *what rising from the dead meant*.

And this shows that they do not understand that the Messiah must come twice.

Elijah?

So they ask Him a question about Elijah.

Read Mark verses 11 – 13.

They asked him, saying, "Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" In other words: You're here Messiah, but I didn't notice Elijah! Wasn't he supposed to come first?

It was the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees that Elijah must come first and restores all things. And this is a correct deduction from Malachi 4:5-6:

⁵ *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*

⁶ *And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

The promise of this scripture was that Elijah would come before the second coming.

But He was not promised before the first coming!!

Malachi 3:1 did prophesy an unnamed forerunner to come before the first coming, but chapter 4 talks about Elijah before the second coming.

^{3:1} *"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the Lord Almighty.*

However, they do not yet understand that there will be two comings of the Messiah. Hence their question in Mark verse 11, *"Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"* .

Elijah does come first

Notice that Jesus affirms the scribes teaching because it is a correct understanding of Malachi 4:5-6. In verse 12a: "*And he said unto them, Elijah does come first to restore all things*".

But, in keeping with Malachi's prophecy, it is the second coming of the Messiah that Elijah will come before.

Son of Man's suffering

Then, having affirmed that Elijah will indeed come before the second coming, Jesus ask them a rhetorical question to make an important point. What is His question in the last part of verse 12?

^{12b} *And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?*

What is the point Jesus is making here?

What would be the consequence if Elijah came and did his work of restoration before the Messiah's first coming?

It would mean that the Kingdom would be established at Messiah's first coming and that the prophecies about His sufferings would not be fulfilled!

But, as Jesus points out, the Messiah must first *suffer many things and be treated with contempt*. Then some time later Elijah will come and restore all things, and then the Messiah will return to set up the Kingdom.

John the Baptist

But then Jesus appears to contradict Himself in verse 13 of Mark's account: *But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him*.

Matthew helps us to understand what Jesus means here. Read verse 13 of Matthew.

¹³ *Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.*

What does that mean?

John is a type of Elijah in that he was a forerunner of the first coming and Elijah will be the forerunner of the second coming.

Review John & Elijah

Let's review what we have learned about the connection between John the Baptist and Elijah the prophet.

1. In section 26, when John was asked if he was Elijah, he said "*I am not.*" So John denied being Elijah the prophet.
2. In section 4, when the angel announced the coming birth of John, he said that John would be a forerunner of the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah (with the same spirit that Elijah had).
3. In section 57 Jesus taught that had the kingdom offer been accepted, John would have fulfilled Elijah's role, which was to restore all things. But since he was rejected he did not fulfill Elijah's function and therefore Elijah himself must come to do so at the appropriate time.

4. And in this section we learn that John is a type of Elijah because he was a forerunner of the first coming just as Elijah will be the forerunner of the second coming.

Summary of events

Now, to summarize the order of events concerning the Messiah's coming:

1. The unnamed forerunner and herald in Malachi 3:1 comes in the person of John the Baptist.
2. Jesus' first coming, which fulfils His role as the Passover lamb.
3. The person of Elijah, who did not die, will come back to earth to fulfil his role in Malachi 4:5-6.
4. Jesus will return to the earth to begin the Messianic Kingdom promised to Israel, fulfilling His role as King.

O. Instruction Concerning Faith, § 87, Mark 9:14–29; Matthew 17:14–20; Luke 9:37–43a

We've been listening to their conversation as they come down the mountain where the transfiguration occurred. Now as they return to the other nine disciples, what will they find?

What they find

Read Mark verses 14-19 to find out.

What do they find?

In verse 14, Mark notes two things that they find.

1. They find a large crowd round the other disciples. And
2. They find there are scribes arguing with them. It will be the scribes who instigated this argument.

We can learn how this came about from the verses that follow. What happened?

These disciples had tried to cast out a demon and were unable to do so, and now the scribes were arguing with them. What would they be arguing about?

No doubt the scribes were using the disciple's inability to cast out this demon to refute Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

The demon

The demon was described as a violent demon, and Matthew adds in verse 15 that the boy was a lunatic. In Greek usage the word for lunatic is equivalent to being epileptic, afflicted with epilepsy, the symptoms of which were supposed to have become more aggravated during certain lunar periods.ⁱ And Matthew adds that he often falls into the fire and also into water.

In Luke verse 39 a spirit suddenly takes him and he cries out, it tears him, he foamed at the mouth, and it crushes him. The word translated maul means to break in pieces or to crush.

This is an extreme example of demon possession. It includes epilepsy, and also suicidal proneness.

O unbelieving generation!

In Mark verse 19, notice Jesus' emphasis on that generation: "*O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?*" This is the generation that has rejected Him.

Healing

Next we see how Jesus heals the boy. Read Mark's account, verses 19b – 27.

Privacy

How does Jesus begin?

He begins by instructing them to bring the boy to Him, which they did at the beginning of verse 20. And bringing the boy to Him means bringing him away from the multitude as is His policy after His rejection in section 61.

The demon's response

The demon recognizes that he is about to have to leave and makes one last effort, and the spirit threw him into a convulsion and he fell to the ground and wallowed foaming.

In verse 21, Jesus asked the father how long this has been happening and the father responds: *from childhood*. The demon often attempted to cast him into the fire and water to kill him.

Personal need

Then notice the expression of personal need at the end of verse 22: *but if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!*

Faith

So he expresses a personal need, *take pity on us and help us*. But the expression "*if you can*" is not an expression of faith but one of doubt. And that doubt must be removed before the miracle can be performed.

So in verse 23, Jesus says to him: *If you can! All things are possible to him who believes*.

Immediately the father cries out: *I do believe; help my unbelief*. And this is an exercise of faith.

Privacy

Notice how verse 25 begins.

²⁵ *When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit.*

Remember that Jesus had the boy and his father removed from the crowd. Now, when He saw the crowd running toward him, and before they arrived, He casts the demon out.

Again the miracle is not for the benefit of the masses anymore, so He does the miracle privately on the basis of personal need and faith.

Disciples' dilemma

All is settled, but not for the disciples. As we will see, they come to Him privately with a question.

Read verses 28 – 29 of Mark's account.

What they want to know is: *why could we not drive it out?*

Remember they have already been able to cast out demons, so why could they not cast him out this time?

Jesus gives them two reasons:

1. *The wrong method*

In Mark verse 29, He replied, *"This kind can come out only by prayer."*

Here He says there is only one method to cast out this kind of demon.

In other words they used the wrong method.

This kind

Unfortunately most preachers and commentaries focus on the last three words, "*only by prayer*". The point they make is that we should be praying more. But they are missing the real point of what Jesus is telling them. Notice how He begins: "*this kind ...*".

That raises the question: what kind was it? Look at the end of verse 17 of Mark. It was a mute demon. And in verse 25, Jesus addresses the spirit as *you deaf and mute spirit*.

Remember that the casting out of a dumb demon was one of the messianic miracles that only the Messiah would be able to do. The Pharisees could cast out all kinds of demons except dumb or mute demons. So by this statement Jesus verifies that dumb demons are different from other demons.

By prayer

This was the first time that the disciples had dealt with a dumb demon. The others they could cast out in Jesus' name. For all the other demons that method is sufficient. But a dumb demon is one you don't cast out, or order out, you simply pray him out!

So the first reason they could not cast it out is that they used an improper method.

2. *Faith*

Matthew gives us the second reason. Read verses 19-20 of Matthew's account.

The use of the wrong method was evidence of their littleness of faith. And in verse 20 Jesus gives *the littleness of [their] faith* as the reason why they could not cast out the demon.

But He didn't stop there. He goes on to explain this to them, and again He highlights His words with *truly I say to you*.

for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

This mountain

Notice that it is not any mountain they should be able to move, but a specific one: *this mountain*. And the Greek is very emphatic. It literally says: *the mountain – this one*.

Which mountain do you think He is referring to?

If he means a literal mountain, He would be referring to Mt. Hermon, the mountain that He has just come down from. That is the mountain in the wider context here.

But if He were not referring to that literal mountain what would He be referring to?

When the word mountain is used symbolically, it is always used as a symbol of a king, kingdom or throne.

In the immediate context, is there a king of kingdom in view?

Yes! In dealing with the dumb demon they had just had a war with the kingdom of Satan.

So in the immediate context *this mountain* most likely refers to the Satanic Kingdom and not a physical mountain like Mt. Hermon.

for

Notice the word, *for*, linking the two parts of Jesus statement here. And it connects their littleness of faith with the fact that they could have moved the mountain of Satan's kingdom.

Even the smallest amount of faith would be sufficient if they used the proper method.

Their choice of the wrong method was the outworking of their little faith, but even their little faith was sufficient to move the mountain that confronted them.

P. Instruction Concerning the Death of the King , § 88, Mark 9:30–32; Matthew 17:22–23; Luke 9:43b–45

Private travel

Now Jesus travels through Galilee privately with His disciples.

Read Mark 9:30-32.

What reason does Mark give for Jesus not wanting anyone to know about their presence?

His coming death and resurrection

This is the second time He makes a clear statement concerning His death and resurrection. And for the second time they do not understand.

This is another example of partial sight and partial blindness on the part of the disciples.

Disciples' grief

Matthew in the end of verse 23 says *they were deeply grieved*. But why were they grieved?

Luke gives more detail in verse 45:

⁴⁵*But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.*

It was concealed from them and they were afraid to ask Him about the saying. So their being grieved is not because they understood that He would die, but because they didn't understand and were afraid to ask.

So when these events eventually happened they caught the disciples by surprise.

Q. Instruction Concerning Sonship, § 89, Matthew 17:24–27

Now they arrive at Capernaum, His headquarters. Read Matthew 17:24-27 to see what happens there.

Temple tax

Now they are back in Jewish territory. So they are again under Jewish law in a Jewish jurisdiction. And we read: *Those who collected the two-drachma tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?"*

This refers to the annual temple tax that was based upon Exodus 30:11-16. The tax was half a shekel which is the same as two drachmas and amounted to two days wages. Every year, every male in Israel had to pay the half-shekel tax to help maintain the temple ministry.

Overdue

Now the temple tax was to be paid around March every year at Passover. However by the time section 89 takes place it is close to the feast of tabernacles which means that Jesus is about 6 months overdue in paying His temple tax. And that is why the tax collectors came and asked Peter, *"Does your teacher not pay the two-drachma tax?"*

Peter's answer

Without checking with Jesus first, Peter doesn't know what to do and therefore blurts out his answer on his own, and he says "yes" and let it go at that.

A lesson

But Jesus knows what has taken place, so in verse 25, when Peter came into the house Jesus has a special private lesson for him and begins it by asking him a question: *"What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth collect customs or poll-tax, from their sons or from strangers?"*

Peter answers: *"from strangers"*. Then Jesus says *"Therefore the sons are exempt."*

His point is that Roman citizens do not pay taxes. Furthermore, when Roman rulers ruled, or other kings ruled, they would collect tribute from subjugated peoples, and therefore from strangers, not from their own sons or citizens. So Roman citizens did not have to pay taxes and the Roman government was financed by tribute, tolls and taxes collected from subjugated people.

Now this was not a Roman tax. This half-shekel or two drachmas was to be paid as a temple tax.

But, as the Messiah, Jesus is the Lord of the Temple and therefore exempt from paying the tax. Believers are His sons spiritually speaking. Therefore believers are also exempt from having to pay the temple tax. So Jesus did not bother to pay His temple tax six months earlier, and He did not tell His disciples to pay it either.

However

In verse 27 He says: *However, so that we do not offend them ...*

There is no need to cause undue stumbling. It is one thing to reject man-made rules and regulations, but here we are dealing with a Mosaic issue, not a Mishnaic issue. And although under the Mosaic Law the Messiah Himself would not have to pay the temple tax, there is no need to cause undue stumbling.

A miracle

So Jesus provides a miraculous payment, and He tells Peter to go back to His old job as a fisherman for just a very short time, and he will catch a fish, and when he opens the mouth of that fish he will find a full shekel coin. With it Peter is instructed to go and pay the temple tax, both for himself and for Jesus.

The lesson

The lesson for the disciples to learn from this is that they are the sons of the King and He is the Lord of the Temple.

R. Instruction Concerning Humility, § 90, Mark 9:33–37; Matthew 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–48

Now we're about to see what was happening among the disciples as they travelled. Remember, they have been travelling through Galilee on their way back to Capernaum from Caesarea Philippi.

Read the first paragraph from all three accounts here. Matthew and Luke are clearly summarizing the story, for Mark gives us more detail. But each adds some detail that the others omit.

Read Mark 9:33-37, Matthew 18:1 and Luke 9:46-47a.

What do we find happening here?

As Luke says, *an argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.*

Why do you suppose this happened?

At that time ...

Notice that Matthew associates their question with a particular time. He begins: *At that time ...*

At what time?

The same time that the shekel was paid for the temple tax of Jesus and Peter. And so this lesson follows the previous lesson that was given to Peter.

And Jesus did not pay the temple tax for all of His apostles, but only for Peter.

Perhaps they argued whether this made Peter greater than the others.

On the way

Perhaps this event only added fuel to an argument they were already having. Mark records that they were *discussing* this question *on the way*.

What happened just before their journey that might have provoked this argument?

Three of His apostles saw the transfiguration on the mountain.

In the kingdom

Notice that Matthew also points out that the dispute is about *who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*, that is, in the coming Messianic Kingdom. Remember that they are still expecting that He will soon set up the Messianic Kingdom.

So their concern is about which of them will have the greatest position in the Messianic Kingdom.

In their heart

Now Mark records that Jesus *began to question them*, "*What were you discussing on the way?*"

Do you think He was unaware of what they were discussing?

He was with them as they travelled and argued. He already knows what they were discussing, and furthermore Luke points out that He knew *what they were thinking in their heart*.

The argument is actually a symptom of their heart condition, and Jesus knew *what they were thinking in their heart*.

And what was in their hearts?

Questions and feelings of superiority among them leading to conflict and argument.

So He asks the question because He wants to draw their attention to the lesson He is about to teach them.

The greatest in the Kingdom

Notice in Mark's verse 35 that Jesus sits down and calls the twelve. This is the typical teaching position for a rabbi.

Then what does He say to them?

If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.

What does this mean?

It means that the person who will have the first of greatest position in the kingdom when it comes is the one who is the servant of all now.

So if one really wants to receive a superior place in the kingdom, he must strive in this life not to receive the highest position, but the lowest, and at the same time to be ministering to all in general. And to be a master in the kingdom you must be a servant now.

An object lesson - childlike

Then He gives them an object lesson, the lesson of being childlike.

Read Matthew verses 2-3.

³ *and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

The word *converted* literally means to *turn about*. Figuratively it means to turn into something, meaning to convert or change, to become another kind of person.

So, in order to enter the Kingdom, they must be changed from what they are and become like children.

Trust

What does it mean to be like children?

Children are dependent on their parents and have a trust which we are to emulate. What brings salvation and therefore entry into the kingdom is a childlike faith in God.

Humility

Now He turns more directly to the disciples' question.

Read verses 4-5 of Matthew.

Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

So while only a childlike trust in God is necessary to enter the kingdom, those who are greatest in the kingdom are those who humble themselves as a child.

What does it mean to humble oneself as a child?

The child lives in the family in dependence upon his parents and in subjection to them and having no rights of his own. This too is how the believer needs to be if he is going to be greatest in the kingdom.

Receiving Him

Jesus' next statement is interrupted as we shall see in the next section. He says, ⁵ *And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me;*

This will be the focus of the next section.

focus

The focus in this section has been on the necessity to be childlike.

In the next section the focus will be on receiving those who are childlike.

Summary

So to summarize what He teaches them here:

1. Entrance into the kingdom is by means of a childlike faith in God
2. This should be followed by a childlike humility. Greatness in the kingdom is achieved by humbly living in dependence on and submission to God now. Children are not concerned about their position or status within the home.
3. To have the first place in the kingdom the disciple must have the lowest place now and must be a servant of all.

Our present belief and behaviour determine our future

Notice also how our present belief and behaviour influence our future in the Messianic Kingdom.

1. What we believe now determines whether or not we will enter the Kingdom.
2. What we do now as believers determines our position in the kingdom.

S. Instruction Concerning Exclusiveness and Pride, § 91, Mark 9:38–50; Matthew 18:6–14; Luke 9:49–50

The lesson of section 90 was to be childlike, both in our faith and in our humility, and the lesson for 91 is to receive those who are childlike.

John's interruption

But first we find John interrupting Jesus.

Read Luke 9:49-50.

In the previous section Jesus rebuked the apostles for their argument about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom. And here they clearly attempt to change the subject.

Exclusiveness

However, what does John's statement reveal about the apostles' attitude?

Once again it shows their concern with their status.

And whereas their previous argument concerned their status within the apostolic group, this question concerns their status in relation to others. It concerns their exclusiveness or pride.

Now the person John was referring to may have been a disciple of John the Baptist, who now showed faith in the person of Jesus.

John pointed out that *he does not follow along with us*. That does not mean he was not a follower of Jesus, but rather that he was not member of the apostolic group of twelve.

And because he was not a member of the apostolic group, and because they thought that only they had been given authority to cast out demons, the apostles felt that he should be forbidden to do so.

This therefore reveals their feeling of superiority. Only they could cast out demons. Others who believed in Jesus could not cast out demons.

Another rebuke

So they have earned themselves another rebuke.

Read Mark's account where we see more detail – verses 38-40.

What is the point Jesus is making in verses 39-40?

The point He makes here is that a person can do great things for God without having to be in the inner circle of the Apostolic twelve. Others outside the apostolic group will also be able to perform miracles.

Pride

Then Jesus moves from teaching about exclusiveness to a lesson about pride.

Read Mark verse 41.

He says: *For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.*

Even the most humble works, like giving a cup of cold water because one is a disciple of Jesus, will be rewarded. Even the smallest service done for Jesus will be rewarded. It is not necessary to do miracles; even a cup of water will bring its reward.

Stumbling blocks

Now John and the others did indeed offend this man by discouraging him from doing what they themselves had no authority to tell him to stop doing. And furthermore, the man was doing it on Jesus' behalf.

Read what Jesus says about this in Mark verse 42.

Who are *these little ones who believe*?

Remember that He has set a child before them, and immediately before John interrupted Him, He was referring to a child as an example of faith and humility. So He is referring to the child as an illustration of those who believe in Him.

What is the point He makes here?

The point is that there will be punishment for those who cause a believer to stumble, and such punishment that it would have been better for the one who causes stumbling if he had died before he caused the stumbling.

Stumbling blocks from the world

Now Jesus turns to the source of stumbling. Read what He says in Matthew verse 7.

Stumbling blocks will inevitably come from the world, but not from believers, and that there will be punishment for the one who causes stumbling.

So the disciples' attitude of pride is the attitude of the world and not of a true believer in the Messiah.

Those who cause little children to stumble will be punished, and as leaders they must be careful not to cause unnecessary stumbling.

Internal causes of stumbling

Then, having warned them about causing others to stumble, and having pointed out that stumbling blocks will inevitably come from the world, He goes on to talk about internal causes of stumbling within the believer.

Read Matthew verses 8-9 to see what He says about this.

Does this sound strange to you? Is He really teaching the value of self-mutilation?

This passage sounds very strange and inexplicable when it is read out of its context. But in its context we can see that He has already warned them about stumbling blocks they might put in the way of others, now He is teaching them about the stumbling blocks people make for themselves.

And the reference to stumbling and to the members of the body here is metaphorical.

What then is He teaching?

Jesus is dealing with the root of the problem, not its external appearance.

And His point is this: Whatever it is in our life that is causing us to stumble must be put away. It is far better to remove all stumbling blocks and come to faith than to persist in stumbling and end up in hell!

Hell

What do we learn about hell at the end of Matthew verse 8 and in Mark verse 48?

Matthew records Jesus describing hell as *the eternal fire*.

Mark describes it as the place *where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED*. Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 66:24 here.

This is the destination of all unbelievers. And those who cause stumbling will end up with greater judgment than those who don't.

Believers, on the other hand, will not go to hell, but they will suffer punishment or discipline in this life and a loss of rewards in the next life.

Application

Next Jesus gives the application of what He has been teaching.

Read Matthew verses 10-14.

The application He gives to them in verse 10 is: *See that you do not despise one of these little ones*.

Angels

And the reason is: *their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven*.

What is the significance of this?

Their angels, those that watch over them, have direct access to God Himself.

And these guardian angels report what people do to believing children that causes them to stumble.

And as a result of the angelic report, if unbelievers cause children to stumble they will have greater judgment in the lake of fire.

However if believers cause these children to stumble, then they will fall under divine discipline in this life and suffer greater loss of rewards in heaven.

The lost sheep

God's concern for children, and His rejoicing over the salvation of each one is illustrated in Mathew verses 12-14.

Read these verses, Matthew 18:12-14.

And the conclusion is in verse 14: *So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.*

To perish means to be deprived of eternal life and therefore exposed to eternal death.

And just as the shepherd rejoices over the lost sheep that is found, so our Father rejoices over each little one who believes.

Summary

To summarize the points He makes here:

1. A person can do great things for God without being in the inner circle of apostleship.
2. Even the most humble service will be rewarded.
3. Those who cause stumbling will be punished.
4. We should put away whatever causes us to stumble.
5. Children have guardian angels with direct access to God.
6. God rejoices over the salvation of each child and is not willing that any of them should perish.

Salt

Now Mark adds something Jesus said about salt.

Read Mark verses 49-50.

What is He saying here?

Salted with fire

He begins by saying that *everyone will be salted with fire*. This is a reference to the fact there is a day when believers will be refined by fire, a fire that will test the quality of each one's work and consume the wood, hay and straw, and purify the gold silver and precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

The parable of salt

Jesus has referred to salt that loses its flavour before. How is it that salt can lose its flavour?

Salt as we know it is pure sodium chloride and cannot lose its saltiness. But in the Middle East of Jesus' day salt was obtained from mineral deposits that were a mixture of several minerals and if it was exposed to rain or moisture from the earth the sodium chloride would be leached out of it and it would become tasteless.

Have salt in yourselves

How does Jesus apply this to the disciples?

The disciples' jealousy and pride found expression both in their argument over which of them was the greatest, and also in their trying to stop someone else from casting out a demon.

Instead, He says, they should have the kind of salt in themselves that causes them to be at peace with one another.

What would that salt be?

Just as salt enhances the flavour of food, so the fellowship of the disciples should be enhanced by the salt within them resulting in a type of fellowship that makes life worth living.

The salt here represents the righteousness of God that they are to have within them. And one of the outward effects of God's righteousness within them will be that they are *at peace with one another*.

And just as it is impossible for salt that has lost its flavour to be made salty again, it will be impossible to have the flavour of true fellowship if they do not have the righteousness of God within them.

Conclusion

So who will be greatest among them? They should be living in peace with each other, and not be jealous if one is elevated above another. And this will come about if they have the salt of the righteousness of God within them.

T. Instruction Concerning Forgiveness, § 92, Matthew 18:15–35

Read Matthew 18:15-17.

Church

Notice the reference to the church here. This is the second time the word *ecclesia* or church has been used in the gospels.

We came across its first use quite recently. Do you remember it?

After Peter declared to Jesus, *you are the Messiah, the son of the God, the living one* Jesus told him *you are petros and on this petra I will build My church.*

And there Jesus was speaking of the universal church which He will build on the foundation of His Messiahship.

Here in this passage He is referring to the local church.

Church discipline

And what is Jesus describing in this passage?

Here He describes the procedure to be used for church discipline in a situation where one brother offends, or sins against, another. In other words a situation where there is a personal issue between two brothers.

(When the issue is a moral sin there is a different response beyond what Jesus is talking about here. Elders have authority to deal with a moral sin, as Paul does in the Corinthian church with the one who is involved in gross sexual immorality, someone has his father's wife. This is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5.)

The Procedure

Jesus teaches four stages regarding local church discipline. What are they?

1. It is the responsibility of the offended person to confront the offender privately, one on one. If he talks to anyone else in advance then he has already broken the principle.
2. If there is no response, take one or two more witnesses. So there will be a total of 2 or 3 witnesses.
3. If there is still no response, in Matthew 18:17, tell the problem to the church.
4. If there is still no response, the offender is to be treated *as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

Excommunication

What does it mean to treat someone *as a Gentile and a tax collector*?

In a Jewish context, to be *as a Gentile and a tax collector* means to be untouchable. It means to be excommunicated from the assembly.

And so the church has the authority to excommunicate the offender from the assembly.

Exactly what this means is demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. Paul says: *to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* This means that the person is put back under Satan's authority for the destruction of the flesh.

The death of a believer

And what does that mean?

As a general rule Satan has no authority of physical death over believers.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.

¹³ *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (NASB)*

¹³ *Now we do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you will not grieve as also the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, thus also God will bring those who have fallen asleep through Jesus together with him. (LEB)*

In this context Paul is teaching that believers fall asleep or die *through Jesus*, that is, Jesus is the one who brings about the believer's death.

That is the normal situation, but there is one exception to the rule.

If a believer has been excommunicated he has been put back under the authority of Satan and then Satan has the authority to put him to physical death.

When someone believes in Jesus he is transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Light, out of Satan's kingdom into God's kingdom. And consequently Satan no longer has authority over him. However, if he is excommunicated, Satan is given authority to put him to death physically, but only physically.

Still saved

Paul is careful to point out to the Corinthians that his spirit is still saved.

He says the purpose and the end result of the excommunication is *so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*. In other words, when such a one dies his spirit will still be saved. It does not affect his salvation, but only his physical life.

Sin unto death

This is what John refers to in 1 John 5:15-16 as the *sin leading to death* that a believer commits. The *sin leading to death* is whatever sin caused him to be removed from the local fellowship.

Verses often quoted out of context

Now we come to several verses that are often quoted apart from their context, and consequently taken to mean more than they were intended to mean.

Read the next three verses, 18-20.

Judgement recognised in heaven

¹⁸ *Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.*

Verse 18 is often quoted by people speaking about spiritual warfare, but the binding and loosing here have nothing to do with spiritual warfare.

As we saw earlier, when used in a judicial sense, as is the case here, "to bind" and "to loose" mean "to punish" and "to not punish".

So what is Jesus saying here?

The church has the judicial authority to order excommunication, and, if the church does it correctly, the excommunication order will be recognized by heaven. And therefore heaven will consequently allow Satan to put this believer to death.

If a believer does not respond in the first three stages of discipline then the fourth stage is excommunication. And that decision is recognized in heaven.

Witnesses agree

Verse 19 is also commonly misused by Christians.

¹⁹ *"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."*

It is taken out of context to teach a principle of prayer: that if two believers ask the Lord for anything He will do it. But the context here is church discipline, not prayer.

What, then, is He talking about?

The two or three of verse 19 is the same two or three of verse 16. They are the two witnesses at whose testimony the church passed the excommunication order.

So Jesus is saying that the judgements made on the basis of two or three agreeing witnesses will be carried out by God the Father.

If someone is excommunicated as a result of agreeing witnesses God will allow Satan to put him to death.

Jesus verifies their testimony

Likewise, verse 20 is not meant to be a definition of what a church is, although people have used it that way.

²⁰ *"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."*

When you have two or three believers gathered together, what you have is two or three believers gathered together. You don't have a local church.

A local church is more complex than two or three people - a biblical church has elders, deacons, and it is organised with lines of authority and things of that nature.

So, what is Jesus talking about here?

Again the two or three of verse 20 are the same two or three of verse 19 and verse 16. They are the same two or three witnesses at whose testimony the church excommunicates the sinning brother.

And Jesus is there, right in their midst, verifying their testimony, which is why God can permit Satan to put the offender to death.

Putting this all together

So, having considered all of this, let's put these three verses together in one sentence:

Jesus is saying that the judicial decisions of the church to excommunicate an unrepentant brother

1. are recognised in heaven, and,
2. if they are correctly made on the basis of two or three witnesses they will be carried out by His Father in heaven,
3. because the testimony of the witnesses is verified by Jesus Himself.

Context

Once again we see the importance of understanding the context when we look for the meaning of what was said.

Peter's question

Now at that point Peter raises a question about forgiveness.

Read Matthew 18:21-22.

Supposing my brother continues to sin against me, even after responding appropriately as in verse 15? He never gets to the fourth stage because he always responds appropriately at the first stage. How many times should I forgive him?

Peter is actually being generous in terms of the rules of that day, because in Pharisaic Judaism you are obligated to forgive someone three times. But you are not required to forgive him after that. Here Peter is offering forgiveness double what the Pharisees offer plus one extra time.

Now Jesus says, *I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

If you take this very literally you can say you have to forgive 490 times.

But seven is the number of completeness and you are to forgive as often as they seek forgiveness with no counting of numbers. The act of counting shows only external forgiveness and not internal forgiveness from the heart.

Interestingly there is another place in Scripture where seventy sevens are mentioned. Do you remember where it is? Daniel 9:24-27. There Daniel was told there would be seventy sevens of years that would extend until the end of the Age of the Gentiles and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom.

So, if Jesus statement is a reminder of these things, how long do you forgive?

Longer than your life time, until the end of the age, forgive perpetually!

Parable

Then Jesus tells a parable to illustrate forgiveness.

Read verses 23-35.

The servant of the king is forgiven a debt of 10,000 talents by the king, and then refuses to forgive another servant a debt of 100 denarii. Now a talent was equivalent to 3,000 shekels or 6,000 days wages and a denarius was one day's wages.

So the first servant was forgiven a debt that was 600,000 times greater than the one he was unwilling to forgive. (60,000,000 / 100) (In Canberra in 2011 the average total earnings amounts to about \$320 per day. So the two debts would be \$19,200,000,000 and \$32,000 respectively.)

1 talent	3,000 shekels
1 shekel	2 days wages
1 denarius	1 days wages
1 talent	6,000 denarii

What are lessons we should learn from this parable? There are three:

1. Firstly, we ourselves have been forgiven a greater debt by God. So we should be willing to forgive our sinning brother.
2. Secondly, we should imitate the forgiving Father.
3. Thirdly, an unforgiving person cannot expect that he will be forgiven himself.

This is not salvation forgiveness because salvation forgiveness has only one requirement: to believe.

This is family forgiveness.

When we sin the fellowship within the family is broken. Our fellowship with God and with other believers is broken.

When we are forgiven the fellowship is restored.

The means of receiving forgiveness for believers who sin is found in 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

For that reason we confess our sins.

However, if we don't have a forgiving attitude towards our sinning brother we shouldn't anticipate receiving family forgiveness ourselves.

While we cannot extend forgiveness to someone until they seek it, our attitude towards him must always be to forgive him no matter what.

U. The Challenge by the Brothers, § 93, John 7:2-9

His brothers' challenge

In section 93 we have the challenge by the brothers.

Read John 7:2-9.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Now John points out that the Feast of Booths was near. The Feast of Booths is the Feast of Tabernacles.

What is the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles? Remember we looked at this when we were considering Peter's response at the transfiguration.

It was common knowledge among the Jews, based upon the prophecy of Zechariah in Zechariah 14:16-19, that the Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom when it will be celebrated each year by all nations.

The brothers' challenge

In view of this and in view of the fact that His brothers were not believing in Him, what is the significance of the challenge of His brothers here?

They are challenging Him to go to Jerusalem at this festival and show Himself to the world as the king He claims to be. In other words, go up to Jerusalem make Himself king at the feast.

Jesus' response

And what is Jesus saying to them by His response?

He responds that He will not go up to Jerusalem for that purpose.

In fact He will go to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, as we will see, but He is not going to go there for the purpose of making Himself king on this occasion. His time is not yet fulfilled for this.

V. The Journey to Jerusalem,

§ 94, Luke 9:51–56; John 7:10

Read John's account and then Luke's account of section 94.

As John points out, only after the brothers leave, does He begin to head towards Jerusalem.

Samaria

And this time He wants to go through Samaria rather than going through Perea along the Jordan valley.

What happens along the way?

As we mentioned in connection with the Samaritan woman, the Samaritans did not bother Jews leaving Jerusalem, but they objected to Jews travelling through Samaria to get to Jerusalem. So they refused to welcome Him *because He was traveling toward Jerusalem* (Luke 9:53). This was quite a common incident in first century Israel.

James and John

So James and John ask if they could rain fire from heaven and wipe out these Samaritans, not exactly showing love for them. Their response was showing anti-Samaritanism.

Jesus rebuked them.

They move on

And they proceeded to a different village.

We don't know which way Jesus went. He may have gone on to another Samaritan village, or He may have chosen to go via Perea along the Jordan valley.

W. Instruction Concerning Discipleship,

§ 95, Matthew 8:19–22; Luke 9:57–62

Three lessons on discipleship

As they travel along the road the people they encounter provide Jesus with opportunities to teach lessons on discipleship. And three of them are recorded for us here in section 95.

1. *Count the cost – self denial*

Read Matthew 8:19-20 to see the first lesson.

¹⁹ *Then a scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”*

²⁰ *Jesus * said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

Why does Jesus respond this way? What is the issue He is pointing out to this man?

Before one commits himself to discipleship he needs to count the cost of following Jesus. And the cost is self-denial. There will be no assurance of a comfortable lifestyle.

This man was simply TOO QUICK and too hasty in what he said, because he hadn't considered the cost.

2. *Don't delay – immediate surrender*

Read Luke 9:59-60 to see the second lesson.

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, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.”*

Let me bury my father

Now what is this all about? Why wouldn't Jesus let him bury his father? Isn't that part of honouring your parents?

In the Jewish context, the situation here was not that the father had already died and was about to be buried. Rather, the father was still living.

The Pharisees taught that the first born son must continue living at home until the father dies, because, in Jewish practice, after the father dies, every week for a year you must say a special prayer in the service called a Kaddish. This is a special prayer to God honouring those who have died.

So, although this man wished to become a disciple, he also wished to remain at home until his father died and then stay another year to say the Kaddish prayer.

Don't delay

In view of this, what is the meaning of Jesus' reply to him?

He makes a contrast between the behaviour of the dead and what He commands this man to do.

- i. *Allow the dead to bury their own dead.*

Here the word *dead* is used in two different senses. Let the spiritually dead bury their own physically dead.

In other words, let those who are spiritually dead worry about those things.

- ii. *but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.*

The way Jesus contrasts this man with *the dead* implies that this man is spiritually alive.

He also contrasts the behaviour which is acceptable for the dead with the behaviour expected of the living.

Instead of delaying, he is told to *go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God*.

And by making this proclamation he will be identifying with the person and the message of the Messiah. And he is to do it now.

So the second principle is this:

Once you have counted the cost,

once you have answered the question of how much you are willing to invest to become a disciple, and He demands everything,

and once you have made the commitment,

don't delay in fulfilling it.

And while the first man was too hasty to make his decision, this one was TOO SLOW and too hesitating in fulfilling his commitment.

The lesson for him is to take up his cross by identifying with the Messiah and *proclaiming everywhere the kingdom of God*.

3. *Don't look back – follow through*

Now we come to the third encounter.

Read Luke 9:61-61.

⁶¹ *Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."* ⁶² *But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*

What is the lesson here?

The third lesson is that there should be no division of loyalty.

Once you have made the commitment, follow through with it and don't go back. Sever all ties that would hold you back from the commitment you made to discipleship.

So, while the first was too hasty and the second was too slow, this one was TOO EASY and he was divided in his loyalty.

The principle for him is: let him follow me.

Summary

In summary then, the lessons on discipleship are these:

1. let the one who would follow Jesus deny himself, counting the cost of discipleship,
2. let him take up his cross, identifying with the person and message of the Messiah,
3. and let him follow Him, with undivided loyalty.

V THE OPPOSITION TO THE KING, § 96-112

Jesus and His disciples have been travelling along the road from Capernaum to Jerusalem, and their encounters along the way provided the opportunity for the teaching about discipleship that we saw in the previous section.

His arrival in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles marks the beginning of the fifth major division of the Messiah's life.

Review

Let's review very briefly the first four divisions of His life.

1. The first division looked at the events surrounding His arrival.
2. In the second division we saw His authentication.

Authentication is the process of proving that He is who He claims to be, that He is the authentic Messiah.

We saw the belief of the first disciples, and the acceptance of His person in Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.

And we saw the demonstration of His authority both in what He said and in what He did.

He began by taking possession of the temple and throwing out the money changers and those selling lambs. He spoke to a leading Pharisee about the need to believe in Him. He taught about the correct interpretation of the Law of Moses. And He performed many miracles to verify His claims to be the Messiah.

3. This demonstration of His authority gave rise to the controversy which marked the third division of His life. And this controversy over the King led to His rejection by the leaders of Israel.

This was a major turning point in His ministry, and consequently He changed His policy regarding the proclamation of His Messiahship in Israel, and His policy regarding signs for Israel.

And He changed the way He taught and the way He performed miracles.

And He began to teach the apostles about the Mystery Kingdom that was now about to begin as a result of His rejection.

4. Then the feeding of the five thousand marked the beginning of the fourth division of His life, where His focus has been the training of the twelve to prepare them for the work they will have in view of His rejection.

The major milestone along the road in this training was the pronouncement of Peter, *You are the Messiah, the Son of the God, the living one.*

Following this Jesus began to teach His disciples about His coming death and resurrection, and many other things they will need in order to lay the foundation of the church that He would build.

Preview

And now, as they arrive in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, we come to the fifth major division of His life, which is characterised by opposition to the King. It begins in section 96 of the Harmony, and continues to section 112.

Sheep begin following the false shepherds

In this division we will see that the crowds begin to accept their leaders' explanation that He is demon possessed.

Up until now the opposition has only been coming from the leaders.

The people have not been sure which way to go, and Jesus described them as sheep without a shepherd.

But now the sheep are going to begin following the false shepherd.

The common people begin to accept the pharisaic explanation that He is demon possessed. And the charge that He does His work in the power of Beelzebub will begin coming from the multitudes and not just from the leaders.

And there was a division

And the key phrase which you will notice occurring several times now is: *and there was a division*. There begins to be a division among the people.

Three months

This is a three month period that comes between the Feast of Tabernacles in October and the Feast of Dedication in December.

It is reported by only two of the Gospel writers, John and Luke, and while John focuses on His ministry in Jerusalem, Luke focuses more on His ministry in the countryside.

A. The Conflict at the Feast of Tabernacles, § 96, John 7:11-52

Now, with that introduction, we come to the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7 where John records the fourth of his seven discourses, the discourse on the Water of Life.

But, before we read on, we need to know something about the two key ceremonies that take place during the Feast of Tabernacles. They are key because knowing about them will open the door of our understanding. Jesus will respond to both of these ceremonies, and we'll be better able to understand what He says if we know about them.

Outpouring of water

The first ceremony is the Outpouring of the Water.

Every day for seven days the priests came down from the temple compound to the Pool of Siloam at the bottom part of the City of David.

They would fill pitchers with water from the Pool of Siloam.

Then they hiked back up into the temple compound and into the outer court, carrying the water.

To go from the outer court to the inner court they would need to ascend 15 steps. And on each step they would sing a Psalm, one of those Psalms described as "A Song of Ascents". So they would sing a total of 15 Psalms, the Psalms 120-134.

Then they went inside the inner court where they poured out the water at the base of the Brazen Alter.

And the outpouring was followed by such great rejoicing that the Mishnah says:

"He that has not seen the rejoicing of the Out Pouring of the Water has not seen rejoicing in all of his life."

Why was this the cause of such rejoicing?

The Rabbinic interpretation of that ceremony is that it represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel in the last days, because five times in the prophets the prophets prophesied that the Spirit would be poured out on the whole nation. (See Appendix 7 in the Harmony for details— Appendix 3 in the first edition.)

The kindling of lampstands

The second key ceremony was the Kindling of the Lampstands.

Huge lampstands were placed within the temple compound, each one having four very large lamps.

At dusk the junior priests would kindle these lampstands which were placed in both the inner and outer courtyards.

And the Mishnah said that there was so much light coming from the temple compound that there was not a private courtyard anywhere in Jerusalem that did not receive light from the temple compound.

What is the significance of this ceremony?

The Rabbinic interpretation of the Kindling of the Lampstands is that it represents the Shekinah Glory light, which is God's visible presence.

1. Messiah's Authority Questioned, John 7:11-15

Now we are ready to begin reading. Turn to section 96 and read what happens in John 7:11-15.

Jews

Notice the word *Jews* here. Weren't they all Jews? Who then is John referring to as *Jews*?

John will use the term *Jews* a total of 71 times. But he uses it in three different senses.

- i. Sometimes he means Jewish people in general, the sons of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob.
- ii. Sometimes he will mean Judeans in contrast to Galileans.
- iii. And sometimes he will use it of the Jewish leaders.

And how can we know which way he is using it?

The context tells us in which way it is being used.

Now what do we find in this context? In which way is he using it here?

Here it is used in contrast to the crowds and the Jewish people in general, and it clearly refers to the Jewish leaders.

In the first segment we have the Messiah's authority questioned.

Division among the people

Also notice in this paragraph that John tells us the reactions to Jesus both among the people and among the Jewish leaders.

How are the people responding to Jesus at the feast?

In verse 12 we see a division among the crowds. Some were saying one thing and others were saying another. Some believe He is the Messiah, and some believe He is a false teacher. They already knew that their rulers had rejected Him.

Fear of the Jews

But even those who believed were not *speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews*. They were afraid of the leaders because they had rejected Him.

The Jews

And how are the leaders responding to Him?

In verse 15, they were *astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"*

The point they are making is that Jesus never went to any rabbinic academy. He had received no rabbinic training whatsoever. So where is He getting all this knowledge He is propagating?

2. Messiah's Explanation, John 7:16-24

Now Jesus hears their question and He answers it in the next paragraph.

The source and authority of His teaching

Read what He says in John 7:16.

In answer to their question, He makes a two-fold claim in verses 16.

1. First of all, where did His teaching come from?

His teaching is received from God, it is not His own.

2. Secondly, by what authority does He teach?

He was sent by God to teach what God has given Him to teach.

How will they know His teaching is true?

Read verses 17-18.

How can they know that His teaching is from God?

First, only those who are willing to do God's will can know whether His teaching is of God or of His own making.

Then He gives the principle that those who are willing to do the will of God can use.

Is Jesus seeking His own glory, or the glory of the One who sent Him? And because He is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, those who are willing to do the will of that One will recognise the teaching as true and the Teacher as righteous.

They don't keep the Law

Read verses 19-20.

And while He is keeping the Law perfectly, He points out their failure to keep the Law.

Their failure to keep the Law, of course, shows that they are not willing to do the will of God.

And their failure to keep the Law is seen in their desire to kill Him.

The crowd's accusation

Notice the response of the crowd.

Now, as John pointed out in the previous paragraph, there is a division in the crowd. But here we see that the explanation of the Pharisees, who said that Jesus works His miracles in the power of the devil, is being repeated by one part of the crowd.

So the crowds are beginning to accept the Pharisaic explanation, and they too begin to reject His claim to be the Messiah.

Jesus' response

Now read how Jesus responds in verses 21-24.

Verse 21 would be better translated: *Because Moses has given you circumcision ... you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.*

In these verses Jesus is showing them why they marvel that He was healing on the Sabbath day.

What is at the heart of their problem?

The problem is not that He has become a Law violator, as they accuse Him, but they have simply misconstrued the purpose of the Sabbath.

Because they misunderstood how God intended the Sabbath to be kept, they made the faulty assumption that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath violates the Sabbath. But it does not.

And He uses the practice of circumcision to illustrate this fact.

A male child is to be circumcised on the eighth day. And even if the eighth day is a Sabbath day, they will still circumcise him on the eighth day.

This demonstrates that certain work was allowed on the Sabbath day, including the work of healing.

If it is permissible to circumcise on the Sabbath day, and circumcision is a form of mutilation, how much more is it permissible to make a man whole on the Sabbath Day!

3. Messiah's Person Questioned, John 7:25-27

Read verses 25-27.

At this point the people of Jerusalem question why their leaders haven't silenced Him. Could it be that they really believe Him to be the Messiah?

And from the questions the people raise it is obvious that they do not understand His divine origin.

They think that no one will know where the Messiah comes from, but they know where Jesus is from.

4. Messiah's Explanation, John 7:28-30

Then Jesus responds to their questions. Read what He says in verses 28-30.

What is the point He is making here?

He points out to them that while they understand His human origin, they don't understand His divine origin.

Do they understand what He is saying?

Their response in verse 30 shows that they do.

And because He claimed divine origin, *they were seeking to seize Him.*

But notice that their attempt failed! And why did it fail?

Because His hour had not yet come. As we will see, all attempts to kill Him prematurely will fail.

5. The People's Response, John 7:31-36

Again we see a division in the crowd. We have just seen the response of those who are seeking to kill Him.

Now read verses 31-36 to see the response of the other division of the crowd.

This part of the crowd are saying that surely He is the Messiah. Look at the works He is performing.

When the Pharisees hear of this they send some of the temple police to have Him arrested.

Notice that when Jesus responds to them the, the Jews do not understand what He is saying.

Why is this?

Because He is speaking to them in parabolic terms about His coming death and resurrection.

6. Messiah's Invitation, John 7:37-44

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast

Now before we read on it will help understand the significance of what John describes in verse 37 as *the last day, the great day of the feast.*

Seven times around the altar

The last day will be the seventh day of the feast. And it was a special occasion, because on the other days when they came into the temple with the water they marched only once around the altar. On this day they marched around the altar seven times.

Prayer for rain

Also on this day they begin praying for rain because the feast of Tabernacles falls in the time of transition from the dry season to the rain season.

The Talmud records the question: "Why do we begin to pray for rain on the seventh day? Shouldn't we pray for rain on the first day?" And the Rabbis gave a logical answer. They point out: "don't forget that we have seven days of Tabernacles and during that time we have to live in these tabernacles. The roof is made up of branches which provide shade but you can see through it and you can see the stars at night. Now suppose we prayed for rain on the first day of the feast and suppose God answered the prayer on the first day of the feast. We would be rained out. We have to live in these booths for seven days. We have to eat and sleep in them." And so to avoid being rained out they wait until the seventh day.

So the seventh day was the day of praying for water.

Messiah's invitation

Now with this background, listen to what Jesus says. Read verses 37-39.

³⁷ *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "*³⁸ *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' "*³⁹ *But this He spoke of the*

Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

This is Jesus' response to the first ceremony.

And He gives the same interpretation as the Rabbis do: the water represents the Holy Spirit.

And He gives an application for the individual. Those individuals who believe in His Messiahship will have the Holy Spirit indwelling them, providing them with satisfaction of their spiritual thirst.

The Spirit was not yet given because He was not yet glorified, and of course the Spirit will not be given until Acts 2, after His ascension. (Other references to living water are found in: Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13, and John 4:10, 11.)

Division in the crowd

Now read verses 40-44 to see the response of the crowd.

What do you see happening here?

His invitation leads to a discussion among the Jewish people about who He is, and the question they discuss is: is He who He claims to be?

And we see in verse 43 the recurring motif of this section: *so a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.*

Some think He is a prophet, some think He is the Messiah, and some think He was born in Galilee and therefore ineligible to be the Messiah.

And some of them wanted to seize Him, but of course, they were unable to do it.

7. The Pharisaic Response, John 7:45-52

Now we see the response of the Pharisees. Read verses 45-52.

Temple police

The Temple police come back empty handed and the Pharisees ask them why they did not arrest him. How do they respond?

Their response is in verse 46: *“Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”* They did not understand what He had to say, but they were impressed with the way He said it.

Pharisees

How do the Pharisees respond to this?

The point they are making is that no intelligent Jew would accept this person as the Messiah, and these Temple police have simply been deceived or *led astray*. But *none of the Pharisees has believed in Him.*

Nicodemus

But there was one Pharisee who has begun moving toward faith, the one we met earlier in our study, Nicodemus. This is the second time Nicodemus appears in John’s gospel. There will be one more time we will see later. He is not yet a believer, but he is willing to defend Jesus’ right to a hearing before being condemned. He reminds them that Pharisaic Law teaches this. ⁵¹ *“Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?”*

Pharisees

Now the other Pharisees respond emotionally in verse 52. *They answered him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”*

This is an overstatement because we know some prophets that came from the Galilee, such as Hosea, Jonah, and Elisha.

Notice also that they accuse Nicodemus of being a Galilean. When a Judean called a fellow Judean a Galilean, he was calling him stupid and uneducated.

B. The Conflict Over the Law, § 97, John 7:53–8:11

The story of the woman who was caught in adultery is actually an attempt by the Pharisees to trap Jesus into saying something that violates the Law of Moses.

Because He keeps the Law of Moses perfectly, even down to the smallest part of a Hebrew character – every jot and tittle, the only basis they have been able to use to bring an accusation against Him has been their Mishnaic Law.

We have seen them accuse Him of not keeping the traditions of the elders, and of breaking the Sabbath laws. These are charges that He has violated the Mishnaic Law.

But these charges never disturb Him. He readily admits breaking the Mishnaic Law, and He even teaches against it.

So now the Pharisees attempt to set up a situation that will cause Him to contradict the Law of Moses. If He will do that then they will be able to dispute His claim to keep the Law of Moses perfectly

The situation

First of all take note of the situation they choose for this attempt. Read John 7:53 – 8:2.

The seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles are over. It is now the eighth day of the assembly. It is an eighth day required by the Mosaic Law, a separate holy day, distinct from Tabernacles.

After spending the night at the Mount of Olives, Jesus is in the temple court teaching the people again.

So we see that they wait until He is teaching publicly because they are looking for an opportunity to discredit Him publicly.

Attempted entrapment

Now look at what happens. Read verses 3-6.

The Scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to Him. And John points out that this was simply an attempt to entrap Him.

Can you see how this is quite obvious from what they do and say?

Caught in the very act

In order to stress that there is not doubt about this woman's guilt, they say she was caught in the very act of adultery! And with that they have given their game away because surely the very act of adultery requires two people!

Where is the male partner in this act? Clearly their concern is not with enforcing the Law.

But you, what do you say

And notice how they challenge Him in verse 5.

“Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?”

In the Greek it is even more emphatic, literally they say: You then, what say you.

They are actually expecting Him to contradict Moses. *“Moses commanded us to stone such women, but you, what do you say we should do?”*

So it is rather obvious that they are attempting to provoke Him to speak in violation of the Mosaic Law.

Finger

Now Jesus' response is very interesting.

Initially He does not say anything, but He stooped down and with a finger wrote on the ground.

Now why do you think He did that?

It is fascinating to read the commentaries trying to tell us what it was that He was writing on the ground, as if after two thousand years there is something left in the dust that we can still decipher.

However, in the Greek text the focus is not upon the writing but upon the finger.

In the Greek language you can say the same thing in different ways, even using the same words and changing the order of the words. And when you want to emphasize or focus attention on something, you put it first in the sentence or clause.

In this case it is His finger that is first in the clause. It literally reads: *But Jesus stooped down, His finger writing into the ground.*

So John is focusing our attention on the finger which was writing in the ground.

Now why would he do that? What is significant about the finger writing in the ground?

Of the 613 commandments God gave to Moses, 603 were written on a parchment with the pen of a man. But ten were inscribed into tablets of stone, and that includes the law against adultery.

Furthermore the ten inscribed in stone were not chiseled out with the chisel of a man. But four times we are told they were written with the finger of God. See Exodus 31:18, 32:15-16, and Deuteronomy 4:13; 9:10.

And the focus on the finger is to point out that He is the author of that command. He knows exactly what the law said about this command and its punishment. He knows all that the Mosaic Law said about this sin and its punishment.

The first stone

What happens next? Read verses 7-8.

So when they press Him for an answer, He gives them one. Then once more He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

And what was His answer?

"He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Common misuse, out of context

Now what is this statement often taken to mean, or how is it often used?

Often people pull this statement out of its context to make it teach something that it was not intended to teach.

Often it is used to point out that we should not be judging others because we are all sinners and therefore we should not condemn anybody else.

Violates other principles

But that would violate other principles that we are taught.

Sometimes we have to judge. We saw earlier the four principles of church discipline. That requires judgment. We confront believers with sin. That requires judgment. Sometimes we have to issue judgment.

Violates Mosaic Law

Furthermore, if He were saying that only if you are sinlessly perfect should you cast the first stone, then that itself would violate the Mosaic Law and they would have grounds for accusing Him.

The Mosaic Law did not require sinless perfection before a sinner could be executed. Otherwise execution for sins would be impossible, because no one qualifies to carry it out.

And certain sins required execution and adultery is one of them.

So to repeat the point we are making here: if He were saying that only a sinlessly perfect person should you cast the first stone, then He would be violating the Mosaic Law, and they would have a basis for accusing Him.

The issue

So then, if our common interpretation of His statement is invalid, and it is, what is He saying here?

The focus of this context is the Mosaic Law.

And the point of His statement is that if we judge on the basis of the Mosaic Law, we should judge on the basis of all that the Mosaic Law said about this sin and its punishment.

And yes, the Mosaic Law does say anyone guilty of adultery must be stoned to death. But that is not all that Moses said about it.

Moses also said that no one could be stoned to death except at the testimony of two or three witnesses. Deuteronomy 17:6.

This much they do have, because they claim she was caught in the very act. And so presumably, they have their two or three witnesses.

Even so, that is not all that Moses wrote.

Moses also said that the two or three witnesses at whose testimony one is condemned to death are responsible to cast the first stone. The first stone must be cast by the actual accusers. Deuteronomy 17:7.

Even so, that is not all that Moses said.

But one other point is made in the rabbinic interpretation of two passages on witnesses, found in Deuteronomy 17 & 19. (17:6, 19:15)

The two or three witnesses at whose testimony one is condemned to death, and who are responsible to cast the first stone, must not be guilty of the same sin of which the accused is accused.

They must not be guilty of the same sin. (Deuteronomy 19:15)

So He reminds them, the witness who is not guilty of the same sin, let him cast the first stone.

The result

Guess what happened next!

Read verse 9.

One by one they stroll away.

This implies that the witnesses and accusers were not innocent of the same sin. And perhaps among them is the one with whom she was supposedly caught in the very act.

So eventually she is left alone with Him.

The woman

Now read what He says to her in verses 10-11.

¹⁰ *“Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?”* ¹¹ *She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more”.*

When He says, *I do not condemn you*, He is not excusing her sin. In fact He goes on to warn her to go and sin no more.

The issue was that the condemnation was illegal, based upon the Mosaic Law. And because the two or three witnesses were not willing to cast the first stone, there were no legal grounds for condemning her.

Entrapment failed

This was the one attempt the Pharisees made to get Him to say something that would contradict the Mosaic Law.

And it failed. They won't try that again.

From this point on they will go back to accusations of breaking Mishnaic Law.

C. The Conflict Over the Light,

§ 98, John 8:21-59

This section and the next together are known as the fifth of John's seven discourses, the discourse on the Light of the World.

And it is the section where we find the second of Jesus' I am's: *I am the Light of the world.*

Jesus again spoke to them ...

But before we read this paragraph, notice how John begins it: *Then Jesus again spoke to them.*

In other words, at this point Jesus returned to the main theme of what He has been saying at this feast.

Look back for a moment to what He has been saying.

1. *The source and authority of His teaching*

Look at verse 16 in section 96.

The Jews were astonished at His teaching and were saying, *How has this man become learned, having never been educated in our rabbinic schools?*

And Jesus answered, *My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*

With this He declared that God was both the source and the authority of His teaching. His teaching came from God, and it was God who sent Him to proclaim it.

2. *His divine origin*

Then in verses 28-29 He declares His divine origin, which of course they don't understand.

3. *His invitation to drink the water of life*

Then, in verse 37, on the great and final day of the feast, the day when the water was carried seven times around the altar before it was poured out, He stood and cried out an invitation to all who are thirsty:

If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'

And He was speaking metaphorically of the Holy Spirit, whom those who believe in Him were to receive.

So, to repeat,

He has declared the divine source and authority of His teaching,

He has declared His divine origin, and

He has invited all who will believe in Him to come and receive the Holy Spirit who will satisfy their spiritual thirst.

The Kindling of the Lampstands

Now, John writes: *Then He said again to them...*

Read what He says in verse 12.

This is Jesus' response to the second key ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Kindling of the Lampstands.

How does a knowledge of that ceremony add to our understanding of what Jesus says here?

Each evening a great many very large lamps in both the inner and outer courtyards of the temple were kindled, and they would give light to all of Jerusalem.

In the understanding of the Rabbis, the light produced by the lamps represented the Shechinah Glory, which is God's visible presence.

An example of the Shechinah Glory is the pillar of fire by which God led the people at through the wilderness at night, and the pillar of cloud by day.

And by claiming to be the Light of the world in this context He claims to be that Shekinah Glory.

Light and Darkness

Then He added: *he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.*

What is the significance of this statement?

Just as the pillar of fire provided light for the Israelites in the wilderness, both showing them the way and giving them light by which to walk, so He proclaimed that those who followed Him *will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.*

And the light will lead them and light up their path so that they will not stumble in the darkness.

Conflict

Now read verses 13-17.

What objection do the Pharisees make to His claim?

The Pharisees object that His testimony could not be true because He alone testifies of it.

Jesus' response

Jesus responds by saying two things. What are they?

1. *Judgment*

First, in verses 14-15, He deals with the issue of judgment.

Jesus is fully aware of both His divine origin and His goal or destiny, the purpose for which He was sent. The Pharisees, on the other hand, do not know either His divine origin or His purpose.

Therefore, He says, they *judge according to the flesh*, that is, without considering the spiritual reality. And therefore their judgment is invalid.

And the Greek word for *judge* here is *krino*, which can mean both to judge and to condemn. It can mean *to form or give an opinion*. And it can be used in a judicial sense: *to sit in judgment, or to pass judgment either condemning or vindicating*.

The Pharisees are in fact passing judgment, and condemning Him.

He, on the other hand is not doing this. As He said to Nicodemus in 3:17, *God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him*.

2. *Witness*

Having dealt with the issue of judgment, He responds directly to their charge of His self-witness, in verses 16-18.

Even in your law ... Their law was the Mishnaic law which Jesus has been refuting throughout His ministry, and by which the Pharisees are condemning Him.

But even in their law is the requirement for two or three witnesses. (Deuteronomy 17:6)

And Jesus points out that He is not alone in His witness, but God the Father also testifies about Him.

He, as the unique *I am*, is qualified to be a witness. And His Father is the second witness.

And on an earlier occasion, after healing the paralytic in section 49, He actually gave them four witnesses: John the Baptist, His works, His Father, and the Scriptures.

And the Father spoke audibly from heaven at His baptism where many heard His witness.

So He says to them that both He, the unique *I am*, and His Father are two witnesses to His claim to be the Light of the world.

Where is your Father?

And how do the Pharisees respond to this?

Read verses 19-20.

Their reply is no doubt scornful: If God the Father is a witness, let him appear in court. Where is He?

And Jesus points out that their problem is that they know neither Him nor His Father.

Again John records that *no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come*.

D. The Conflict Over His Person,

§ 99, John 8:21-59

1. Messiah the True Object of Faith, John 8:21-30

Then again Jesus takes up His discourse. Let's see what He says. Read verses 21-24.

Ever since His rejection, when He speaks in public, He has been speaking to them in parables that most of His audience do not understand.

And here He is speaking to the unbelieving part of the crowd.

Where is He going?

He says: *I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come?*

What does He mean when He says He is going to depart for a place where they cannot come?

He is referring to His death and resurrection. He is from heaven, and He will return to heaven.

They will die in their sins

But they cannot come with Him, they will die in their sins.

Why does He say they will die in their sins?

He explains in verse 24: *Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.*

Most translations add an extra word here, *unless you believe that I am He*. But the word He is not in the Greek text.

Jesus is using the name of God that He gave to Moses when He said *"Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

So unless they believe that He is the Messiah, who is God, they will die in their sins.

Of this world

What does He mean by what He says in verse 23?

He is not only contrasting the material world with the spiritual one, He is also contrasting the dominion of Satan, *this world*, with the dominion of God, *not of this world*.

And He will come back to this point later in His discourse.

Who are You?

But they are not understanding Him. Read verses 25-26.

He tells them that ultimately He will be the one to judge them. He has *many things to judge concerning them*.

And then once again He tells them that His message has a divine origin and authority.

He speaks to the world the very things that He heard from the One who sent Him. And the One who sent Him is true.

The Father

But still they don't understand.

Read verses 27-29.

They don't realize that He has been speaking to them about God the Father.

And so He tells them two things here.

First He tells them when they will recognise Him, and then He tells them yet again the authority by which He speaks.

i. *Lifted up*

When will they recognize who He is?

When they lift Him up. And this is a reference to His crucifixion.

Although thousands of them did recognize Him soon after He was crucified and raised again, it will not be until the end of the Great Tribulation that all Israel will recognize Him and call for Him to return.

I am

And again He uses that name of God given to Moses: *you will know that I am.*

ii. *The Father*

Then what does He say about His relationship with God the Father?

- a. The initiative for what He does comes from the Father.
- b. His teaching comes from the Father.
- c. He was sent by the Father.
- d. The Father is with Him.
- e. He always does what is pleasing to the Father.

So the authority for what He says and does comes from the Father.

Many believe in Him

Now see the result of what He has been saying in verse 30.

Despite their not fully understanding Him, many believed in Him as He was speaking.

Conclusion

In this paragraph, then, He emphasises that He is the Messiah sent from the Father, and unless they believe in Him they will die in their sins.

2. Messiah the True Deliverer, John 8:31-59

And having told them that the Messiah is the true object of faith, He goes on to say that the Messiah is the true deliverer from three things.

a. *From Sin, John 8:31-40*

The truth will make you free

Let's look at His first point and the crowd's response.

Read verses 31-33.

How does the crowd react to Jesus' statement that *the truth will make you free*?

They make two points. What are they?

- i. First they say they are descended from Abraham.
- ii. Then they say they *have never yet been enslaved to anyone*.

Now is that true?

Yes, they are the biological descendants of Abraham. That part is true.

But throughout history they have often been either slaves or a vassal state subject to another world power: beginning with Egypt, then Assyria, Babylonia, Media-Persia, Macedonia, Egypt again and Syria, then finally at the time they were speaking they were subject to Rome.

So why did they say they *have never yet been enslaved to anyone*?

Obviously they are not making a statement about their history.

So their meaning is elsewhere.

Remember the context for their statement is the Feast of Tabernacles. And the Feast of Tabernacles was given to them by God as a continual reminder of their experience in the wilderness after they were delivered from bondage in Egypt.

Unlike the Zealots, the Pharisees did not regard political liberty as the test of freedom.

Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy, and read Deuteronomy 14:1-2.

¹ *"You are the sons of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead. ² "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.*

Based on this passage, they regarded themselves as sons of God, a holy people, God's own possession. And this was for them the meaning of being free.

And, according to the rabbis, just as the people of Israel had earlier escaped the bondage of Egypt, so being circumcised was their guarantee that they would escape the bonds of Gehenna (which is the Lake of Fire) (*Exod. Rab.* 19:81; 15:11).

So, by saying that they *have never yet been enslaved to anyone*, the crowd is reflecting the teaching of the Pharisees that because they were sons of Abraham they were automatically free from the judgment to come.

But that simply is not true, and they are contradicting what Jesus has just pointed out to them.

He has just told them that only those who are truly His disciples will be free, meaning, as He soon points out, free from sin.

Knowing the Truth

And by continuing in His word they will prove to be His disciples, *and [they] will know the truth and the truth will make [them] free.*

And knowing the truth is more than simply a head knowledge that some doctrine or statement is correct.

The word used here is *ginosko*, to know, and it is the same word used, for example, in the Greek translation of Genesis 3:5,7 and 4:1.

⁵ *For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

⁷ *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

¹ *Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain ...*

And in John's gospel, *ginosko*, to know, is used to denote personal fellowship with God.

In John 17:3 Jesus says:

³ *"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

To know (*ginosko*) the Father and the Son, is to have their life, which is eternal life.

And to have eternal life is to be free from sin.

Continue in My word

Now, to review what He said to them here, look again at verse 31, noticing its structure.

There is one thing they are to do, and three consequences of doing it.

What are they to do?

They are to continue in His Word.

And what are the three consequences of continuing in His word?

- i. First, it is the proof that they are His disciples. Those who truly believe in Him will be found continuing in His Word.
- ii. Secondly, being His disciples, they will know the truth. That is, they will know God.
- iii. And thirdly, knowing the truth, the truth will make them free. Because they will have the eternal life of God they will be free from sin.

In other words, those who are truly His disciples are those who continue in His word, and because they are truly His disciples they will know the truth, and because they know the truth they will be free from sin.

Their response

And in response the crowd, who do not understand what He is saying, say they are Abraham's descendants, and they have never been enslaved to anyone.

Now Jesus responds to both of these claims, and He answers the second one first.

Truly, truly, I say to you

And He highlights His next statement with those words: *truly, truly, I say to you*.

The word *truly* here is the Greek word *amen*, which is actually a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning to be firm, steady, or trustworthy.

And Jesus is the only one in the New Testament to use the word at the beginning of a sentence. And it could be rendered, "I who am the Amen [Truth itself] tell you as a most certain and infallible truth."ⁱⁱ

Slaves of sin

And what does He tell them as a most certain and infallible truth?

Read verses 34-36.

Jesus points out to them that, contrary to their claim, they are in fact slaves to sin, and that if the Son makes them free they will be free indeed.

Descendants of Abraham

Then He addresses their first claim.

Read verses 37-40.

What is He telling them here?

He says that although they are Abraham's descendants, Abraham is not their father spiritually.

They are trying to kill Him, but in contrast, Abraham *believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness*. (Genesis 15:6)

Their deeds reveal who their father is, just as Jesus' deeds reveal who His father is.

And He will have more to say about this in the next paragraph.

Unbelievers

Notice also that while He began speaking to those who believed in Him, He ends up addressing those who still do not believe.

Summary

To repeat the main points here:

- i. Those who sin are slaves to sin, and the Messiah is the one who can deliver them from slavery to sin.
- ii. His disciples will be found continuing in His word and they will know the truth and the truth will make them free from sin.

b. From Satan, John 8:41-48

Now He has just been telling them that they are in fact slaves to sin, and that, while they are descended from Abraham, they are not spiritually children of Abraham because they are doing what Abraham would not have done.

Satan's children

Next, He tells them who their father is.

Read verses 41-42.

First they claimed that Abraham was their father. Now they claim that God is their father.

How does He answer them?

God is not their father

First He refutes that God is their father.

If their claim were true, if God were their father, then instead of trying to kill Him they would be loving Him.

And why?

Because He came from the Father's presence and He came at the Father's initiative, not His own. He was sent by the Father.

If God were their father, they would have recognised Him and loved Him.

The devil is their father

Then He tells them who is their father.

Read verses 43-45.

Who is their father?

He points out that the devil is really their father.

How does He prove this to them?

The devil is obviously their father because they want to do the desires of their father.

And then He gives two examples of the devil's desires that they are carrying out.

- i. The devil is a murderer from the beginning.

And the fact that they are trying to kill Him shows that they have a murderer's spirit.

- ii. The devil is the father of lies. He is by very nature a liar, and all liars share his nature.

And they are lying about Him, which shows that the devil is their father.

And since they do the acts of the devil, they are the devil's children, and the devil is their father.

And for that reason, Jesus says, they do not understand Him and they do not believe Him.

He is free of sin

Next He issues them a challenge.

Read it in verses 46 - 47.

Which one of you convicts Me of sin?

Here is the opportunity. Can they raise one sin He is guilty of, a sin based upon the Mosaic Law, not rabbinic traditions?

They could not find even one!

So He reiterates that He speaks the truth and they do not believe Him because they are not of God but of the devil who is the father of lies.

Crowds now following their leaders

Now read their response in verse 48.

The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

Notice that the accusation of being demonized is now coming from the multitudes. They are beginning to follow the leaders here.

Samaritan

How does the word *Samaritan* fit in this context?

It might simply be the negative attitude of the crowd towards Him.

But in light of the fact that it is followed by the clause *and have a demon*, there is something else involved here.

In rabbinic demonology there was a leading demon called Shomroni. And in Hebrew the word Shomroni could mean Samaritan, or it could be the name of this demon.

And Shomroni was the father of Asmodai who was the prince of demons.

So by calling Him a Samaritan they are not referring to the ethnic group of that name, but to the demon Shomroni.

And in this context, where He has just told them that the devil is their father, their response is the retaliation that He is of Shomroni. In other words, that is His father is Shomroni.

c. From Death, John 8:49-59

No demon

Read His response to them in verses 49-50.

What is He saying to them here?

He does not have a demon.

On the contrary, He is honouring His Father and not seeking His own glory, while they are dishonouring Him.

He also warns them about the judgment to come.

Free from death

Then once again He highlights what He is about to say with: "I who am the Amen [Truth itself] tell you as a most certain and infallible truth."

Read verses 51-53.

And what is this most certain and infallible truth?

He says, *If anyone keeps My word he will never see death.*

Who are the ones who keep His word?

In verse 47 He said: *He who is of God hears the words of God.*

And in verse 31 He said: *If you continue in My word then you are truly disciples of Mine.*

Clearly, the one who keeps His word is the one who is truly His disciple, the one who believes in Him.

And what does it mean to *never see death*?

He is speaking of spiritual death.

Those who believe in Him are those who will keep His word, and they will have eternal life and so they will not see death.

But the Jews do not understand Him, and they think He is talking about physical death.

Response of the crowd

Notice in verse 52 that the charge that He is demon possessed again comes from the people and not just from the leaders.

And look at verse 53 where they ask Him two questions:

- i. *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?*
- ii. *And whom do You make Yourself out to be?*

Jesus' answers their question: whom do You make Yourself out to be?

Read how He responds in verses 54-55.

He begins with their second question by directly refuting the idea that He is making Himself out to be somebody. He is not glorifying Himself. Rather it is His Father, the same God that they claim is their father, who is glorifying Him.

Then He says that while they do not know the Father, He does know Him.

And the contrast is even greater in the Greek, because He uses two different words for the verb, *to know*:

- i. *ginōskō*, which means to know experientially, and frequently suggests the inception or progress in knowledge, and
- ii. *oída*, which suggests fullness of knowledge, or intuitive knowledge, that is, I know what I know because I am what I am.

When He says they *have not come to know Him*, He uses the word *ginōskō*. And when He says that He knows Him He uses the word *oída*.

So what He says here could be written as follows:

“You never had the initial or progressive experience of knowing Him;
but I intuitively know Him because I am God as the Father is God:
and if I should say that I do not intuitively know Him, I shall be a liar like you:
but I know Him intuitively, and keep His word.”

The last clause here adds the thought that Jesus did the will of His Father not only through obedience, but because He is God as the Father is God.

Here Jesus, the Messiah, points out that His knowledge of God was not acquired and progressive, but it was intuitive and full because, as He will say later, He and the Father are one (John 10:30) and the Father is in Him and He in the Father (John 14:10, 11).ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus' answers their question: Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?

Then He turned to their first question: *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died?*

Read verses 56-59.

Why did Jesus say: *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad?*

There are two points to note here: the rejoicing and the seeing.

i. *Seeing*

Why did He say that Abraham saw His day? And when did he see it?

He is responding to their assertion that He is not greater than Abraham who died.

And so He says to them, although he died physically, Abraham is still alive in paradise, and he rejoiced to see His day.

ii. *Rejoicing*

Let's illustrate the idea of rejoicing in a different setting: We might rejoice if the queen of England were to visit our city, but it is unlikely she would even know if we were to visit London. Much less would she be rejoicing about our visit.

Thus it is the lesser who rejoices to see the greater.

And Abraham's rejoicing is proof that Jesus is the greater.

I AM

How do they respond to this?

They complain that He is not old enough to have seen Abraham!

So He responds with another statement highlighted by His double amen: *I who am the Amen [Truth itself] tell you as a most certain and infallible truth: before Abraham was born, I am.*

What does this mean?

By using the phrase *I AM* He is claiming to be the God who revealed Himself to Moses, *I AM THAT I AM.*

He claims to be God, and therefore to exist before Abraham.

They pick up stones

Did they understand Him?

Yes, the people understood that He was claiming to be God, which they considered to be blasphemy, so in verse 59 they pick up stones to kill Him.

But again He is able to escape. He cannot die before His appointed time.

E. The Conflict Over the Healing of the Man Born Blind, § 100, John 9:1-41

Here we have the sixth of John's seven signs.

Messianic miracle

There are three miracles which Jesus performs that are described as messianic miracles because the Pharisees taught that only the Messiah would be able to perform them.

We have already seen the first two of them. Do you remember what they were?

The first was the healing of the Jewish leper. And the second was the casting out of a mute demon.

The third messianic miracle was the healing of anyone born blind. It was one thing to heal someone who simply had gone blind, but to heal someone born blind would be a messianic miracle. A lot of details on this third messianic miracle are given in John 9:1-41. This lengthy chapter can be divided into five segments.

1. Physical Healing, John 9:1-12

The first segment, verses 1-12, records the physical healing itself. And the first five verses tell us how it came about.

A strange question

Read verses 1-5.

Notice the setting. Jesus and His disciples are passing by when they see a man who was blind from birth. And this prompts them to ask Jesus a theological question:

Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?

Now, does it strike you that this is a strange question to ask? What is strange about it?

The strange part of the question is not: did his parents sin and he was born blind? That could be explained by a point of the Mosaic Law in Exodus 34:6-7 that God visits the sins of the fathers *upon the children, and the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation*. So, conceivably his parents sinned and as a discipline, punishment or judgement God caused the son to be born blind.

The strange part

But there is more to the question than that. Can you see it?

The question also asks: did this man sin, and because he sinned he was then born blind?

How could he sin first and then be born blind?

Some people in the New Age Movement have used this passage to claim that Judaism in the first century held to a form of reincarnation, but there never was any such belief in ancient Judaism. The question does not reflect New Age philosophy, but it does reflect a point of Pharisaic theology.

Pharisaic teaching

The Pharisees teach that when a child is conceived, he is conceived with two separate inclinations, and they refer to it as the good inclination and the evil inclination. And the two inclinations continually struggle for control of the person. In most people the good inclination wins. But there are exceptions, and it could be that during the nine month development within the womb of the mother the evil inclination got the upper hand and out of an attitude of animosity the child kicks his mother in the womb, therefore dishonouring the mother. And therefore the child is born blind.

So being born blind is a sign of divine discipline and divine judgement and therefore anyone who is born blind will never see – until the Messiah comes.

For this reason healing a man born blind is a messianic miracle.

To heal someone who went blind was not unusual because that happened before. But to heal someone who was born blind was unique. It had not happened before, and it would not happen until the Messiah came and did it.

Understanding

And, as you will see, understanding this very issue will enable us to see why things happen the way they do in this chapter.

Theology corrected

Now, in verse 3 He corrects their theology.

The man was not born blind because of any specific sin committed either by the man himself or by his parents. So neither option proposed in the question is correct.

God so ordained the situation for His own glory at this particular point in time.

Healing

Now let's read about the healing of this man in verses 6-12.

He now proceeds to heal the man, but He does it in a rather strange way. What does He do?

He spits on the ground and from the spit and the dirt He makes mud. He then smears the mud on the eyes of the man born blind. Even then the man is not healed. He then tells the man, in verse 6, to "*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*". Only then will he finally be healed.

Now why go through all this trouble? Why not simply heal him instantaneously?

Mishnaic law

We mentioned before that Jesus not only violates Mishnaic law, He sometimes goes out of His way to do so. Here is one example of this.

First of all we already know that it is the Sabbath day and that it was forbidden by rabbinic law to heal any person on the Sabbath day.

But not only do the rabbinic writings spell out not to heal a blind man on the Sabbath day, they also spell out how not to do it!

Let me quote the law the way it actually reads.

“It is prohibited to heal a blind man on the Sabbath day either by injecting wine into his eye or making mud from spittle and smearing it on his eyes.”

Not only can you not heal a blind man on the Sabbath day, you cannot do it this way on the Sabbath day!

Yet that is the way He does it.

The pool of Siloam

There are many pools in Jerusalem, and many are easier to get to than the pool of Siloam. Why was he sent to the pool of Siloam?

You have to go down a very steep hill to the bottom part of the City of David. This is difficult enough for people with sight, and more so for those without sight. Why this pool and no other?

As we saw in section 96, it happens to be the feast of Tabernacles. And there is a special ceremony conducted by this pool every day for seven days. This was the most crowded pool in the city during this period of time.

And therefore word would spread quickly that a third Messianic miracle had been performed.

Policy on miracles

But in keeping with His policy since He was rejected, He doesn't heal the man publicly because when the miracle occurs He and the man are separated by some significant geography.

Result

And indeed, when he washes the mud off his eyes in the pool of Siloam, it does cause a stir. And it causes a dilemma for the Jewish audience.

On one hand, and on the positive side, this was a miracle never performed before.

But on the negative side, it was done on the Sabbath day. And furthermore, it was done in a way that is specifically forbidden on the Sabbath day.

And they cannot reconcile this in their minds, so, as we are about to see, they go to their leaders to get this one sorted out.

2. The First Interrogation, John 9:13-17

Read verses 13-17.

Notice that John emphasises the issues that concern them here: both the fact that the man was healed on the Sabbath, and the method by which he was healed.

And as the man is questioned they are hoping to find some kind of loophole in his story. But none of his answers help them out at all.

Division among the Pharisees

Notice verse 16. What is happening among the Pharisees now?

There is a division developing among them. Some are saying Jesus couldn't be from God because He doesn't keep the Sabbath, while others were saying that He must be from God to be able to perform such signs.

3. The Interrogation of Parents, John 9:18-22

How will they solve this problem?

Read verses 18-22.

Here the man's parents are brought before the Pharisees and interrogated.

The man

Among the Pharisees, in attempting to find a way out of their dilemma, the question was raised,

“Suppose the whole thing is not true to begin with. Just suppose the man never was born blind in the first place and the whole thing is a trick. Let's ask the parents.”

But the parents confirm two things.

- i. First of all there was no doubt about this man being their son.
- ii. And secondly they affirmed was that he was indeed born blind.

So there was no longer any possibility that there was any type of fakery going on, or that someone was trying to play a trick on the Pharisees.

The parents

But, as for how their son was healed the parents decided to say nothing more and to let their son speak for himself.

What was the reason for their reluctance?

The answer is given in verse 22:

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

The *Jews* here refers to the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin.

And they have already decreed that if anyone owned Jesus as Messiah, he would be excommunicated from the synagogue.

It is obvious that the parents wanted to believe in Him, and perhaps at this point they had become secret believers in His Messiahship, because they saw that He not only performed a messianic miracle but also performed that miracle on their own son.

Excommunication in Pharisaism

In Pharisaic Judaism, there were three specific levels of excommunication.

- i. The first level is called the *nezipah*,

which is simply a “rebuke” that lasted anywhere from seven to thirty days and was merely disciplinary.

And the decision could only be pronounced by three rabbis.

That was the lowest level of excommunication.

An example of the *nezipah* is found in 1 Timothy 5:1.

Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father.

- ii. The second level is called the *niddui*,

which means, “to cast out.” It would last a minimum of thirty days and was disciplinary.

A *niddui* had to be pronounced by ten rabbis.

Examples of the second type are found in 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 and Titus 3:10.

¹⁴ *If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.* ¹⁵ *Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

¹⁰ *Reject a factious man after a first and second warning.*

iii. The third and worst type of excommunication is called the *cherem*,

which means to be totally devoted to destruction, and the person is to be “un-synagogued,” to “be put out of the synagogue and to be separated from the Jewish community.”

The rest of the Jews considered someone under the *cherem* curse to be dead, and no communication or any kind of relationship whatsoever could be carried on with the person.

This third type is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-7 and Matthew 18:15-20.

¹ *It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.* ² *You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.* ³ *For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.* ⁴ *In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus,* ⁵ *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶ *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?* ⁷ *Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.*

¹⁵ *“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.* ¹⁶ *“But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.* ¹⁷ *“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.* ¹⁸ *“Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.* ¹⁹ *“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.* ²⁰ *“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”*

Excommunication decreed

The fact that the expression, *be put out of the synagogue*, is used tells us which level of excommunication the Pharisees had chosen for one who would own Jesus as Messiah. It was the third and most severe level, the *cherem* - to be un-synagogued, to be put out, to be considered as dead.

Therefore, the Pharisees were now threatening a Jewish believer, not merely with a rebuke or with being cast out temporarily, but with being put out permanently.

And because the parents knew what the Pharisees had decreed, they chose not to make any further comments, except to affirm those two things: that he was their son, and that he was born blind.

Conclusion

Therefore, just as the first interrogation of the man had done, the interrogation of the parents ends inconclusively.

4. The Second Interrogation, John 9:23-34

So they call the man in again for a second interrogation.

Read verses 23-34.

During this interrogation, the Pharisees begin to lose their sense of logic and they become somewhat emotional.

And there is a bit of humour here that I will try to bring out as we go through the passage.

Praise God for a sinner!?

Look at verse 24:

So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner."

Does this make sense?

This is not a very logical response!

When is the last time any of you said, "praise the Lord, this guy robbed the bank, or praise God this person killed somebody"? We praise God for many things, but we don't praise God for other people's sins.

Yet this is what they are asking him to do – *give glory to God because we know Jesus is a sinner.*

Tactful challenge

At this point the man is able to stay tactful.

He responds by saying in verse 25,

Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

Now there is much more here than meets the eye. This is not merely a statement of simple fact: I was blind and now I see. It is more than that.

What he is actually doing with this statement is issuing a challenge.

What he is saying is I was born blind. And you are my spiritual teachers. You are the ones who taught me that because I was born blind I will never see unless the Messiah comes in my lifetime. That is what you taught me.

Now this man named Jesus of Nazareth has come and has healed me of my blindness, and, based upon what you taught me, He should be proclaimed to be the Messiah.

Instead you tell me to give God the glory because you know He is a sinner!

Can you please explain this to me? I am having trouble following your logic here.

Pharisees look for a loophole

And how do they respond to this challenge?

In verse 26 they say,

What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?

What kind of a response is that?

The man's challenge is perfectly logical, but if they can find a loophole in his story it can be defeated.

So their response was in effect, "alright, tell us once again from the beginning. Go through every little detail."

There must be a loophole in the account somewhere.

Tactless response

And now the man loses his ability to stay tactful.

Look at verse 27. He says,

"I told you already and you did not listen; why do you want to hear it again? You do not want to become His disciples too, do you?"

That's not a smart thing to say to Pharisees.

Pharisees

And they respond accordingly in verse 28,

²⁸*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 where He is from."*

The implication was that being a disciple of Moses was superior to being a disciple of Jesus because God spoke to Moses, but He did not speak to Jesus.

Further bold challenge

If the man was tactless earlier, he really blows it next. He is very bold in the face of severe consequences.

Look what he says in verse 30.

³⁰ *The man answered and said to them, "Well, here is an amazing thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes.*

The point is that as the spiritual leaders of Israel they should be able to explain this.

Then he continues by emphasising the very points the Pharisees are trying to escape.

- i. First in verse 31.

³¹ *"We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.*

The first point is that Jesus cannot be a sinner because God hears Him, and God only hears those who fear Him and do His will.

- ii. His second point is in verse 32.

³² *"Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.*

There are records of the healing of people who went blind, but never was there any report of someone healed who was born blind.

That is what makes this miracle uniquely messianic.

So he is reminding them of their own theology here.

And the implication for the Pharisees is that they had no basis or grounds for rejecting the Messiahship of Jesus.

Pharisees

The Pharisees now terminate the interrogation. Look at verse 34.

³⁴ *They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out.*

As far as the Pharisees are concerned that will terminate that discussion.

On the basis of their theology, anyone who was born blind was born that way because of some specific sin, either committed by the individual while in the womb of the mother, or by his parents.

So they are not about to be taught by such a person, even if he is only repeating their own theology.

The casting out of verse 34 is the same as that of verse 22. He is now expelled from the synagogue.

5. Spiritual Healing, John 9:35-41

And so we come to the last part of this story.

Now keep in mind that this man never saw Jesus. When he walked away from Jesus he was still blind. And when he finally received his sight Jesus was nowhere to be seen.

Spiritual healing

Read verses 35-38.

Who is taking the initiative in verse 35?

When Jesus hears about his expulsion from the synagogue, He finds the man and asks him:

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

The man does not know who he is talking to, so he says in verse 36,

“Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”

Then Jesus identifies Himself in verse 37,

“You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you.”

At that point he says in verse 38,

“Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped Him.

And for a Jew to worship another man, meant that he was accepting Him to be the Messianic Person, the Messianic God-Man.

And that leads to the spiritual healing of the man born blind.

Blindness and sight

Now read Jesus' conclusion in verses 39-41.

He concludes with a comparison between the man and the Pharisees.

What is the point of His comparison?

He points out that this man moved from physical blindness and physical darkness to physical light and physical sight.

But he has also moved from spiritual blindness and spiritual darkness to spiritual light and spiritual sight.

As for the Pharisees, they have physical sight and physical light. But because of their unbelief they remain in spiritual blindness and spiritual darkness.

Light and darkness

We are pointing out, without further comment, the places where John mentions his sub-theme of light and darkness. It can be seen in this chapter in verses 4-5 and in verses 39-41. This subtheme is worthy of its own study, but we don't have time to discuss it in this context.

Messianic miracles

Now let's review the three messianic miracles, noticing the development in the attitude of the leader's towards Jesus:

1. Do you remember the first one? It was the healing of the Jewish leper.

And what happened as a result of that miracle?

The intensive investigation of Jesus' Messiahship began.

2. And what was the second messianic miracle? It was the healing of the mute demoniac.

And what was the result?

The result was the decree that Jesus was not the Messiah on the basis of demon possession.

3. And the third messianic miracle was the healing of the man born blind.

The leadership's response to this miracle was that anyone who owned Jesus as their Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

F. The Conflict Over the Shepherd, § 101, John 10:1-21

Here we have the sixth of John's seven discourses, the discourse on the Good Shepherd.

In this discourse we will find the third and fourth I AM statements: *I am the door of the sheep* (verse 7), and *I am the Good Shepherd* (verses 10 & 14).

1. Messiah the True Shepherd, John 10:1-6

Read the first part of the discourse in verses 1-6.

As verse 6 says, Jesus was speaking to them in a figure of speech. And this has been His practice since He was rejected in section 61.

John says *they did not understand what those things were which He had been saying to them.*

Now the question is: do we understand the things He was saying to them?

Does what He said raise questions for you?

A Parable

Recall that a parable is a figure of speech in which a spiritual truth is illustrated by analogies drawn from every day life and experience.

A parable uses something that is known and understood to illustrate something that is otherwise unknown. And the illustration is taken from an everyday life experience.

In this case, the life experience concerns the shepherd and his sheep.

One major point

And each parable makes one major point, and it might have some sub-points as this one does.

The major point and the sub-points will become clear as we understand the everyday life experience being used.

Understanding a parable

Once we understand the illustration and its key elements, we will be able to find the truth that is being illustrated.

Sheep in Israel

So let's begin by looking at the way sheep are cared for in Israel. It is very different from the way they are treated here in our country.

Here sheep are rounded up and driven along by specially trained sheep-dogs.

But there the shepherd has a personal attachment to the sheep, and the sheep recognize his voice and respond accordingly.

One man who had taught in Israel told of two illustrations that were vivid in his memory concerning eastern shepherds and their sheep. He says ...^{iv}

Of the two pictures, one is that of a shepherd leading his sheep through the city of Jerusalem just outside the Jaffa Gate. Cars were whizzing by while the shepherd

sang and gently whistled to his sheep, and they dutifully followed him despite all of the bustling traffic nearby.

The other picture is that of an early morning with the Bedouins when the shepherds began to lead their sheep out of the sheepfold, which contained the combined flocks of four shepherds. As each shepherd took his turn and began to sing and call his sheep, they dutifully separated from the larger flock and began to follow him to the hills for their daylight feeding.

Sheepfold

The sheepfold was a place of security, intended to keep intruders out.

It would probably have been either a circular or a square enclosure, constructed with a high stone fence or wall, and at the top of the wall may have been vines or briars.

Door

The entrance would be the only break in the wall, and once the sheep were safely inside at night, the watchman or guard (who was either a servant or a shepherd) would lie down across the opening and serve both as the protector for the sheep and as a gate or a door to the sheepfold.

So there was no door as we know it, but the watchman himself was the door.

Access

Unless an intruder was willing to confront the watchman, the only way into the sheepfold was to climb the wall (10:1).

Access for the shepherd was quite another matter. He could enter the sheepfold through the opening to check his sheep anytime he desired because he was known both to the watchman and to the sheep (10:2–3).

Intimacy

The use of *his own* in verses 3–4 clearly indicates the intimate relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.

In the mornings the shepherd would enter the fold and lead the sheep out to their pastures and water holes by the sound of his voice. The sheep follow him because they know his voice.

But, as we read in verse 5, they simply will not follow a stranger. Instead, they will flee from him because they do not know his voice.

And the intimacy between the shepherd and his sheep is emphasized by the fact that the shepherd called his sheep by name.

Key elements

What are the key elements in this illustration?

The sheep, the shepherd, the thief or stranger, and the doorkeeper.

The main point

Now, before we try to interpret these elements and the parable, what is the main point made by this illustration?

The main point is that there is only one true shepherd of the sheep.

There are also five sub-points:

- i. The true shepherd is the one who enters by the door.
- ii. The false shepherd climbs over the wall. He is a thief and a robber.
- iii. The true shepherd calls his sheep by name and leads them out to pasture.
- iv. The sheep follow the true shepherd because they know his voice.
- v. But they will flee from a stranger because they do not know his voice.

The meaning of the parable's elements

Now we understand the illustration, let's look to see what it is illustrating.

And we'll begin with the key elements: the sheep, the shepherd, the thief, and the doorkeeper.

What do these elements represent?

- i. The sheep are the people of Israel, and more particularly, they are the believing remnant of Israel.
- ii. The true shepherd is the Messiah, Jesus. He will make this more explicit later in this section.
- iii. *The doorkeeper*

Who is the doorkeeper?

The true shepherd is the one *who enters by the door*. He is the one who enters in the appointed way, the one who is recognised by the doorkeeper.

How were the people of Israel to recognize the Messiah when He came?

The prophets of the Old Testament described the Messiah who would come.

And just as the doorkeeper of the sheepfold verifies the identity of the shepherd and allows him to enter the sheepfold, so the Old Testament prophets verify the identity of the Messiah.

And the doorkeeper is the Old Testament prophets.

And the true shepherd will be recognised because He comes in fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, and what He does will be in accordance with those prophecies.

- iv. *Thief and stranger*

Now, and by way of contrast, who is the thief who climbs over the wall?

Who is disregarding the door, which is the Old Testament prophets?

The Pharisees are false shepherds who have climbed in the wrong way. They have taken authority and, as we have seen before, by their own rules and regulations they have actually nullified the Law and the Prophets.

Notice that Jesus is directly addressing the Pharisees here. Who are the *you* of verse 1? The same *you* as in verse 9:41, which are the Pharisees of verse 9:40.

And the prophets had much to say about the shepherds of Israel, for example in Jeremiah 23:1–40; and Ezekiel 34:1–31.

And Micah predicts, in 5:2, that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem. And in verse 4 he says,

⁴ *And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God.*

Isaiah says in 40:11,

¹¹ *Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.*

And the prophet who said the most about the Messiah and His role as a good shepherd was Zechariah in 11:4-14, where Zechariah was told to play the role of a good shepherd, representing the Messiah. Now Jesus is the fulfilment of that prophetic role prophecy.

The meaning of the parable

So now to step back and catch an overview of what this parable means. What is He saying?

By means of this parable Jesus is pointing out that He is the one true shepherd of Israel who comes in accordance with the prophets of the Old Testament, and that by way of contrast the Pharisees are thieves and robbers who disregard those same prophets.

He also points out that His own sheep will follow Him because they know His voice. His own sheep are the ones described in Zechariah 11:7 as the poor or afflicted of the flock. And they are the people who are willing to believe and who receive Him in John 1:10-12 (which you can find on page 1 of the Harmony).

¹⁰ *He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

2. Messiah the Door, John 10:7-10

Now Jesus uses the same life example to illustrate a new point, and He shifts the focus from the shepherd to the door of the sheepfold.

Read verses 7-10.

Again He introduces what He has to say with His *Amen, amen, I tell you as a most certain and infallible truth.*

The door to eternal life

And what is this truth and the main point He is making here?

His main point here is that He is the true door. And in verse 9 He explains what He means by that. What does He say here?

He is saying that the only way to enter into salvation and eternal life is to come through Him. And those who do come in will not only have eternal life, they will have it abundantly, far beyond the minimum required of necessity.

Thieves and robbers

He also points out that all who came before Him are thieves and robbers who come only to steal and kill and destroy.

And notice in verse 8 He uses the present tense to refer to them. They are, in the present, thieves and robbers.

Once again He is referring to the leaders of Israel who have rejected His Messiahship and endeavor to prevent others from accepting Him.

3. Messiah the Good Shepherd, John 10:11-18

Now not only is He the true door, He is also the good shepherd, and in the next paragraph He gives three characteristics of the good shepherd.

Read verses 11-18.

i. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (verses 11, 17-18)

The first characteristic of the good shepherd distinguishes him from the hired hand. What is it?

The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Who killed Jesus?

According to what He says in verse 18, it is irrelevant who killed Him. Different groups of people have different roles in His death, but, as we will see later, He will chose the moment of His own death.

The Father gave Him authority both to lay down His life, and to take it up again. And when He died, it was not because anyone took His life away, but because He took the initiative to lay it down.

ii. He knows His own and His own know Him. (verses 14-15)

Then in verses 14-15 He adds the second characteristic of the good shepherd that, just as the Father knows Him and He knows the Father, so He knows His own and they know Him.

iii. He has other sheep which are not of this fold. (verse 16)

And the third characteristic of the good shepherd is found in verse 16. What is it?

¹⁶ *"I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*

This statement only becomes clear in the light of later New Testament revelation, especially in the writings of the apostle Paul.

Now who are the *other sheep*? And what is *this fold*?

This fold is the land of Israel, and He points out that He does have a flock of sheep right there in the land of Israel. They are the Jews who are responding to Him with belief, and they are the members of the faithful remnant of that day.

But He has *other sheep* who are of a different fold, and eventually the two folds will be united together *and they will become one flock with one shepherd*.

And the sheep of the other fold are the Gentiles who come to faith.

And as Paul revealed in his letters, the two will be united into one body, the body of the Messiah.

Although that specific revelation is not yet being given, we see here the first hint of it.

So Jewish and Gentile believers become one flock, and they have one shepherd.

4. The Division, John 10:19-21

So to summarize this discourse He has told them three main things:

- i. He is the one true shepherd of Israel who comes in accordance with the prophets of the Old Testament.
- ii. He is the door and the only way to enter into salvation and eternal life is to come through Him.
- iii. And He is the good shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep. He knows His own sheep and they know Him, and they will be both Jews and Gentiles.

Now read what happened among the Jews as a result. Read verses 19-21.

A division occurred again among the Jews because of these words.

Some are saying that He is the Messiah in light of the recent special miracle of the healing of the man born blind.

Others are saying, "No, He has a demon", a charge which is now coming from the people as well as their leaders.

G. The Witness of the Seventy, § 102, Luke 10:1-24

Now while the 12 disciples whom He appointed as apostles were with Him all the time, there were other disciples who were there on call, not necessarily with Him all the time, and here they are called upon for a very specific mission.

1. The Seventy Sent, Luke 10:1-16

Read verse 1.

Now this verse has some links back to its immediate context in Luke's gospel. Can you see them?

- i. He begins by saying, *after this*. So the question is: after what?

- ii. Then he says *the Lord appointed seventy others*. And the question is: other than who?

To answer these questions we need to turn back to the end of Luke chapter 9, which we will find in section 94 in the Harmony.

Context

Read Luke 9:51-52.

The time of the Feast of Tabernacles was near and He was determined to go to Jerusalem. And He decided to go through Samaria. So He sent messengers ahead of Him to enter a village to make arrangements for Him.

Chapter 9 goes on to recount what happened on His journey to Jerusalem.

Purpose

Then comes verse 1 of chapter 10 which says:

¹ Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

After what?

After sending messengers ahead of Him into Samaria to make arrangements for His journey to Jerusalem, He now appoints seventy others for the same purpose: to go out in pairs to the very places He Himself was going to visit, and their purpose is to prepare a place for Him to stay in those cities.

So this is not a general ministry to go throughout the land proclaiming a message, but a very specific ministry to go only to those places He Himself was going to visit. And their purpose is to prepare places for them to stay.

Instructions

Then He gives them some instructions.

The harvest

Read verses 2-16.

Although the leaders of Israel have rejected His Messiahship, and many of the people are following their leaders in rejecting Him, nevertheless He says the harvest is plentiful.

In other words there are many individual Jews who are going to accept the message of His Messiahship and believe in Him.

So He tells them to pray for labourers to reap the harvest, and obviously they also need to be willing and ready to reap this harvest.

Rejection

In verse 3 are warned to anticipate rejection by those who remain in unbelief. And like the 12, so also the 70 are sent as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Provision

In the first part of verse 4, they are also told not to take anything with them. What they need will be provided as they proceed. And verses 7 and 8 also say that what they need will be provided for them.

Urgency

Then, at the end of verse 4, they are not to greet anyone on the way. Why would that be?

There is a sense of urgency and nothing must hinder them in their mission to prepare places for Him to stay as He begins His final journey towards Jerusalem for His approaching death.

They are to carry nothing with them and they are not to stop along the way for conversation.

House of peace

And once they find an acceptable place for Him to stay they need to look no further. They are to stay in that house

And they are simply to do good to those that accept them, but declare judgement on the cities that will reject Him.

When they find a city that receives them, they are to *heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'* (verse 9) Healing the sick is evidence that they are experiencing the Kingdom life, because when the King is present there is healing for those who come to Him.

Judgment for rejection

As for the cities that will reject Him, they will be under judgement. He repeats the curse we saw in the earlier paragraph. Among the cities that saw the majority of His miracles they will be suffering the greater judgement at the Great White Throne.

Accepting the messenger

In verse 16 is the principle that those who accept the messenger are accepting the one who sent him. To accept the message of one of the seventy is to accept Jesus, which in turn is to accept the Father who sent Him.

And the converse is also true. To reject their message is to reject Jesus and the Father who sent Him.

At least 35 places

And so the 70 are sent out two by two, which means that there will be at least 35 places prepared.

2. The Seventy Return, Luke 10:17-20

Now read what happens when they return, in verses 17-20.

Their joy

When they come back, they come back with great joy, and, although it is not stated here, no doubt some of their joy is because in every place they went they found the fellowship of believers. And so places have been prepared for Him to visit.

But we are told that they are also rejoicing over the fact that they found demons to be in subjection to them, and in Jesus name they were able to cast them out.

True cause for joy

How does He respond to this?

But He tells them in verse 20 not to rejoice over the fact that demons are subject to them.

What they should be happy about is that their names are written in heaven. The thing to be excited about is their salvation, and not the issue of demons being in subjection.

Satan

The demons are only subject to them because of the divine authority which He gave them.

He also says that He saw *Satan fall from heaven like lightning*. It is a prequel to, or a foretaste of, the final collapse of Satan.

3. Messiah's Prayer, Luke 10:21-24

Then Jesus prays.

Read verses 21-24.

Truth hidden

Why is He rejoicing?

He is rejoicing that the truth has been hidden from those who count themselves wise in their own eyes. And who is this?

It is the Pharisees who fit this description - they have tempered (or modified) what the Scripture says with the so called wisdom of Pharisaic Judaism, and they can no longer see what the plain text of Scripture says.

This why they failed to recognize the Messiahship of Yeshua.

Truth revealed

He also rejoices that the truth has been revealed to those who accept Him with childlike faith.

These are the ones who were not educated in Pharisaism, but only had the Scripture to go on. And they were taught the Scripture from the age of five in that day. They believed the Scriptures, and saw that Jesus fulfilled them.

Blessed eyes

And in verse 23 , what was their unique advantage?

Their advantage, and the advantage of other disciples and Jews who recognized Him, is that they are seeing the fulfillment of prophecies that the prophets and kings wished to see.

And the ones, who in that day were considered to be the wisest and most knowledgeable in the Biblical literature, were the very ones who failed to recognise Him.

And again, they failed to recognise Him only because they failed to take the text as it is.

H. The Conflict Over the Question of Eternal Life, § 103, Luke 10:25-37

Read verses 25-28.

What is a lawyer?

Lawyer here means someone who is an expert in the Scriptures, and especially the Mosaic Law.

A question

And this lawyer comes to Jesus with a question. What is it?

His question is: *what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

Now this question is intended to trap Jesus theologically, to show that He is not well versed in the Scripture and in the Law in particular.

One work

Here again the Greek is more emphatic than the English translation. (The form of the word, *do, poiéō*, is a participle in the aorist tense and singular number.)

Its emphasis could be expressed as follows: What is the one thing that I can do, once and for all, to have eternal life?

So the lawyer asked: What is the one work that will guarantee I have eternal life?

The Law

Because he focussed on the issue of what one work can he do, Jesus refers him to the Law (verse 26).

²⁶ *And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"*

And the man answers correctly (quoting the first and second most important commandments from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Lev. 19:18):

"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 NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

So in verse 28 Jesus says to him: *"You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."*

But here Jesus uses the present tense, meaning keep on doing this, keep on doing this consistently and you will have eternal life.

Jesus' answer

In other words Jesus is saying: you asked me the question what one work most I do to have eternal life. If you want to base your salvation on work, then let's see what the Law says: love God, love your neighbor.

So if you can keep on doing this perfectly then you shall have eternal life.

And the lawyer, of course, knew he could not consistently maintain that standard. No one can.

Neighbour

So read what happens next in verses 29-37.

How did the lawyer respond?

Knowing that he has lost the argument and could not entrap Jesus as he intended, he now attempts to argue a point of theology: well, if I have to love my neighbor - how do you define "neighbor"? *Who is my neighbor?*

And in Pharisaic Judaism your neighbor could only be a fellow Jew. A non-Jew could never be your neighbor.

The good Samaritan

Now Jesus gives him the famous story of the Good Samaritan where a man was robbed and left for dead on the Jericho road. And a priest and a Levite go by without offering any help. Perhaps they assumed the man was dead and a priest and a Levite could not touch a dead body.

They could excuse themselves that way. But they even failed to check if the man was alive or dead. They could have tried to check without touching him. Now of course another Jew who was not a priest or a Levite could have touched the man to see how he was.

Then it was not a Jew who came by next, but a Samaritan.

And this Samaritan knew that the person beaten up and dying on the side of the road was a Jew, and yet he went against the whole Samaritan culture. He brought the man some oil and some wine. He put the man on the donkey and began to walk it. He brought him to an inn. He left some money with the innkeeper to make sure he can stay there until he is fully recovered. And if it needs any more money, he will pay it next time he comes around.

So, in light of these actions, how do you define the man's neighbor? Was it the priest? Obviously not. Was it the Levite? Obviously not. It was the Samaritan.

The conclusion

But notice that the Jewish lawyer does not even want to say "Samaritan", so he answers the question in a round about way in verse 37:

"The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

So the lawyer failed in his attempt to trap Jesus into contradicting the Law, and he failed to find a loophole that would enable him to avoid loving his *neighbour*.

An application

And the way to define your neighbor is simply this: whoever has a need that you can meet is your neighbor.

I. The Example of Fellowship, § 104, Luke 10:38–42

Read verses 38-42.

Women

One of Luke's concerns is the role of women in the life of the Messiah. Notice that he is the only gospel writer who records this event.

These two special women appear for the first time at this stage. We will meet them again as the gospel story unfolds.

A home prepared

Now Jesus comes to a village where He is welcomed into a home by two sisters, Martha and Mary.

Later we will learn that their home is in Bethany, not too far from Jerusalem, located on the lower eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. And they have a brother named Lazarus.

This will be one of the homes found by the seventy who were sent out to prepare places for Him to stay. And, as we shall find later in the course, this household plays an important role in His life and ministry.

Martha's frustration

Now when they welcome Him into their home, what do these two women do?

While both women welcome Him in, Martha is more concerned about getting everything ready. She wanted to become a very nice Jewish hostess.

On the other hand, Mary sits at the feet of Jesus listening to what He is teaching.

And Martha gets a bit frustrated and asks Jesus to scold her sister and tell her to help her out in the affairs of the household in getting things ready.

Jesus' response

How does Jesus respond to Martha?

⁴¹But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; ⁴²but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

And what is *the good part* that Mary has chosen?

While Martha was occupied for the Messiah, Mary was occupied with the Messiah, sitting at His feet, listening to His word, being taught by Him.

So He is telling Martha that to be taught by the Messiah is far more important than to be busy for Him, simply preparing a meal.

Later, we will discover ...

And would you like to know what Mary learned while she was sitting at Jesus feet?

Mary learns something here that even the apostles fail to understand, and she is commended for it when it finds expression in her actions. But Luke doesn't tell us here, and we will have to wait until we discover it later in our course (in sections 147 and 184).

J. Instruction in Prayer, § 105, Luke 11:1-13

Sermon on the Mount

In dealing with the Sermon on the Mount I mentioned that it was the Messiah's interpretation of the true righteousness of the Law in contradistinction with the Pharisaic interpretation.

It was not intended to be church ethics for this age, but there are things He says in it that do become church ethics for this age.

And we know what does and does not apply in this age by what is repeated later in the gospels, especially after section 61 where He was rejected, and also by what is repeated in the letters of the apostles.

Here is one such example.

Prayer

Read verses 1-4.

Now why would the disciples need to be taught to pray?

Remember that in Judaism in those days nobody prayed their own prayers. Every prayer was from a prayer book. There were no extemporaneous (impromptu, unrehearsed, spontaneous) prayers per say.

Judaism no longer taught people to pray on their own. Everything was from prayer books, as it is to this day.

And of course, by now the disciples recognise that Jesus does not use the common prayers of Judaism.

So they asked Him: *Lord, teach us to pray.*

A six point outline

And once again He gives the same six point outline that He gave in the Sermon on the Mount. So we won't go over it again in detail here.

The fact that He repeated it in this context shows that what He taught about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount also applies to us today.

And He taught that prayer should not be prescribed, or come out of a book, but it should come out of the heart.

But at the same time He also taught that it should not be hap-hazard. And He gave us a model or outline to use for our prayer life.

And this is especially useful for our times of devotions, whether we have them in the morning, afternoon, or evening.

But throughout the day, of course, and as issues arise, we can do much shorter praying, and use specific, simpler prayers.

A Parable

He then goes on to present a parable. Read verses 5-8.

These verses are the illustration taken from their common life experience.

Key elements

What are the key elements of this illustration?

There are three elements, all people:

1. The main character, who has two friends, but nothing he can give his visitor to eat.
2. His first friend, who comes to visit from some distance and is in need of something to eat.
3. The second friend, who lives nearby and has bread available.

And what is the main point of the illustration?

Main point

The point made in the illustration is that the persistence of the man in requesting bread for his visitor was rewarded with all that he needed.

Meaning of key elements

What do the key elements represent?

The main character represents the disciple.

The visitor represents someone with a need for which the disciple doesn't have whatever is needed.

The neighbour with the bread represents God who does have what is needed.

Interpretation

What, then, does the main point of the illustration teach?

It teaches the need for two things:

1. Intercessory prayer, to intercede for someone in need, and
2. Persistent prayer, to continue asking until the need is met.

And Jesus points out that if an unwilling person will finally give in because of persistence, how much more can we expect from God who is actually willing to hear and to answer our prayers!

Conclusion

Then He draws His conclusion and makes an application in verses 9-13. Read verses 9-13.

In verse 9 the Greek tense emphasises persistence. He says that we should *keep on asking, keep on knocking, keep on seeking*.

Application

Then in verses 11-13 He make His application. What is it?

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Now, ever since the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, we receive the indwelling Holy Spirit the moment we believe. So now we don't have to ask God to give us the Holy Spirit.

But that was not the case before the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.

In the economy of the Mosaic Law, while some believers were indwelt, not all were indwelt. While all believers had the Spirit with them, the Spirit was only in certain people, not all.

And one way to receive the Spirit in a unique way under the Mosaic Law would be to ask Him.

And that is the way it will be until Acts 2 when things change.

K. Conflict Over Healing of the Dumb Man, § 106, Luke 11:14-36

Now He repeats the second messianic miracle by casting out another mute demon.

The first time we saw this miracle was in section 61, and we know it is not simply a second record of the same event because there are some significant differences in the details of each event.

First of all section 61 happened in Galilee, and this one happened in Judea a year or so later.

1. The Charge, Luke 11:14-16

Read verses 14-16.

The response to this miracle sounds familiar from what we read in section 61. Can you spot the difference?

In section 61 it was the leaders who said He is demon possessed and is able to perform the miracles He does because He is possessed by Beelzebul, the prince of demons.

It is now the crowds who are making the charge of demon possession. It is no longer coming exclusively from the leaders. Now the people are beginning to repeat what their leaders have been proclaiming all over the country.

Therefore, here in Judea before the crowds He will repeat some of the things He said earlier in Galilee before the Scribes and Pharisees.

2. The Defence, Luke 11:17-23

Read verses 17-23.

In making His defense to the crowds in Judea He points out five things which are similar to what He said in section 61.

The similarity should not be surprising since the charges are the same, although the two events occur in different places and with different audiences.

The similarities don't mean that this is the same event that we read about before.

What are the five points He makes here?

- 1) In verses 17-18 Jesus explains that the accusation is untrue because it would mean a division in Satan's kingdom.
- 2) In verse 19 they themselves believe that exorcism is a gift of the Spirit, and for them to accuse Him of doing so by the power of Satan is inconsistent with their own theology.
- 3) In verse 20 the miracle actually authenticates His message.
- 4) In verses 21-22 show that Jesus is stronger than Satan and not subservient to Satan.
- 5) In verse 23 there is again a call to individual decision: *He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.*

Interpretation repeated from section 61

The first part of this statement is fairly plain. They cannot be both for Him and against Him at the same time. If they are not for Him they are against Him. And these are the only two possibilities.

The questions arise from the second half of this verse. What is the gathering? And, what is the scattering that He talks about?

The implication of His statement is that those who are with Him will gather with Him, but those who are against Him will scatter.

Now what is the gathering, and what is the scattering?

Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 28:63–64.

In chapter 28 of Deuteronomy, Moses first sets before Israel the blessings they will receive if they diligently obey the Lord their God. Then he sets out the curses they will have if they disobey the Lord their God.

And in the midst of the consequences of disobedience he says this:

⁶³ "It shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. ⁶⁴ "Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

Here, right in the very covenant He gave them, God warns them that one of the consequences of their disobedience will be a scattering. They would be scattered among all nations over all the earth.

Now when in the history of Israel has this happened?

And in all their history, up to the time when Jesus was speaking, this had not yet happened. In the Babylonian captivity they were taken captive into one nation.

But in AD 70, about 40 years after Jesus spoke these words, the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. At that time:

- i. Those who accepted His Messiahship and heeded His warnings were gathered together in safety outside of the war zone and not one of them perished.
- ii. But those who rejected His Messiahship were either killed or scattered all over the world by the Romans!

These words of the covenant would be familiar to His audience. And so we can see that Jesus is making reference to this statement from the covenant. And the implication is that the time for that scattering is at hand.

The meaning

And those who are with Him, that is, those who believe in Him, accepting His Messiahship will be gathered together in safety when that judgment comes.

But those who are against Him, who reject His Messiahship, will be scattered.

Warning and invitation

So His words are both a warning and an invitation.

And each individual of this generation must make a once and for all decision whether or not they will follow Him.

3. The Condition of the Nation, Luke 11:24-28

The parable of the unclean spirit

Now read verses 24-26.

Jesus gives essentially the same parable here that He gave in section 62, the parable of the unclean spirit that left and came back.

And He gives the main point of the parable at the end of verse 26:

The last state of that man becomes worse than the first.

The man in the parable represents the generation of Israel that has rejected His Messiahship on the basis of demon possession.

And His parable means that the last state of that generation will be worse than the first state of that generation.

Blessing – to hear and obey the word of God

Read verses 27-28.

Jesus gave the same reply in section 63, but on that occasion it was His mother and brothers who came and attempted to take Him home.

On this occasion it is a woman in the crowd who calls out, but Jesus response is the same.

Spiritual relationships are more important than physical ones, and what is of greatest importance is to hear and obey the word of God.

4. The Sign to that Generation, Luke 11:29-32

A sign

Read verses 29-30.

Who is He referring to with the phrase “*this wicked generation*”?

He is speaking of the generation of Israel who has rejected His Messiahship while He was with them. It does not refer to any generation after that.

Notice that He is addressing the crowds here. In section 62 He addressed the same remarks to the Scribes and Pharisees, the leaders of Israel.

So again we see that the crowds are accepting the leadership's explanation that He performs His miracles by the power of Beelzebub.

The sign of Jonah

And once more Jesus calls them an evil generation, and declares that the only sign that will be given to them is the sign of Jonah - which is the sign of the resurrection.

Condemnation

Read verses 31-32.

What is He saying here?

There is condemnation waiting for that generation, and on judgment day, Gentiles, who responded with repentance to lesser light, will condemn this particular Jewish generation.

5. The Call to the Nation, Luke 11:33-36

They were asking Him for a sign when they already have the Light Himself shining in their midst!!

Read verses 33-36 to see what He says to them about the Light.

There are actually two different parables here. Two separate illustrations taken from every day life, and both of them involving a lamp. But in each case it is a different lamp.

i. The first parable

Before we look for its meaning, let's examine the illustration in verse 33.

Why would someone light a lamp?

The purpose of lighting a lamp is to give light for people who see. So when you light a lamp you put it on a lampstand in a prominent position in the room for all to see when they come into the room.

The word *cellar* here is *krypte*, meaning crypt, secret cell, or vault. In other words it is a hiding place.

The point made by the parable

There is no point hiding the lighted lamp in a secret place or under a basket.

If it is to fulfil its purpose it must be put on a lampstand for all to see.

The meaning of the parable

The lamp is the source of light and would represent Jesus, the Messiah.

What does the light represent?

The word that He is proclaiming is light. He provides light for them through His teaching.

And He has already told them that the light He is proclaiming is not His own, but He received from the Father. And that the light He was giving to them was the light of the knowledge of the Father.

And, just as the lamp is put on a lampstand for all to see, so also His revelation was made openly in His public teachings, and He taught these truths before the whole nation.

ii. *The second parable*

Verse 34 makes a different use of the word *lamp*, and therefore introduces a new parable.

The first parable described His teaching as a light set on a lampstand for all to see.

This second parable describes the reception of the light by His audience, the way that His light is perceived.

And in this second parable the Greek word order emphasises the lamp. He says

The lamp of the body is the eye.

The lamp is obviously the source of light. So He is saying that the source of light for the body is the eye.

Now in what sense is the eye the lamp of the body?

Physically, light is received into the body through the eye. And then we comprehend what it is that we are looking at.

body

And the word for *body* here is not the word *sárx*, which means flesh, and refers to the material body, but the word *sóma*, which means body in the sense of an organized whole made up of parts and members. And here it refers to the person himself or to his inner being.

So by saying that *the lamp of the body is the eye* He is saying that we understand what we are looking at because the eye brings light into the body.

the eye

Jesus expands on this idea in the rest of the verse:

when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness?

clear

And to understand what He means it will help to look at another translation which better brings out the meaning of the words used here^v:

*When your eye is in single focus, sound, and fulfilling its function, also your whole body is well lighted. But when it is pernicious, also your body is full of darkness.
(Wuest)*

When the eye is clear it accomplishes its purpose and we see things as they are, resulting in a correct understanding of what we are looking at.

Conversely, when the eye is bad, it fails to accomplish its purpose and we don't see things the way they are, resulting in an incorrect understanding of what we are looking at.

meaning

Now that is the illustration. What is He getting at, what is He pointing out to them?

Recently, after the healing of the man born blind, Jesus referred to the Pharisees as blind although they could see physically. He was saying that they are spiritually blind because of their unbelief.

And because they were spiritually blind they rejected the light that they received.

But now He adds that their rejection of Him was not due to the light being unclear. The problem was not with His presentation of the light.

The problem was with the eye of the beholder of the light. It was not clear. It was not faithfully representing what it was looking at.

So He is telling them that if their eyes were clear they would be filled with light.

In other words, if they were single-mindedly receptive to the truth He is revealing then they would be filled with understanding.

But this they refused to do, so instead of light they will have darkness.

And the reason Israel will remain in darkness will not be the fault of the light they were given, but the fault of the nation which rejected the light offered to them.

Meaning of verses 33-34

Now to review verses 33-34.

In verse 33 He told them that just as the lamp is put on a lampstand for all to see, so He taught before the whole nation for all to see.

Then in verse 34 He told them that their failure to understand His teaching was not due to any failure in His teaching, but was due to their refusal to receive His teaching as it was taught.

And this in turn, as He told them earlier, was due to their unbelief.

iii. *Be constantly scrutinizing yourself*

Then in verse 35 He makes an application. It is an exhortation which might better be translated:

*Be constantly scrutinizing yourself therefore lest the light which is in you is darkness.
(Wuest)*

In other words they are exhorted to be continually examining themselves as to the condition of their hearts, because, if they are unbelieving, they will not be able to understand His teaching.

The way they choose to look at His teaching will determine whether or not their understanding of His teaching is correct.

Therefore they are to *constantly scrutinize themselves*.

iv. *Some will believe*

And verse 36 might better be translated:

Therefore, assuming that your whole body is well lighted, not having any part full of darkness, the whole shall be full of light as when the lamp by its bright shining illuminates you. (Wuest)

In other words, if they will correctly look at His word they will have complete understanding, just as when a brightly shining lamp completely illuminates them.

And, although the leaders and the majority of the nation have rejected Him and remain in darkness because of their unbelief, there will nevertheless be some individuals in the nation who will receive the light, and believing in Him they will have eternal life. (John 1:10-12)

Summary

In the preceding paragraph we saw that *this wicked generation* was seeking a sign which they would not be given.

But here Jesus points out to them that God has given them a light that was set upon a lampstand for all to see. And the light was His teaching and the signs that confirmed it.

He goes on to tell them that their failure to understand His teaching was not due to any failure in His teaching, but was due to their refusal to receive His teaching as it was taught.

Therefore He ends with an admonition to be constantly scrutinizing themselves to see if they are believing and correctly understanding His teaching.

If they will believe, they will have complete understanding.

L. The Conflict Over Pharisaic Ritualism, § 107, Luke 11:37-54

Now Jesus is invited to lunch by a Pharisee and He accepts the invitation.

Read verses 37-41.

Here a Pharisee invites Him over to dinner. But, as the context shows us, it is only to have an opportunity to try to entrap Him in some way.

And what is the issue that he raises?

It was the same issue that came up in section 77. He did not ceremonially wash His hands before eating dinner. This was a requirement of the oral law, the traditions of the Pharisees, but not of the Mosaic Law.

Now the Pharisee hadn't said anything, he simply noticed that Jesus had not washed and he was surprised.

But his surprise shows and Jesus can tell that He is being looked upon with condemnation, and so He points out their problem in verses 39-41.

What does He say?

Jesus tells the Pharisees that their outside is clean but their inside is filthy.

They only concern themselves with external things in keeping the Law, but they should be concerned about the condition of their hearts. That was the main point of the Sermon on the Mount.

And if they give their hearts to God, then all things are ceremonially clean for them.

Woe to the Pharisees

Then Jesus pronounces a series of woes, and when we get to section 142 we will find a more elaborate series of woes.

1. *Woes on the Pharisees*

He begins with three woes on the Pharisees. And we'll read them one at a time.

a. *Neglect*

Read verse 42.

What is the cause of their woe here?

They are far more concerned with lesser issues of the Law, without showing concern for the greater demands of the Law.

The background for verse 42 was the Pharisaic teaching that nothing was to be partaken of unless a tithe was taken from it first.

But at the same time they were neglecting the greater issues of justice and the love of God.

b. *Self-glory*

Read the second woe in verse 43.

What is the issue here?

The second woe concerns their self-glory. Always seeking the best seats in the synagogue and looking for salutations in the market place.

c. *hypocrisy*

Read verse 44.

This time the issue needs a bit more reflection to discover. Can you see it?

In Paragraph 137 He will compare them to whitewashed tombs, but here they are like concealed tombs that are not so easily seen.

What would be the problem with a concealed tomb?

Others may walk over a concealed tomb without knowing and so become defiled without knowing.

So they are causing corruption and impurity without warning.

And they are hypocrites because they put on the outward appearance of righteousness when they are inwardly full of impurity.

2. *Interruption*

Then He is interrupted. Read verse 45.

Who were the lawyers?

The lawyers were experts in both Mosaic and Mishnaic law.

They were the real thinkers of the Pharisees, and were the ones actually involved with making new rules and regulations in the law.

Therefore, by condemning the Pharisees in general, Jesus automatically condemns the lawyers because the precepts that the Pharisees are following have been laid down by these very lawyers.

So now, one of the lawyers interrupts Him, saying in effect: "you also reproach us who are experts in the law."

3. *Woes on the lawyers*

And Jesus replies in effect: *OK, Woe to you lawyers as well!*

a. *Burdensome traditions*

Read verse 46.

What is the issue here?

They make their traditions mandatory, and institute heavy burdens of compliance.

And they have no concern for the burden or how they can help people to bear it.

b. *They rejected the prophets*

Read verses 47-51.

What is he pointing out here?

They have rejected the prophets.

And their rejection of the prophets has led to the rejection of the Messiah, which in turn will lead to the coming destruction of AD 70.

Notice again the emphasis on that particular generation at the end of verses 51 and 52. He says that: *the blood of all the prophets ... will be charged against this generation.*

Jesus will repeat this in section 142, and more detail will be given then, but notice for now that this same generation which is guilty of the unpardonable sin will be held accountable for all the blood of the prophets that has been shed since the foundation of the world.

It will be required of this one specific generation.

Why?

Because everything that the prophets were to speak about the coming Messiah has now been said and the prophetic descriptions of His coming are complete. The prophets testify to His Messiahship, and to reject his messianic claims automatically means the rejection of the prophets.

And so this generation, by rejecting His claims to be the Messiah, has rejected all the testimony of the prophets about Him, and is therefore guilty of the blood of all the prophets.

You cannot affirm the prophets without also affirming His messianic claims.

c. *They took away the key of knowledge*

Read the third woe in verse 52.

What is the *key of knowledge* which these lawyers have taken away from the people?

Essentially it is the understanding of the plain sense of what was written by Moses and the Prophets.

And how did they take it away?

They had built so many additional laws and traditions that the actual word of God could no longer be recognized and they and consequently the people were unable to recognize the Messiahship of Yeshua when He came to them.

They did not enter in to understanding themselves, and, by their teaching, they also hindered the people from entering in to understand what was written.

The third woe is for hiding the truth from the people by means of their traditions. They took away the key of knowledge.

So here around the dinner table of a Pharisee are three woes on the Pharisees in general and three more woes specifically on the lawyers (who are also Pharisees).

The reaction of the Pharisees

Then the section concludes in verses 53-54 with the reaction of the Pharisees. Read verses 53-54.

As Wuest's translation puts it:

And after He had gone out from there, the men learned in the sacred scriptures and the Pharisees began to set themselves against Him with a vengeance, and to be plying Him with questions so as to entice Him to give answers to questions to which He would have no opportunity to give consideration beforehand, concerning many things, preparing a trap for Him in order to catch something out of His mouth.

In other words the Pharisees totally lose themselves emotionally, trying to get Him to say something that will bring legal condemnation against him. However they are unable to do so.

M. Instruction of the Disciples, § 108-111

Now the next three sections 108 - 110 together form a unit in which Jesus instructed His disciples in nine specific lessons.

Speaking to His disciples

Read Luke 12:1.

Notice the contrast here. Many thousands of people have gathered together in one place, to such an extent that they trampled one another under foot.

In spite of this, He is focused on teaching His apostles and Luke says He began speaking to them first of all.

And that has been His policy ever since His rejection in section 61.

1. Hypocrisy, § 108, Luke 12:1-12

Now read verses 1-12.

Context

Now what do we have here? Have you ever wondered what these verses mean and why they are all lumped together here?

While these verses appear to be a collection of miscellaneous teachings, there is actually a thread of thought running through them. And this will come into view if we keep in mind the context in which He made these statements, especially the immediately preceding section.

And Luke actually encourages us to do this in his text, because he begins with the words: *under these circumstances*.

Under what circumstances?

He was invited to lunch by a Pharisee who was surprised that Jesus did not practice the ceremonial washing of His hands that is a requirement of their traditions.

Jesus responds that they should be more concerned about the state of their hearts than the cleanness of their hands.

Then He proceeds to pronounce woes on them for their neglect of the more important commands of the Law of Moses, for their hypocrisy, and for their burdensome traditions. (and their rejection of the teaching of the prophets and taking away the key of knowledge from the people.)

In response, the Pharisees set themselves against Him with a vengeance.

Hypocrisy

It is in this context, then, and *after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another* that He began to teach His disciples, saying, *Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

Now what is *the leaven of the Pharisees*?

When Jesus talks about *the leaven of the Pharisees* He is talking about the teaching of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees teaching of God's Word is based upon their oral tradition or Mishnaic law.

What is hypocrisy – what does the word mean?

Hypocrisy describes the acting of a player on the stage assuming a role of something which he is not. So his outward appearance is not representing his true self. His true self is hidden.

In what sense is the teaching of the Pharisees hypocritical?

It is important to understand the Law and the Prophets as they were given.

The problem with the teaching of the Pharisees was that it obscured the true meaning of the Word. And it hid the revelation of the Messiah found in the prophets. And thus it kept the truth from the people.

This is what Jesus means by calling it hypocritical.

And it is also important to obey the commands of the Law of Moses as they are given.

But the Pharisees make up man-made commands (such as the requirement to ceremonially wash before eating, which He has just been responding to in the previous section) and then make them equal with Scripture. Thus the true commands of Moses are hidden behind the mask of the Mishnah.

And this too is hypocrisy.

Secrets revealed

By its very nature, hypocrisy conceals things and whispers secrets to the ear in hidden places.

So, in verses 2-3, Jesus points out that all these hidden things will be revealed.

Then in view of the Pharisees' hypocrisy and their vehement opposition, Jesus gives some instructions to His disciples, whom He calls *My friends*.

Fear only God

In verses 4-5 He says that God alone is the One to fear. Although the Pharisees will oppose them with violence and will even kill them, the disciples should not be afraid of them.

The only One they should fear is God, who can not only kill them but also cast them into hell.

Trust God

But, He says in verses 6-7, instead of fearing God, they can trust Him, because they are more valuable to Him than many sparrows, not one of which is forgotten by God.

Identify with Jesus

So, in verses 8-9, not fearing the Pharisees and trusting God, they should openly and freely declare their identity with Him, knowing that if they do then Jesus will also declare their identity with Him before the angels of God.

Unforgivable sin

In verse 10 He repeats what He told the Pharisees when they rejected Him in section 61.

Why does He say: *everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him?*

In the process of investigation of His messianic claims there were two stages, First, the observation stage, and then the interrogation stage.

The purpose of the investigation was to determine if His claims are true, whether or not He is the Messiah.

And during the course of this interrogation stage they would be questioning Him and challenging Him, and even speaking against Him.

This was acceptable and would be forgiven them.

But now they have reached their conclusion. The investigation is complete. Their decision has been made, and they have decided that He is not the Messiah, and the power enabling Him to perform His miracles is that of the prince of demons.

So He makes the contrast. While they were speaking against Him, whatever they said would be forgiven them.

But now they have reached their decision they will be judged on the basis of that decision, and the consequent destruction of the city and the temple and the scattering of the Jews is now inevitable.

Thus their decision is unforgivable.

Divine utterance

In verses 11-12 He says that they will be brought before rabbinic courts of law (because they have violated the rabbinic laws), but they don't need to be concerned about how they will respond. They will be given divine utterance at that point of time.

As Wuest translates this, He says:

And whenever they bring you to the synagogues and to magistrates and authorities, do not begin to be troubled how or what your verbal defense shall be, or what you shall say, for the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that very hour the things that are necessary in the nature of the case to speak.

Summary

So, in verses 4-11, He is telling His disciples that they will be able to fulfill the commission and the commands He gives them without fearing those who oppose them. They can trust God to protect them and to provide for them even the very words to speak to their accusers.

2. Covetousness, Luke 12:13-34

Now see how this lesson develops.

a. *Occasion, Luke 12:13-15*

Read verses 13-15.

Occasion

Now what would bring about the need for this question?

The occasion is that someone in the crowd has a family dispute going on over their inheritance, and he comes to Jesus and asks Him to tell his brother to settle that dispute by telling his brother to divide the inheritance with him.

Why?

And why would this man feel free to ask Jesus to do this?

Have a look at Psalm 72:1-2.

¹ Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's son. ² May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice.

This is a Messianic Psalm, and according to verse 2, the Messiah will be the one to arbitrate disputes, and He will do it with righteousness and justice.

And since Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, He should therefore arbitrate between this man and his brother over the inheritance.

Response

How did Jesus respond?

He responds by quoting from Exodus 2:14.

Who made you a prince or a judge over us?

Now where have we heard those words before? Where, in the history of Israel, do we find these words?

Jesus is quoting the very words of the Israelites to Moses.

Moses had killed the Egyptian overseer, and the next day, when he saw two Jews fighting and tried to intervene, he was rejected with this statement: *Who made you a prince or a judge over us?*

And the Hebrews would not see Moses again for another 40 years.

Now, just as Moses was initially rejected, Jesus was rejected. And because He was rejected, He cannot act in His Messianic role as an arbitrator at this time.

He can only do that after His second coming and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, even as Moses was only able to lead Israel out of Egypt when he came to them the second time.

Warning against greed

Having rejected this man's request, Jesus then warns His disciples to be on guard against every form of greed.

And the Greek here emphasizes the need for continuous vigilance:

Take heed and be guarding yourself from every kind of greedy desire for more, because not in the abundance of possessions is life to be found.

b. Instruction, Luke 12:16-21

Then He again speaks a parable. Read verses 16-21.

Let's think about this parable for a minute. What is the illustration it uses?

A man who was quite wealthy and very productive ran out of room to store all his crops. So he replaced his barns with bigger ones and lived a life of ease.

But God called him foolish, because that very night his life was required of him and others would take all that he had accumulated.

Now in what sense was that behaviour foolish?

Yes, it is folly to store up wealth that he would not be able to use.

But that is only half of his folly. What is the other half?

While he was busy storing up wealth in his barns he was not storing treasure for himself in heaven! He was *not rich toward God*.

How could this man have become rich toward God?

He could have obeyed the second most important command of the Mosaic Law, to love his neighbour as himself. He could have shared his abundant produce with others instead of keeping it all to himself.

He doesn't even need all this extra produce, and yet, although there are many poor people, he doesn't share the surplus with them, and therefore fails to fulfil the second most important commandment of the Mosaic Law.

And failure to keep the second most important commandment is in turn due to failure to keep the first most important commandment, to love the Lord God with our whole being.

And a failure to love the Lord will lead to a failure to love the neighbour.

c. *Application, Luke 12:22-34*

And having said this parable in the hearing of the crowds, he gives the application to His disciples.

Read verses 22-34.

There are two very basic and essential things that they need never worry about. What are they?

Food and clothing.

And why need they never be anxious about food and clothing?

Because God will feed them. And God will clothe them. And therefore they need not show anxiety over these particular issues.

Instead of anxiety over these things where should their attention be directed?

He tells them to seek His kingdom, and God will provide their basic needs.

And how can we test to find out where our hearts are?

By observing where our treasure is. The location of our treasure will point out the inclination of our hearts.

3. *Watchfulness, Luke 12:35-40*

Then He exhorts them to be ready for His return and gives them two illustrations to emphasise what He means.

Read verses 35-40.

Exhortation

He begins with the exhortation in verse 35. And the Greek literally says:

You yourselves see to it that your loins are girded ready for action, and that your lamps are burning constantly.

Illustrations

The first illustration is in verses 36-38. What is the point He is making with this illustration?

He emphasises the need to be ready, to be alert and watching for His return. While these servants carry out the work they have been given to do they are also to be watchful and alert to the master's return so that they can welcome him when he comes.

And the second illustration is in verses 39-40, and it points out that He will return at an hour they do not expect.

Meaning

This is speaking of the rapture which can happen at any time now. It is imminent. And we are to be alert and ready to welcome Him when He comes.

And what does it mean to be alert and ready to welcome Him when He returns?

First of all it means to believe in Him.

Then it means to be about His business, doing what He has given us to do.

And therefore it means to be free from the encumbrances of sin and the world.

As we will see later in our course, He will have more to say on this subject in a different context. (Matthew 24 & 25)

4. Faithfulness, Luke 12:41-48

Peter's question

Now Peter has another question. Read it in verse 41.

"Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"

His question is a good one: To whom shall we apply this parable?

And he postulates two possibilities: either it applies *to us*, which would be the disciples, or it applies *to everyone else as well*, which in its context would be the crowds of many thousands who were gathered there at that time.

So Peter asks a good question, are you addressing this parable to us or to the crowds?

Now before we read Jesus' answer, how would you have answered Peter's question?

The answer Jesus gives to Peter had three parts.

Faithful Stewardship

- a. Read the first part in verses 42-43.

What is He saying here?

He has appointed stewards (and Peter is one of them) to be responsible to feed His servants at the proper time.

Those who are faithfully doing so when He returns will be rewarded with more responsibility.

Unbelievers

- b. The second part of Jesus' answer is introduced with the word, *but*. So it stands in contrast to the first part.

Read verses 45-46.

What is the contrast Jesus is making?

Having just described the faithful steward, now, by way of contrast, Jesus describes an unfaithful servant who will consequently be assigned *a place with the unbelievers*.

Parable

So Jesus' answer to Peter is in the form of a parable in which the master represents God, and the servants of the master represent all of mankind.

And they are divided into two categories.

The first category, represented by the faithful steward, is those who are believers.

And the second category, represented by the unfaithful slave, is those who are unbelievers.

The believers will be rewarded with responsibility for all God's possessions.

And the unbelievers will be punished and assigned to a place reserved for them.

Anyone who knows the truth

- c. Then, in the third part to His answer, Jesus has more to say about the fate of the unbelievers.

Read what He says in verses 47-48.

What is the key issue here?

In verse 47 we find *that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will...*

All men have offended God, and unless they accept the pardon He offers them they will be punished for their offence.

And the key issue being pointed out here is that everyone is accountable for what he knows. Did he believe, and did he act in accordance with what has been given to him?

Degrees of punishment

And even the degree of punishment for unbelievers will be determined by their knowledge of the truth. Those who know the truth and reject it will receive greater punishment than those who did not know it.

Summary

So Jesus exhorts them to be ready and alert when He comes. They are to be watching for His return while at the same time engaged in the work He has given them. And He tells them that He will come at a time they do not expect.

Then Peter asks Him whether He is saying this to them or to the crowds in general.

And He answers that the world is divided into two groups:

- a. Believers, who He describes as faithful stewards who will be rewarded with responsibility for all God's possessions, and
- b. Unbelievers, whose degree of punishment will be determined by how they respond to what they know.

5. The Effects of His Coming, Luke 12:49-53

Now Jesus describes the effect of His coming in the light of His rejection by Israel.

Before His rejection in section 61 He was offering them the Messianic Kingdom. And with the Messianic Kingdom would come blessing and unity. He was offering them a time of peace with the Lord and therefore peace in all issues.

But now, in light of His rejection, that has changed.

Judgment instead of blessing

Read what He says in verses 49-50.

What does *fire* symbolise at the beginning of verse 49?

Judgment. In place of peace with God and consequent blessings there will be judgment.

And then He points out that before the judgment can begin He must first undergo a baptism, referring to His coming death on the cross.

Division in place of unity

Read verses 51-53.

What is His point here?

Even the Jewish family unit, known for its unity, will be torn apart when one or two of their number accept His Messiahship.

And this fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah 8:14 - 15 that when Emanuel comes, He will be the new point of division in the Jewish world, a division between the remnant and the non-remnant. Isaiah says He will be a sanctuary to those who believe, and to those who do not believe He will be *a rock to stumble over*.

Summary

These then are the results of rejecting Him as their Messiah. In place of blessing is judgment. In place of unity is division. In place of peace, it is war. And in place of unity within the Jewish family there will be division over His Messiahship.

6. The Signs of the Times, Luke 12:54-59

Now He speaks to them about the signs of the times.

Messianic Times

Read verses 54-56.

What is His point here?

It comes in verse 56. They *know how to analyse the appearance of the earth and the sky* to determine whether it will rain or be hot.

Even so they should *analyse this present time* and correctly judge what is happening.

In other words they should know that these were Messianic times.

And how were they to know that?

From Old Testament prophecy.

Most notably, if they had simply calculated from the prophecy of Daniel 9, they would have known that the Messianic times had arrived. Daniel even gave a specific time table for the first coming.

In fact, as we learned early in this course, the magi or astrologers from Babylon, who had and believed the writings of Daniel, were able to analyse the times and they came to Israel to worship the new-born Messiah.

And why did the leaders of Israel fail to recognise it? Again, not because they didn't know Scripture, but because they only knew it as it was re-interpreted in Pharisaism. Their understanding of what was written was obscured by the teachings of their leaders.

Make peace with the judge

And because they failed to judge the times correctly they rejected their Messiah. And because they rejected their Messiah a judgment against them was determined.

Read what He says next in verses 57-59.

Why did He give them this illustration?

Common sense, He says, teaches you that you should make peace with your enemy before you arrive in court where the judge will have you thrown into prison.

What is His purpose in giving this illustration?

In the context of that generation, the generation that rejected Him, individual Jews need to make their peace with the Lord by accepting Jesus as the Messiah before the AD 70 judgement comes. Otherwise those living at that time will suffer great death and destruction and poverty.

The judgment is certain. But the individual can escape it by accepting His Messiahship before it comes.

7. Concerning Repentance, § 109, Luke 13:1-9

Recent tragedies

Read Luke 13:1-5.

Two recent tragedies had happened in Jerusalem.

One is that Pilate took some Galileans to be rebels, and he sent his soldiers who killed them in the temple compound. And as a result animal blood was mixed with human blood.

The second tragedy was that there was a tower at the pool of Siloam that collapsed killing 18 people.

And the teaching of the Pharisees was that if people die in such a violent manner they must be especially sinful.

Question

And so after each example Jesus asks them a question to challenge their thinking. What is it?

Do you suppose that those who died so violently were worse sinners than those who did not?

Answer

In both cases He gives the same answer. And the answer is in two parts. The first part relates to those who died, and the second part relates to His audience.

First He says to them, *I tell you, no.*

Here Jesus points out that neither the Galileans, nor those who died in the tower of Siloam were guilty of any special sins. They were not more sinful than others.

Then He warns them: *unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*

The word "*repent*" means to change their mind. Unless they change their minds about Jesus, recognizing that He is not demon possessed but that in fact He is the Messiah, they will perish in like manner.

Fulfilment

And indeed that is precisely what came to pass.

When the Roman war against Jerusalem occurred in 68-70 AD, there were defensive towers on the walls of Jerusalem. And as the Romans began to undermine the foundations of the towers, the towers began collapsing, and many Jewish soldiers died in like manner.

And one of the last battles took place inside of the temple compound, where the Jewish defenders were killed by the Romans. And once again animal blood and human blood were mixed together. And so they perished in like manner.

The parable

Jesus then gives a parable in verses 6-9.

What point is this parable making?

The owner of the fig tree pronounces a judgment against it. It is to be cut down. But there will be a delay in carrying out the judgment to give the tree opportunity to bear fruit.

The purpose of the parable

And why did Jesus tell this parable, what was His purpose in giving it?

In its context, the purpose of the parable is to show why the judgment against Israel is being delayed by 40 years, until AD 70.

It is to show that even after 40 years they do not produce any fruitfulness. Even after 40 years there is no repentance on the part of the nation.

And finally the destruction of AD 70 hit.

8. Concerning Israel's Need, § 110, Luke 13:10-17

Section 110 is the last synagogue incident recorded in Jesus' life.

Read verses 10-17.

Sabbath rest

Mosaic Law did not prohibit healing on the Sabbath, but rabbinic law did. They argued that if someone had been sick for any period of time, why not wait just one more day rather than heal on the Sabbath day. But the purpose of the Sabbath was rest, and the point Jesus makes is that true rest consists in healing and being delivered from bondage.

Focus is individuals

Notice the focus of Jesus' ministry here. He is no longer dealing with Jews as a nation, but He is dealing with Jews as individuals.

We see this in verse 16. He refers to the woman as *this woman, a daughter of Abraham*.

Notice the indefinite object, indicated in English by the indefinite article. She is a daughter of Abraham, one of many.

And the point is that as a nation they are under judgment and He is no longer dealing with them as a nation at this time.

But He will deal with Jewish individuals, and individual Jews can come to faith. And she is one example, a daughter of Abraham.

And since His rejection His emphasis has been on individual Jews as opposed to Jews as a nation.

9. Concerning the Kingdom Program, § 111, Luke 13:18-21

Read verses 18-21.

Here Jesus repeats two of the parables of the mystery kingdom.

Context

Luke connects this section with the previous one with the word “so” or “therefore”.

In the previous section Jesus was responding to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and confronting them with their rejection of His Messiahship and its consequences. And He has just released a woman *whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years*.

Therefore He now repeats these two parables which describe the mystery kingdom, the kingdom that will come about due to their rejection of Him as their Messiah.

Parable of the mustard seed

First the parable of the mustard seed in which a seed that normally grows into a bush is growing into a tree with the birds of the air nesting in its branches. And as we saw in section 64, the birds represent the agents of Satan. The point of the parable is that there will be an abnormal growth of the mystery kingdom until it becomes a monstrosity housing the agents of Satan.

Parable of the leaven

In the second parable the leaven is false teaching and false doctrine. And so Jesus is teaching that the mystery kingdom, in all its divisions, will contain false teaching. And what happened to Judaism, the corrupting of God’s word with the traditions of men, traditions that actually make it difficult for people to see God’s word as He intended it to be seen, will also happen in the church age!

N. The Conflict at the Feast of Dedication, § 112, John 10:22-39

Read John 10:22-23.

Hanukkah

Here we learn that it is the time of the Feast of Dedication.

The Hebrew word for this feast is Hanukkah, which means dedication. And it is not a feast inaugurated by Moses. There were two feasts inaugurated after the time of Moses.

One is the Feast of Purim as a result of events recorded in the book of Esther. It celebrates deliverance from persecution and execution at the hands of the Persians.

And the other is the Feast of Hanukkah or Dedication resulting from the events occurring in the inter-testament period. And while these events and the feast itself is not found in the Old Testament, the events that lead to it are prophesied in Daniel's prophecies (Daniel 8 & 11).

It was a time when the Greek Syrians had taken over the temple and had desecrated it by offering a pig on the altar. After three years of fighting the Jews got the temple back, and it was the month of Kislew, which corresponds to our December. Notice in verse 23 it says it was winter. The feast is observed in the month of December, winter time.

Having recovered the temple from the Syrians, they were three months late for the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a festival that lasts for 7 days plus one day, a total of eight days.

So when they dedicated the temple they observed the Feast of Tabernacles three months late. They then decided to make this an annual affair. They would observe the Feast of Tabernacles at its normal time in the month of October, and then observe the Feast of Dedication for eight days in the month of December.

And Jewish people do that to this day.

And the only place that the Feast of Dedication is mentioned in the Bible is here in the New Testament.

This is the occasion. It was winter and the time of the Feast of Dedication. And, John writes, *Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon.*

Accusation

Read how the Jews confront Him in verses 24-26.

What are the Jews saying here?

They accuse Him of being obscure about His messianic claims. They claim that He had not come out openly and said that He was the Messiah, though obviously He did that rather frequently.

Response

Jesus begins His response in very clear terms by directly contradicting their accusation and pointing out the reason why they think He has been obscure.

His response actually comes in four parts, resulting in a clear picture of the issue.

1. He says simply, *I told you*. And in its context where they have just asked, *if you are the Christ, tell us plainly*, it means that rather than being obscure as they claim, He has in fact told them very plainly. And by His words He has claimed to be the Messiah.
2. Then He points out why they think He has been obscure. Their problem, He says, is not that He didn't tell them clearly. Their problem is that they did not believe.
3. Then He adds that, not only has He told them by His words, but also by His works. The miracles He performed substantiate His claims.
4. And then He gives the reason for their unbelief. He says, *But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep*. And because they are not of His sheep they fail to recognize Him.

His sheep

Then, having mentioned His sheep, He goes on to give three characteristics of His sheep.

Read verses 27-29.

What are the three characteristics of His sheep?

1. *They recognise Him*

How would you summarize verse 27?

They recognize Him.

How do they recognize Him?

They hear His voice, and they follow Him. So when He calls, they respond. And they respond because they recognize Him.

For example, when Matthew was called, He left everything and followed Him because he recognized Him to be the Messiah. And when He called the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, they dropped everything and they followed Him.

2. *Eternal life*

Not only do they recognize Him, at the beginning of verse 28 He gives them eternal life.

3. *Eternal security*

Eternal life, by its very nature, is permanent. It is not temporary. And Jesus goes on to say that His sheep cannot be snatched out of His hand, and they cannot be snatched out of the Father's hand.

This is an important statement teaching eternal security. They have eternal life which cannot be taken away from them.

He and the Father are one

Then His argument reaches its climax as He makes a very clear statement about His divinity in verse 30.

Read verses 30-33.

He says quite plainly: *I and the Father are one.*

Now, do they understand what He means?

Obviously! John records in verse 31 that *The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him*. So much for their accusation that He was obscure! Their actions reveal their understanding.

And long ago, in John chapter 5, when He claimed that God was His Father, the Jewish audience understood Him to claim that He is equal with God. And again their actions revealed their understanding. *They were seeking all the more to kill Him because He ... was making Himself equal with God.* (John 5:18)

But now He makes an even stronger claim. He says, *I and the Father are one.*

Before they begin throwing the stones He asks them a question to highlight just what they understood Him to say:

I showed you many good works from the Father; before you stone me can you please tell me for which of them are you stoning Me?

Notice their answer in verse 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 out to be God."

So they understood correctly that He claimed to be God Himself.

Blasphemy?

Then He responds to their claim that He is blaspheming by claiming to be one with God.

Read verses 34-39.

He begins by quoting from Psalm 82:6, where God, speaking of Israel's judges, says "*you are Elohim*", "*you are gods*".

Jesus is using a form of argument commonly used by the rabbis, a form of argument which progresses from the lesser to the greater.

He argues that if the Law calls gods men who are given that title by divine declaration (a fact established by the Scripture which cannot be invalidated), then surely it cannot be blasphemy if He, who the Father sanctified and sent into the world declares that He is indeed the Son of God.

That is to say ...

The judges were men appointed by God in this age and God declared that they are gods. And the word of God came to them. And they had delegated authority to perform the works of God on earth.

This is stated in the Scripture which is true and cannot be broken. The Greek word, *broken*, is the same verb, *to loose*, which we have met before. It means the Scripture has been declared by God and cannot be changed.

But, in contrast with the judges, Jesus, who is the Son of God, and who is the Word of God, was set apart by God and sent into the world by Him. By saying that He and the Father are one, He is saying that What God is, He is. And if the Father is God, and He is, then He also is God.

If the lesser is true, and it is because the Scripture is true, then surely the greater is also true.

And He is therefore not blaspheming because His statement is true.

Moses and Aaron

Verse 35, where Jesus refers to those *to whom the word of God came*, is quite likely speaking of Moses and Aaron.

We are told in Exodus 4:16 that Moses was a god to Aaron. And in Exodus 7:1 we read that Moses was a god to Pharaoh.

And how was Moses as God to Aaron and Pharaoh?

Because God sent him and he was God's messenger. God gave him His words to speak to Pharaoh through Aaron.

And if Moses, who was merely a man who received the words of God, could be as god to Aaron and Pharaoh, why could not Jesus, who is the Word of God, be the very Messiah, the Son of God.

Like Moses, He was God's messenger with God's message.

The children of Israel listened to Moses. Why should they not listen to Him? He not only claimed this unique privilege, He had the power to prove His claims, and He performed it.

Believe His works!

The judges and Moses only had delegated authority. He claimed not merely delegated authority. He claimed to be what the Father is. *I and the Father are one*. He claimed that He is God.

And again He asks them to believe this, even if they are unable to believe it on account of what He said, He asks them to believe it on account of His works.

Rejection

And how do they respond?

In verse 39, *Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp*.

Once again they reject Him. And they try to take hold of Him to stone Him.

But of course He eludes them.

VI THE PREPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES BY THE KING, § 113-130

Now He begins to focus His ministry on preparing His disciples for His coming death. Until now He was instructing His disciples in how they were to conduct their lives and carry on their teaching ministry in Jesus' absence. Now beginning in section 113 He is preparing them for His death when He will leave them.

The main element in the previous segment of His life was the statement, *and there was a division*. Jesus' coming caused a division among the Jewish people, even among family members

The main element or motif of this segment is *the first shall be last, the last shall be first. And the exalted shall be humbled, the humble shall be exalted*.

And He is going to make a contrast between the Jewish leadership and the individual Jew, particularly the disciples, who will follow the Messiah.

Those who saw themselves as exalted will be humbled, and the humble, who will come to Messiah for mercy will be exalted.

Those who were first, namely the Jewish leadership, will be last. And those who were considered last will be raised to a status of first place.

A. The Withdrawal from Judea, § 113, John 10:40–42

Perea

Now read John 10:40-42.

He now goes into what is called Perea. Perea is the east bank of the Jordan River. That puts Him outside the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin's jurisdiction went only as far as the Jordan and the Sanhedrin could do nothing once He is across the Jordan.

John the Baptist

This is also the area where John the Baptist did most of his ministry.

John heralded the first coming of the Messiah.

John's ministry was not the restoration of all things. That will be the function of Elijah in preparation for the Messiah's second coming. John's ministry was to have a people ready to accept the Messiah once the Messiah was identified at His first coming.

This ministry of John was foretold by Malachi in Malachi 3:1.

¹ *"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts.*

Malachi also prophesied that Elijah would be sent before the second coming of the Lord. We find this in Malachi 4:5–6.

⁵ *"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."* ⁶ *"He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."*

As we saw in Luke 12: 51-53, as a result of His rejection there will be division, even between family members.

But when Elijah comes, immediately before the Lord's return, *he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.*

The result of John's ministry

Now we read here in verses 41 – 42 that John's ministry was quite successful:

⁴¹Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." ⁴²Many believed in Him there.

So those who had been baptized by John, and made the commitment to believe in the Messiah when John identifies who He is, have no trouble recognizing Him as the Messiah.

It is those who have rejected John's baptism who also reject Jesus.

B. Instruction Concerning Entrance into the Kingdom, § 114, Luke 13:22-35

In section 114 we find Jesus teaching concerning entrance into the Kingdom. And verse 22 sets the scene.

Read verse 22.

And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.

He is on His way back to Jerusalem, and He is passing through cities and villages along the way. And, while they are not specifically mentioned here, no doubt He was visiting the places which had been prepared for Him by the seventy who were sent out for that purpose in section 102.

Question

And as He was going, someone raised a question.

Read verse 23

Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?

This question arises because, during the previous three months of His ministry, which we have just looked at in sections 96 – 112, while there are many who believe, the great majority obviously do not believe.

And while the question concerns salvation, we see from Jesus' answer that its focus involves entry into the Messianic Kingdom.

Answer

Now read how Jesus begins His response in verse 24.

There are two points here:

1. first of all the door is narrow; and
2. secondly entry through the door is difficult and requires them to *strive*.

The narrow door

Why does He describe the door as narrow?

Pharisaism is a wide road because they taught that all Israel has a share in the age to come. That is, anyone born a Jew would have the right to enter into the Messiah's Kingdom.

However, Jesus taught that the way into the Kingdom was narrow, because only those who believed Him to be the Messiah would enter into the Kingdom of God.

So He says they must *strive to enter through the narrow door*.

Jesus responds that entry into the Kingdom has been blocked by Pharisaism, so it takes a struggle for a Jew to break through what he has been programmed to believe before he can see the way to enter in.

Strive

And He says they must *strive to enter*.

Why must they *strive to enter*?

Because Pharisaism has so re-interpreted what the Scriptures actually taught, the Jew has to undergo a struggle before he can understand and accept that Jesus is the Messiah. And the struggle involves a radical change of world view.

He undergoes a reprogramming of his mind before he can break away from the Pharisaic programming and recognize the Messiahship of Jesus. Any Jewish person, even today, who is confronted with His Messiahship ends up going through this struggle before they can see the possibility. It's a spiritual struggle. It is also an ethnic struggle, a theological struggle, and a national struggle.

The door will be shut

Then He warns them that the time is coming when it will be too late to enter.

Read verses 25-27.

When the door is shut the opportunity to enter is finished. When He comes to establish His kingdom it will be too late to enter in.

And although they will even acknowledge that He is the one who taught in their streets, and they will plead to be allowed to enter the Kingdom, they will not be doing it on the basis that they accept His Messiahship.

And He will call them evildoers and tell them to depart.

The result

Then He describes the result.

Read verses 28-29.

Those who break through in their struggle and accept His Messiahship are the ones who are going to enter the kingdom, while the majority is going to be left outside the Kingdom.

When the kingdom is finally established, people will come from north, south, east, and west, and they will sit down and enjoy the Kingdom, while those who were initially invited into the Kingdom will be outside the Kingdom.

Motif

Then in verse 30 we come to the motif repeated in this period of His ministry. Read verse 30.

And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.

Those who saw themselves as exalted will be humbled, and the humble, who will come to Messiah for mercy, will be exalted.

To the Jew first!

Notice that, as Paul reminds us, the gospel is *to the Jew first, and also to the Gentiles*.

The Jews, who were chosen by God and given the promises and the covenants, should have been the first to believe and therefore the first to enter the kingdom.

But they will be the last to enter the kingdom.

And right at the very end of the Tribulation all Israel will believe, and so they will be the very last to enter into the kingdom!

They should have been the first, but they will be the last.

And the Gentiles, who would have been the last, will be first because all the Gentiles who enter the kingdom will enter the kingdom before that day when all the Jews will enter.

Pharisees

Now read verse 31.

Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, "Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You."

Now why do you think the Pharisees warn Him about what Herod might do to Him?

Remember that we read that He crossed over to the eastern side of the Jordan and into Perea.

Perea, along with Galilee, was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. However it was outside the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin.

And while their statement appears to express concern for His safety, actually, the Pharisees' concern was to get Him to go back to the west side of the Jordan where the Sanhedrin could have Him arrested.

Response

Read His answer in verses 32-33.

He answers them with a parable so they don't understand what He is saying, and He is telling them they do not need to be concerned.

He won't go to Jerusalem at this stage. But He will eventually and at exactly the right time.

So they need not be concerned. He will die in Jerusalem.

And their attempt to get Him to cross back over the Jordan into the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin fails.

Lament

Then He concludes with a lament, and, as we will see when we reach section 142, He will close His public ministry with this same lament.

Read verses 34-35.

In it He summarises three messages to Israel.

1. He often liked to spread out His hands and offer Israel the Messianic protection offered by the prophets. But He says *and you would not have it* - when they rejected Him.
2. Consequently, in the first clause of verse 35, their house is destined to lie desolate. It is destined to be destroyed forty years hence.
3. Now look at the rest of verse 35.

And I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say,

'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Messianic greeting

Now what is the significance of this statement?

In Hebrew, those words, *Blessed is he who comes* are a greeting. It is how you greet someone who arrives in the country or simply comes to your home. When a friend returns to Israel after a journey the first words he hears will be: "Baruch Haba (Blessed is he who comes)."

Jesus was saying, I will not return until you welcome me.

This saying is a quote from Psalm 118:26. Psalm 118 is a messianic Psalm. It speaks about the Messiah at the time of the second coming.

Read Psalm 118:22-26 to get a glimpse of its context.

²² The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. ²³ This is the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ O Lord, do save, we beseech You; O Lord, we beseech You, do send prosperity! ²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord; We have blessed you from the house of the Lord.

The stone rejected by the builders is the Messiah. But now, in the time that the psalmist is writing about, a time that is still future, He becomes the chief cornerstone, and it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in their eyes. It is a day of rejoicing and gladness. And they address Him with this greeting: *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.*

So in the first century Jewish context that expression was the official Jewish greeting for the Messiah.

And rabbis would teach that whenever the Messiah comes He must be welcomed with these words.

And when they finally say these words it will be because they are accepting Him to be their Messianic King.

So, here in verse 35 He lays down the pre-condition to His second coming.

He won't return until the Jewish people acknowledge Him to be the Messiah and ask Him to come back.

C. Instruction in a Pharisee's House, § 115, Luke 14:1-24

In section 115, we again find Jesus invited over to a Pharisees house, and, as verses 1 and 2 point out, it is merely for entrapment. They have also invited a man with dropsy and given him a place in front of Jesus. And they invited Him so that they might watch Him closely to see what He would do.

1. True Sabbath Rest, Luke 14:1-6

Read verses 1-6.

What point does Jesus make here by healing this man?

His point here is that true Sabbath rest includes being healed.

He points out that even the Pharisees taught that if a domesticated animal falls into a pit on the Sabbath day and its life is endangered, then it is permissible to raise the animal out of the pit – even on the Sabbath day.

But a human being is more valuable than an animal that was made for the service of man.

And for Jesus true Sabbath rest means not just the cessation of activity, but a restoration of health and wellbeing.

So He proceeds to heal which, of course, violates the Pharisaic law, but not the Mosaic Law.

2. Humility, Luke 14:7-11

He goes on to teach them a parable about humility.

Read verses 7-11.

What point does He make with this parable?

The point He makes is: don't praise yourself, wait for others to praise you. And don't raise yourself up, but let others raise you up.

And then He repeats the motif of this period of His ministry in verse 11.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Again He reminds them that those who see themselves as exalted will be humbled, and the humble, who will come to Messiah for mercy, will be exalted.

And in the context in which He is speaking it is the Pharisees and leaders of Israel who see themselves as exalted.

3. Respect of Persons, Luke 14:12-14

Read verses 12-14 where He speaks about respect of persons, but not just respect of persons. So as we read, look to see the deeper significance of what He says.

Notice that Jesus is addressing His host. What is He saying to him?

He is pointing out to His host that the kind of hospitality they were showing Him was simply self-seeking and self-righteous.

True hospitality flowing out of the righteousness of God should be extended to those who have no way of repaying.

And why should he extend hospitality to those who are unable to repay him?

Because, He says, such hospitality *will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous*.

And why will it be rewarded at that time?

Such hospitality will be rewarded *at the resurrection of the righteous* because it is the outward expression of the kind of righteousness that one is given when He accepts the Jesus to be the Messiah.

So, while Jesus is speaking to His host about respect of persons in the context of hospitality, He is actually speaking to him about the contrast between hospitality which is based upon self-righteousness, and hospitality which is based upon true righteousness.

4. The Rejection of the Invitation, Luke 14:15-24

Then He finishes His teaching here with a parable.

Read verses 15-24.

Now Luke introduces this parable by telling us the response of one of the guests to what Jesus had just been saying about the reward for hospitality that is based on true righteousness.

When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

So Jesus responds with a parable about a great feast that had been prepared.

The illustration

Before we look for the meaning of the parable, let us take notice of the details of the illustration itself. What are the important details? There are quite a few of them.

A man had planned to give a feast. And certain people had already received an invitation.

And when the feast had been prepared the man sent out his servants to those who had been invited telling them to come and partake because everything is now ready.

And one by one they all gave excuses why they could not come.

Some were simply too occupied with business. Some were too occupied with their possessions. Others were simply too occupied with personal pleasures.

How does the man respond to this?

He sends out his slave twice more to bring in two groups of people to his banquet.

Where is he sent first? And who is he to bring in?

He is sent into the streets and lanes of the city to bring in the *poor and crippled and blind and lame*.

And where is he sent the second time?

He is sent *out into the highways and along the hedges*.

So, having first brought in the poor of the city from its streets and lanes, he is then sent out further afield along the highways to compel others to come to the feast.

Then the man declares: *none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner*.

Meaning

Now that we have a clear view of the illustration used in the parable, what are its key elements, and what do they mean?

The man who prepared this feast is God Himself, and the feast is the banquet that will take place in the Messianic Kingdom.

And the meal is prepared by means of the prophets.

And the invitations were given out by John the Baptist.

Then Jesus came to bid the invited guests to come for the banquet was now ready.

And the invited guests were the Jewish leaders.

But the Jewish leaders of that generation rejected the offer.

So now the feast will be given, not to those who were initially invited, the Jewish leaders, but to two other groups.

The ones for whom the servant was sent out into the streets and lanes of the city would be Jewish Believers in *Yeshua*. And they were brought in.

As there was still room, the servant was sent out beyond the streets of the city into the countryside to bring Gentiles in to the feast.

So that generation which received the invitation to enter the Kingdom will fail to enter the Kingdom. They will not be in it either in this age or in the age to come.

And others who were not initially invited, the Jews first, and also the Gentiles, will get to partake of the wedding feast.

D. Instruction Concerning Discipleship, § 116, Luke 14:25–35

Now in section 116 Jesus teaches about discipleship. And as we look at this section bear in mind that discipleship is not the same as salvation. Salvation has only one requirement, and that is to believe certain truths.

Three lessons in discipleship

Here Jesus teaches three lessons about what is required of a disciple.

1. *Leave all.*

Read how He begins in verses 25-26.

If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

Has this statement ever troubled you, and have you ever wondered what it means?

Especially in Jewish circles where they like to pick on the New Testament, many like to point out a discrepancy here between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They point out that the Old Testament teaches that we should honour our parents, but here Jesus tells us to hate our father and mother.

Meaning of words

Now in English we tend to use the words love and hate primarily in the emotional sense, and sometimes the Scriptures use it that way as well.

But there is also another way the words love and hate are used in the Scriptures. – They means to choose and not to choose. To love means to choose, and to hate means to reject or not to choose.

In Jewish literature it is used of a common situation where a man went into a shoe store and found that of all the sandals in the store only two of them would fit his feet, and so his choice was limited to those two pairs. And then it says he loved one and hated the other. But it doesn't mean that he had this emotional love affair with one pair of sandals, and that he also had an emotional animosity towards the other pair. It simply meant that he chose one pair and did not choose the other pair.

Jewish context

Remember that Jesus is speaking at a time when the Jewish people as a nation were rejecting Him as the Messiah. And many parents, spouses, and brothers or sisters would not acknowledge Him to be the Messiah.

And if the believing Jew is going to be His disciple, he needs to follow Him anyway, in spite of the rejection of his family members.

So the disciple must choose not to follow his family members who have rejected the Messiah, and instead choose to follow Jesus.

Meaning

The principle is that, if we are going to be His disciples, then anything that would stand in the way of our following Jesus must be removed.

And Abraham is an example of this in that God called him to leave his family and to follow Him.

The disciple must be willing to leave all relationships behind, and notice He says, *even his own life*, to follow Him.

In other words, the disciple needs to be ready to relinquish everything, even his very own life, in order to follow our Lord and Messiah, Jesus.

2. *Identify with His rejection*

Now read verse 27 to see the second lesson.

What does He mean by the expression *carry his own cross*?

We looked at this back in section 70 where Jesus was beginning to teach them about the ministry they would have in view of His rejection.

It was the Roman custom to make convicted criminals carry their own crosses to the place of crucifixion. So bearing a cross meant carrying their own execution device while facing ridicule and humiliation along the way to death.

Therefore to carry a cross and follow Him means to chose to identify with Him, knowing that the consequence may very well be rejection and humiliation, and even death.

It means to identify ourselves with Him, even in being rejected as He was rejected.

3. *Count the cost.*

The third lesson points out the need to count the cost of discipleship before committing to it.

Read verses 28-33.

How much of our possessions are we willing to give up in order to become a disciple. Jesus demands all of it.

Again Jesus makes a clear distinction between salvation and discipleship.

And for salvation only one thing is necessary, and that is belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

But for discipleship it is necessary to give up all things, even our own lives; to identify with His rejection; and to think through what it means to follow Him, and then accept whatever provision God provides along the way as we follow Him wherever He calls us to go.

Salt

Jesus now brings His lessons about discipleship to a conclusion by repeating the parable of salt.

By way of review, how is it that salt can lose its flavour?

Salt as we know it is pure sodium chloride and cannot lose its saltiness. But in the Middle East of Jesus' day salt was obtained from mineral deposits that were a mixture of several minerals and if it was exposed to rain or moisture from the earth the sodium chloride would be leached out of it and it would become tasteless.

Previous uses of the parable of salt

This is the third section where He has used this parable.

1. The first time He used it was in section 54, where He was describing in detail the characteristics of the true righteousness required by the Law of Moses.

There He used it to explain that, just as their salt contained within it a salty flavoured component, so Israel contained within it a believing Remnant who were intended by God to be the flavour of righteousness in the world. They were to possess the characteristics of true righteousness for all the earth to savour. So the Jews were the salt of the earth.

But they had lost their flavour of righteousness because so many of them were following the Pharisaic tradition of righteousness instead of the true righteousness required by the Law.

2. The second time He used the parable of salt was in section 91, where Jesus was teaching His disciples about their exclusiveness and pride.

His disciples had been arguing amongst themselves about which of them was the greatest. And Jesus taught them that they should be living in peace with each other, and not be jealous if one is elevated above another. And this will come about if they have the salt of the righteousness of God within them because one of the outward effects of God's righteousness within them will be that they are *at peace with one another*.

And just as salt enhances the flavour of food, so true righteousness within enhances their fellowship.

3. Now here, the third time He uses this parable, He is teaching the crowds about discipleship. And with it He is pointing out to them that a prerequisite of true discipleship is to have the righteousness of God within them.

"If a believer never becomes a disciple, or if a disciple turns away from their commitment, then they lose their saltiness and are useless to God. To press on toward spiritual maturity, they must make the commitment Paul writes of in Romans 12:1-2."

This commitment is the way to become a full-time disciple who is salty and useful for God's work.

So now He has used this illustration three times in three different contexts:

1. Speaking to the Jews under the Law of Moses,
2. Speaking to the disciples about their pride, and
3. Speaking to the crowds about discipleship.

And in each context the salt represents the righteousness of God that those He was addressing need to have within them.

E. Instruction Concerning God's Attitude toward Sinners, § 117, Luke 15:1-32

In section 117 we see Jesus giving instruction concerning God's attitude towards sinners.

1. The Occasion – Luke 15:1-2

Read verses 1-2 to see the occasion or what it was that provoked this instruction.

Why were the Pharisees and scribes grumbling?

He receives sinners and eats with them.

And why was this a cause for them to criticize Him?

In Pharisaic theology it was said that God rejoiced over the death of sinners. Therefore, in their view, if Jesus really was the Messiah, he would not have welcomed sinners.

The Mishnah, the Oral Law of the Pharisees, contained a great number of rules covering a Pharisee's relationship towards sinners. And by the word *sinners* they mean prostitutes and tax collectors.

Here are five of the many such rules which show their underlying attitude:

- 1) The Pharisee was neither allowed to sell anything to, nor to buy anything from, a publican or sinner, in either a dry or fluid state. And that covers everything!
- 2) The Pharisee was not to eat at the sinner's table and thus partake of something which may not have been tithed.

The Pharisees tithed every little seed. And they would not even accept food at a non-Pharisee's home because of the fear of partaking of un-tithed food.

- 3) The Pharisee was not to admit the sinner to his own table until he put on the clothes of a Pharisee.

And this was a figure of speech, meaning conversion to Pharisaism.

So only if a sinner became a Pharisee would he be allowed to eat at a Pharisee's table.

- 4) A Pharisee was not to do anything in the sinner's presence which might demonstrate any points connected with the laws of purification.

He was not to do anything which might arouse interest in ritual purification on the part of the sinner.

The sinner should be dissuaded from even asking questions about the laws of purification.

God forbid that he might want to be converted!

- 5) There is joy before God when the one who provokes Him perishes from the earth.

And so God rejoices over the death of a sinner.

And the application of these attitudes to Jesus was:

If He was really the Messiah, then He would not associate with this class of society.

And so it was this attitude of the Pharisees towards sinners that gives rise to their grumbling here.

Jesus' response

This is the occasion. And Jesus responds with three parables to show the contrast between the Pharisaic attitude towards sinners and God's attitude towards sinners.

Verse 3 begins with the word, *so*, meaning therefore. And it is important to remember that the three parables that follow are a direct response to the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes.

2. The Parable of the Lost Sheep – Luke 15:3-7

Read verses 3-7.

Lost and found

The focus here is on the lostness of the sheep, because of the tendency of sheep to stray.

And human beings, like sheep, have a tendency to stray from God and become lost.

This parable may also be describing the work of God the **Son**, who goes to find the one who is lost and brings him back into the fold.

Joy

And notice how the parable ends: when the sheep is found there is joy.

And in the same way *there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.*

3. The Parable of the Lost Coin – Luke 15:8-10

Read the second parable in verses 8-10.

Searching

Whereas the first parable is about the status of the sheep which is lost, the second parable is about the woman's earnestness in seeking.

So the focus is on the searching.

And this emphasises the work of the Holy Spirit, who searches the hearts of all individuals and is the agent by which a person's heart is opened and drawn to the Lord.

Joy

And when the coin is found there is joy, and so it is also in life, when a sinner repents there is joy, as Jesus says in verse 10.

In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

And this contradicts the Pharisaic mind set.

4. The Parable of the Prodigal Son – Luke 15:11-32

The third parable is the well-known parable of the prodigal son.

And here the focus is on restoration, which is the work of God the Father.

The prodigal

Read verses 11-19.

There are two sons. One who is staying home and working with the father, and one who wants to receive the inheritance early. So the father divided the inheritance and, because he was wealthy, the younger son's portion (one third) would still have been quite substantial. But he wasted all his funds in riotous living. Finally, to survive he had to get a job feeding pigs, which for a Jew is quite a downward trend!

Finally he came to his senses and recognised that his own sustenance was even poorer than what the servants in his father's house had to eat. So he chooses to go back home, not with the intent of being restored back into sonship, but simply to be a servant and do better than working for the one who raises pigs.

The father's longing

Now read verse 20.

What does this say about the father?

It shows that the father was sitting in a position where he could see in the distance. And this was his habit. It was no coincidence that the father saw his son returning *while he was still a long way off*. He was longing for his son to return, and, on a daily basis, he kept looking for his son to return.

And when he sees his son, what does he do?

When he sees his son approaching in the distance, he doesn't wait for his son to arrive; he runs to his son and greets him warmly.

Restored by the Father

Then Jesus tells us about how the father restores the son.

Read verses 21-24.

In verse 22, the father gives him three things. What are they, and what is their significance?

1. He gives him the best robe, which is the sign of his birth right. (1 Samuel 18:4 Johnathan)
2. He gives him a ring, which is the sign of his authority in the household. (Genesis 41:42 Joseph; Haggai 2:23 Zerubbabel; Esther 8:2 Mordecai)
3. He gives him shoes or better sandals as a sign of his sonship. (Deuteronomy 25:9)

Then they begin to celebrate *for*, as the father says, *this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found*.

The older brother

But then the older brother comes in from working in the field.

Read verses 25 - 30.

How does the older brother respond to what he sees?

He doesn't like what he sees because he has always been obedient. And never has there been a feast held for him, and never has he had these gifts given to him. And he is the eldest son.

But he has never been rewarded.

So, in his mind he has earned many celebrations, but has never received any.

The reason for the rejoicing

And how does the father respond to this?

Read verses 31-32.

³¹“And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.
³²’But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’ ”

So what reason does the father give for the celebration and rejoicing?

They are in response to the fact that the one who was lost has been found. And the one who as considered dead has begun to live again.

The lesson

There is a lesson here.

The older brother believed that he should be rewarded with celebrations because he had earned them. And this is the teaching of the Pharisees. They believe they will be rewarded for all their works in keeping their rules.

But Jesus is pointing out here that rewards will not be given on the basis merit, but rewards will be given on the basis of mercy.

The one who has never gone away does not need to be restored. And the restored son is the one they must rejoice over.

Conclusion

All three parables teach about the rejoicing that takes place when the lost one returns. And this stands in stark contrast to the Pharisaic attitude expressed in the grumbling that provided the occasion for this teaching.

And the purpose of the three parables is to explain the difference between the Pharisaic attitude towards sinners and God's attitude towards sinners.

And God does not rejoice over the death of a sinner, but rather, He rejoices over those who come to Him.

F. Instruction Concerning Wealth, § 118, Luke 16:1-31

1. The Parable of the Unjust Steward, Luke 16:1-13

Now Jesus turns from addressing the Pharisees and scribes about the attitude of God towards sinners and returns to His instruction of the disciples.

The parable

Read Luke 16:1-8.

First of all notice that this manager is not dismissed immediately. Notice in verse 3 that he says, *my master is taking the management away from me*. And in verse 4 he says, *so that when I am removed from the management...*

So this manager is given notice that his employment will be terminated because he was squandering his master's possessions.

How does he use the time he has left?

He uses it to make new friends in the hope that when he loses his present job he will be welcomed and possibly even given a new job by one of them.

Key point of the parable

Now how does his master respond to this?

He responds with praise!

And why does he praise him?

Verse 8 gives us the reason.

His master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly.

Notice that he was not commended for his unrighteousness, but for his shrewdness. He was commended for his wisdom demonstrated by his actions. The time he had left in his job, he used wisely to make friends for the future.

Application

Then at the end of verse 8 Jesus begins to make His application of the illustration given in the parable. He says:

for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

Here He notes that unbelievers show more shrewdness than believers.

Application

Now read His application in verse 9.

And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Now the word translated “wealth” here is “mammon”, which is a common rabbinic term referring to all that the world offers materially. It includes all kinds of possessions, earnings, gain, and anything of material value.

And what is the point Jesus is making here?

The point is this: He says we are to use the material things of this world to win friends for ourselves.

And why are we to do that? He also give us the reason.

So that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

When what fails?

When the mammon fails.

And when does mammon fail?

Our material world fails for us when we die and go to heaven.

And what will happen then?

Then some of those who we helped to bring to the Lord will be in heaven welcoming us *into the eternal dwellings*.

In other words, some of the people that we win to the Lord by using our material means will go into heaven before we do, and they will be there to welcome us when we arrive.

Three contrasts

He goes on to make three contrasts in regard to faithfulness.

Read them in verses 10-12.

1. Verse 10. The one who is faithful in a very little thing will also be faithful with much.
2. Verse 11. The contrast is between unrighteous mammon and true riches.

What are the true riches?

The true wealth that belongs to believers is the message of the gospel that they have from Jesus.

3. Verse 12. The contrast is between that which is another’s and that which is your own.

And what is the point He is making with these three contrasts?

The point here is that

if believers are trustworthy in little things and with material things, and if they are trustworthy with the possessions of others,

then unbelievers will trust them with greater things, with the true wealth of the gospel which they possess.

Some of these will believe and go on to heaven ahead of us and will be there to welcome us when we arrive.

So believers can use the material things of this world to win friends for the Lord.

Who are we serving?

But His lesson is still incomplete, and He adds the most important part right at the end.

Read it in verse 13.

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Here He points out that it is impossible to serve two masters. We will always end up choosing one over the other, serving the one we choose devotedly and neglecting the other. As Paul points out in a different context, we will be the slaves of the one we choose to obey.

So what is the issue He is bringing to their attention?

The issue is this, and it is a key question in each of our lives:

Who are we serving? Which one is in control? Is it God, or is it mammon?

We need the material things of this world to provide for our families, to pay our bills and things of that nature. But are we subservient to the material things of this world? Or are we serving the Lord?

And once we are serving the Lord then we will know how to deal with our material things.

We will know what part of our income has to go to meet our needs, what part we want to save, and what part will go to support the Lord's work. All these have to be brought into consideration.

If we make ourselves the servants of God, then we will see our mammon, our material things, from His perspective and He will teach us how to deal properly with them.

2. The Conflict with the Pharisees, Luke 16:14-18

Scoffing

Read verse 14.

In section 117 we saw Jesus responding to the grumbling of the Pharisees and the scribes about the fact that He was receiving sinners and eating with them. So He was teaching them about God's attitude towards sinners, which stands in contrast to their own attitude towards sinners.

Now, while He has been speaking to His disciples, the Pharisees have also been listening. But they cannot contain themselves, and they begin scoffing at Him.

Pharisaic attitude

Why is this?

Luke point out that they *were lovers of money*.

The teaching of Pharisaism was: whomsoever the Lord loves He makes rich. And so they gave themselves to becoming wealthy, because wealth was, in their view, a sign of divine favour.

And unfortunately, some in the church have fallen into the same trap with the health and wealth message.

Response

Read how Jesus responds to their scoffing in verses 15-18.

In verse 15 He points out the contrast between God's view of their hearts and their own view.

In verses 16-17 He repeats something He taught earlier:

Because of Pharisaism the way into the Kingdom has been blocked. And so a Jewish person has to struggle and almost fight violently to be able to break through the teachings of the Pharisees to see what the truth is.

And so, as He puts it here, those who believe are forcing their way into the kingdom.

He also reminds them again that not the smallest stroke of a letter of the Law will fail.

Example of divorce

And the issue of divorce, which He mentions in verse 18, is a key example of the difference between what Pharisaism taught about adultery and what the biblical standard is.

And He will give us more details on the subject of divorce in section 125, so we won't discuss now, but we'll leave it until get to that section.

3. The Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31

Then, still responding to the Pharisees who were scoffing at Him, He goes on to tell the story about the rich man and Lazarus to counteract their concept: whomever the Lord loves He also makes rich.

In the same story He also counteracts the Pharisaic teaching that all Israel has a share in the age to come so that everyone who is born a Jew automatically goes into God's Kingdom.

The story

Read verses 19-31.

He talks about an unnamed rich man, who is a Jew; and a poor beggar, who He does name, by the name of Lazarus.

At his gate

Notice in verse 20 that Lazarus was laid at his gate. This means that the rich man had a nice big home in a compound with a wall. And Lazarus would beg at the compound wall.

So every time the rich man went in and out of his house, in and out of his compound, he would see Lazarus.

He had ample opportunity to fulfil the second most important Mosaic Law to love your neighbour as yourself. And this he failed to do.

And again, he failed to fulfil the second most important commandment because he failed to fulfil the first one: to love God with his whole being. Had he loved God, he would know what to do with his mammon.

But instead of sharing his wealth with those who were in need, he hoarded it.

Rich man in hell!

Now when both men die what occurs is the exact opposite of what the Pharisees expected!

It is the rich man who ends up in hell. And it is Lazarus who ends up in Abraham's bosom.

The place of the dead

Now in order to understand what is going on here, let me describe with the situation as it was at the time of Jesus, and up until the time He ascended.

Look at the chart to showing the place of the dead. (PowerPoint file "Sheol, Hades.ppt" or printed chart from "The Unseen World diagram.xlsx" or The Place of the Dead Appendix 8 in the Harmony)

Sheol / Hades

There is a place in the centre of the earth that goes by the Hebrew name of Sheol. In Greek it is called Hades. Hades and Sheol are the same thing. One is simply a Greek name and the other is a Hebrew name.

In the Old Testament, you read that everyone who dies goes into Sheol or Hades, without exception. Believers went to Sheol or Hades, and so did unbelievers.

But there are two different compartments.

Abraham's bosom / Paradise

The side where the righteous would go is a place referred to as Abraham's bosom.

This is a very common name from rabbinic writings from this period.

It occurs only once in the New Testament, here in this passage in verse 22. But it is a very common Jewish name for this place – Abraham's bosom.

It is also referred to as paradise.

Paradise is a term used for the place where believers go, and so at that point of time paradise was in Abraham's bosom.

Today paradise is up in the third heaven.

In the future, in the eternal order, paradise will be in the new Jerusalem on the new earth, but at this stage paradise was in Abraham's bosom in the righteous side of Sheol.

While animal blood in the Old Testament was able to cover sins, it could not take the sins away. And the Hebrew word for atonement does not carry all of the theological implications that the term implies in English. It simply means to cover. The sins of the saints were covered but not removed. Therefore they could not enter into the presence of God upon death. The place they went to was Abraham's bosom, paradise.

The side of the Unrighteous

Now the other side, the side of the unrighteous, had three subdivisions.

1. *Abyss.*

The first subdivision is the Abyss, which is a temporary place of confinement for fallen angels or demons.

When a demon is cast out, he would normally spend some time in the Abyss and then be released.

There are demons confined there right now, like those of Revelation chapter 9 that will be released as part of the Tribulation judgements.

This is also where Satan will be confined for 1,000 years during the Messianic Kingdom in Revelation 20:1-3. This is also a temporary confinement because after 1,000 years he is released.

2. *Tartarus*

The second division is a place called *Tartarus*, which is a permanent place of confinement for demons or fallen angels, specifically those fallen angels who intermarried with human women in Genesis chapter 6. (2 Peter 2:4)

In Genesis chapter 6 we have an unnatural intermarriage between human women and fallen angels which lead to the race of the Nephalim that brought about the flood.

And now those angels that participated in that sin are in Tartarus. They will never be free again. They are in permanent confinement. They will be there until the Great White Throne Judgement, and then they will go into the Lake of Fire.

So putting it into more contemporary terminology, the Abyss is like a place for a temporary jail sentence, and Tartarus is like a place for a lifetime jail sentence.

3. *Hell*

The third subdivision is hell, which is where unbelievers go. This is also referred to as Abbadon or the Pit.

Great Chasm

So when a believer died, his body was buried in the earth somewhere and his soul went into Abraham's bosom. If an unbeliever died his soul went to hell.

And there was an impassable chasm between the two.

This passage shows they could see each other. And they could talk to each other. But they could not cross from one side to the other.

Back to the story

We'll come back to this chart in a few moments, but let's go back to the story Jesus told.

Two contradictions

Not only does He contradict the concept that wealth is a sign of divine favour, he also contradicts the concept that being a Jew gave them automatic rights into God's Kingdom.

Descendant of Abraham

Notice that the rich man is a descendant of Abraham.

Twice he calls him *father Abraham*.

In verse 24: *Father Abraham, have mercy on me.*

In verse 30, *No, father Abraham.*

And it is a relationship that Abraham acknowledges, because in verse 25 he says, *Son, remember.* (The NASB translates son as child. *Téknon* can be either. *Téknon* is a general designation for offspring and contemplates the individual as one who is parented, one who has been born to another.)

So there is a physical tie between Abraham and the rich man. But being a descendant of Abraham did not guarantee the rich man any spiritual benefits as the Pharisees had expected.

Two requests

Now the rich man makes two requests of Abraham. And each of them teaches a lesson.

Agony

What is his first request?

The first request he makes is to allow Lazarus to come over and place one wet finger upon his tongue. That would give him tremendous relief. Notice his agony.

How does Abraham respond?

Abraham points out there is this great chasm fixed between them. They can see each other and talk to each other, but what Lazarus cannot do is cross from his side to the other.

So there will be no relief coming whatsoever.

Request for a miracle

And what is his second request?

Now the rich man still has his memory, and he remembers that he has five brothers which are still living. And knowing their spiritual state is the same as his, he recognises that if something doesn't happen they will end up in the same place as he is.

So his second request is to allow Lazarus to be raised from the dead to warn the five brothers.

How does Abraham respond?

In verse 29

*Abraham * said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'*

They have Moses, they have the prophets. All they have to do is simply read the Scriptures they have. Simply believe the Scripture as it is written and they could avoid this place.

And what is the rich man's argument in response to Abraham?

The rich man says in effect, 'no, what my brothers need is signs and wonders.' They need to see miracles and signs. If they see Lazarus is raised from the dead – that is what will finally get them to believe.

And this, of course, reflects the requests of the Pharisees for a miracle.

But notice the response of Abraham in verse 31.

But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'

In other words, if the Bible is not accepted and believed as it is written, no amount of signs and wonders and miracles will be persuasive.

And the best evidence for this is all the miracles that Jesus performed. He even performed unique miracles never done before, and yet they found a reason to reject Him anyway!

A true story

Now this is sometimes called the parable of the rich man, but notice it is not called a parable at all.

And furthermore, in Jewish parables there are no names given. There is no Lazarus, and there is no Abraham in a Jewish parable.

This is not a parable. It is a true story. It is a real, true story that had taken place.

His purpose

Also notice that He tells this story just before He will raise a man called Lazarus, in section 121.

It is not the same Lazarus, although the name is the same.

We have already seen some of the purposes which Jesus fulfils with this story. But there is another purpose we haven't mentioned yet.

What do you think His purpose was in telling this story at this time, just before He raises Lazarus from the dead?

His purpose in telling the story here is to point out that when the first sign of Jonah is given, when a man named Lazarus is resurrected, they will find a reason not to believe.

Advantage of thematic view

This is an observation we are able to make because we are looking at the gospels thematically rather than geographically.

Because we are looking at the gospel events in their chronological sequence, and because we are focussing on the significance of those events in the unfolding story of the Messiah's life rather than simply focussing on their geographic location and considering each event in isolation as other studies have done, we are able to see the correlation of one event with another.

Summary of purposes

To summarize Jesus purposes in giving this parable:

1. He is refuting the Pharisees' idea that wealth is a sign of God's favour.
2. He is refuting the Pharisees' idea that all Jews will automatically gain entrance into paradise.
3. He is teaching them that signs will not persuade them to believe. But belief comes from accepting the words of Moses and the prophets.
4. He is pointing out in advance that the first sign of Jonah, which He will soon give them, will be rejected.

Paradise moved when Christ ascended

Now getting back to the chart, when Jesus died on the cross His body was placed in the tomb, but His soul went into paradise or Abraham's Bosom. As we will see soon, He will say to the rebel who was crucified with Him, "You will be with me today in Paradise."

Things have changed for the believer as a result of the ascension of Jesus. This is found in Ephesians 4:8-10.

Today when a believer dies, his body stays here, but his soul goes straight into God's presence: To be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord. This is seen for example in Philippians 1:21-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-11.

Hades emptied after the Millennium

Things have not changed for the unbeliever. He dies, his body stays here, and his soul goes into hell.

But when the Millennium is over, the second side of Hades shall also be emptied, and all the demons and unbelieving souls will stand before the Great White Throne Judgement.

And they will be cast, alive, into the Lake of Fire, also referred to as Gehenna.

It is not Hell that is the eternal abode of the unbeliever; it is the Lake of Fire that is the eternal abode of the unbeliever, which is worse than Hell because Hell is torment for the soul only. But the Lake of Fire will be torment for both soul and body.

The state of the lost

Now, from the story He told us let's draw some lessons concerning the state of the lost.

1. They are eternally separated from God. There is no second chance after death.
2. The state is unalterable, eternal, it cannot change. Again, there is no second chance after death.
3. They are in torment, so much torment that just one wet finger placed upon the tongue would bring tremendous relief. But no such relief is forthcoming.
4. They are very conscious of their lostness. There is no soul sleeping there. They are very conscious of their lost condition.
5. They do remember opportunities they had to respond correctly, but rejected.

If we clearly understand the condition of the lost, that should energize us all the more to share the gospel.

There is only one way to avoid this state. And that is to believe the simple gospel. And therefore we must take the opportunities that God provides to share the gospel clearly.

G. Instruction Concerning Forgiveness, § 119, Luke 17:1-4

Now Jesus turns from addressing the Pharisees to speak to His disciples.

And He gives them instructions concerning forgiveness.

Read Luke 17:1 – 4.

He teaches here three basic things.

1. They are to be careful not to give offence.

In verses 1-2, while stumbling blocks are inevitable, they are warned that it would be better to have died before causing someone else to stumble.

There will be an accounting that takes place after death, and it would be better to die early than to live longer to cause stumbling and then have to give account for it.

2. They are to be careful not to take offence.

In verse 3, they are to be on guard so that rather than taking offence they would confront the offender, with a view to both repentance and forgiveness.

3. Forgiveness is to be uncouneted.

He has spoken to Peter about this on an earlier occasion. They are to be willing to extend forgiveness as frequently as it is requested. Forgiveness should be unlimited in number.

H. Instruction Concerning Service, § 120, Luke 17:5-10

Have you ever thought it would be good to have more faith?

If so, you are in good company. Here the apostles ask Him to increase their faith.

How will He answer them?

Read verses 5 – 10.

Notice that His answer has three parts.

1. He begins with a statement in verse 6.
2. Then He gives an illustration in verses 7-9.
3. Followed by His conclusion in verse 10.

Even a little faith is effective

What is His point in verse 6?

He begins by pointing out to them that even a very little faith is effective.

Servanthood

Then He gives an illustration about servanthood. What is this illustration showing us?

He is showing us the relationship between a master and his servant. The master assigns the servant his work and gives him commands, while the servant simply carries out his master's commands.

Application

Then Jesus makes the application in verse 10.

So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'

Meaning

So putting all three parts of Jesus answer together, what is His answer to their request for Him to increase their faith?

First He reminds them first of all that even the smallest amount of faith is effective. So they already have enough faith to be effective.

Then He says not to focus is on increasing your faith, or even on faith itself, but on exercising the faith that they already have to obey all that they are commanded.

And when we are doing all that the Lord has given us to do, we will be exercising the faith that we already have, and we will begin to see how God is working. We will see Him answering prayers. And we will see His work in those around us. We will see our part in His work and how, when we simply obey Him, His work is accomplished. And His work extends beyond what we are able to do ourselves.

And so the way that faith is increased is by doing the work of the Lord.

Our faith will increase by exercise.

And then, when we have done what He commanded, exercising our faith in the process, we should also recognize that all we have done is only what is expected of us as His servants.

I. The Resurrection of Lazarus: The First Sign of Jonah, § 121 - 123

Now we come to the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, which is the first sign of Jonah that He promised to the leaders of Israel. Sections 121 – 123 of the Harmony together are a description of this event.

This is the seventh of John's seven signs.

Here also have the fifth of his seven "I am" s in verse 25, where Jesus says: *I am the resurrection and the life.*

And in verses 9 & 10 is John's subtheme of the conflict between light and darkness, which we are pointing out as we go, but not elaborating.

1. The Sign of Resurrection, § 121, John 11:1-44

a. The Death of Lazarus, John 11:1-16

Request for help

Read verses 1 – 5.

A message comes to the two sisters that we met earlier that Lazarus is ill, fatally ill. And the intent of the message was to get Him to come quickly to Bethany and heal Lazarus before he dies.

Now where He was geographically at this point in time would have been only a one day walk to Bethany. He had plenty of time to get there in time. And we would expect to read that when He heard about the illness He departed for Bethany. Yet that is not what we read.

Delay

Read verse 6.

Notice how 6 begins: *so when, or when therefore.*

These words point to the explanation for what follows.

And what follows is that Jesus deliberately stayed two more days where He was after receiving the request of the sister Mary and Martha. This is unusual, and we would not have expected it.

Why did Jesus delay for two more days?

He had already made clear in verse 4 that this sickness is not for the purpose of death, though death will occur, but for a greater purpose, a special purpose, *for the glory of God.*

And so, therefore, in order to fulfil that purpose He doesn't go anywhere. But He deliberately stays put waiting for Lazarus to die.

Only when Lazarus finally does die does He begin moving towards Bethany.

Danger

Read verses 7 – 16.

Now He says, *“Let us go to Judea again.”*

This, of course, would take Him from Perea back across the Jordan into Judea. And the disciples recognise the danger of doing that and question His intention.

The time is right

So Jesus makes two points in response to them.

1. In verses 9 – 10 He makes the point that the time to be working is during the daylight hours, and the inference is that now is the right time to be returning to Judea.
2. Then in verses 11 – 15 He reminds them about Lazarus. Perhaps they have forgotten about him, or perhaps they thought Jesus didn't intend to go to him.

Here Jesus tells them that Lazarus has died and that He will now go and raise him up again.

But they are having trouble understanding Him.

And in verse 16, Thomas is still focused on the danger and he says: *“Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”*

b. Jesus and Martha, John 11:17-27

Read verses 17 – 27.

When Martha hears of His approach she goes out to greet Him, and she also scolds Him for not coming when He was first called. Had He come when He was first called, Lazarus was still living and He could have healed him.

Now she does affirm her faith in His Messiahship. And she does understand His power to heal before death. But she does not yet understand His power over death.

And He teaches her that the one who believes in Him may die physically, but he cannot die spiritually.

c. Jesus and Mary, John 11:28-32

Read verses 28 – 32.

Mary also goes out to greet Him, and like Martha she also scolds Him for not coming when He was first called. Like Martha, she does recognise His power before death, but not after death. And she does recognise Him to be the Messiah.

d. *Jesus and Lazarus, John 11:33-44*

Read verses 33 – 38.

How would you describe Jesus' response to the situation He finds here?

Common interpretation

Some would say that in verse 33 we see the tears of Mary and her friends acting sympathetically upon Jesus, and drawing forth His emotions. And that it is a vivid and beautiful expression of His "real" humanity!

And that His being *deeply moved in spirit and* troubled refers to His visible difficulty in repressing His emotions.

Then when He could repress them no longer, in verse 35, He wept, showing His perfect oneness with us in our sorrow for human suffering and death.

This is a common interpretation.

Three Greek words

But if we look at some of the Greek words John uses here, we will arrive at a better understanding of the text. There are three.

1. *Wailing*

When He arrives at the tomb, in verse 33, and He sees a group of people there *weeping*, the Greek word is, *klaiō*, which means "to weep as a loud expression of grief, wail, lament, implying not only the shedding of tears, but also every external expression of grief."^{vi}

They were not merely weeping at their loss. This was the loud wailing and lamentation you can still hear in certain kinds of Jewish funerals.

2. *Tears*

And in verse 35 it says *Jesus wept*. But it is a different word from the one used in verse 33.

It is *dakrúō*, which simply means to silently shed tears. Jesus shed tears quietly.

The others are wailing loudly. But, by way of contrast, Jesus simply shed tears.

3. *Indignation*

The third word we need to understand here is found twice.

As He listened to all this wailing, it says in verse 38, He was *deeply moved within*. And earlier in verse 33 we read, *He was deeply moved in the spirit*.

And again it is far more emphatic in the Greek than it is in English. He was moved with indignation. He was very, very angry.

The Greek word, *embrimáomai*, means to be enraged, or indignant, to express indignation against someone.

So literally the Greek says He was moved with indignation in the spirit. He was angry.

Jesus' responses

So Mary and the Jews who were with her were loudly wailing and lamenting.

And against this backdrop John gives us two responses of Jesus, each of which stands in contrast to that wailing and lamenting.

1. Once He simply shed a tear.
2. And twice He became indignant and very angry.

His tears

Now what was it that prompted His tears?

It was the death of Lazarus and being invited to come and see where he lay.

His indignation

And what brought about His indignation?

Read verse 37 again.

But some of them said, "Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, have kept this man also from dying?"

Had the Jews accepted His Messiahship instead of rejecting Him, the death and resurrection of Lazarus would have been unnecessary!

And therefore, had they accepted Him as their Messiah, He would indeed have kept Lazarus from dying!

It was their rejection of Him that occasioned the death of Lazarus, and so their question provokes His indignation and anger!

And in verse 33 also, it was their rejection of Him that occasioned the death of Lazarus, and so their loud wailing and lamentation again provokes His indignation and anger!

Lazarus raised

Read verses 39-44.

He then, in verse 39, orders the stone to be rolled away. And Martha, who would be the one to be careful about such things, says to Him: don't do that because by now Lazarus has been dead for four days, so by now he stinks!

Not normally a nice thing to say about your brother, but in this case it would be accurate.

Four days

But the mention that he has been dead for four days is significant and helps to explain why He acted the way He did.

The common teaching of the rabbis in first century Israel was that when a person dies the spirit of the person hovers over the body. And there is always a small possibility of resuscitation.

But at the end of the third day the spirit descended down to Sheol of Hades.

From then on resuscitation wasn't possible. Only by a miracle of resurrection could the man live again.

And because it was a sign intended for the nation, Jesus set the stage in such a way that they could not explain it away by mere resuscitation.

Lazarus has been dead for one day too many.

Primary reason for the miracle

In many commentaries when they deal with the resurrection of Lazarus and the reason behind it, they focus only on the love He had for Mary and Martha. And not doubt that is involved.

But it is always wise to look at the textual reasons why He does what He does. In other words it is wise to look for the reasons that are actually given in the text.

And now what was the primary reason for raising Lazarus?

Look at verse 42.

"I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me."

Notice that the primary reason for the resurrection was for the benefit of the multitudes who were standing there, *so that they may believe that You sent Me*.

This was the one miracle He promised to do publicly for them after His rejection in sections 61 - 64. He said that there will be no sign given except the sign of Jonah.

And so Lazarus is resurrected and the first occurrence of the sign of Jonah is given.

We'll see how the Jews respond in the next section.

And because, in the first century, the bodies were wrapped around with strips of cloth, He orders Lazarus, who is now alive again, to be unwrapped so that he can move around freely.

2. The Rejection of the First Sign of Jonah, § 122, John 11:45–54

Now in section 122 we see the response of the Jews. And there are two different responses.

Belief and unbelief

Read verses 45 – 46.

Notice in verse 45 that many of the Jews who were there *believed in Him*. And this is the correct response.

Then verse 46 introduces a contrast with the word, *but*.

And the rest of the section, nine verses, is given to those who do not believe.

Leadership complex

Some of the Jews were still labouring under what Arnold calls a leadership complex.

Do you remember what we mean by a leadership complex?

Back in section 61, after Jesus cast out the mute demon, we read that: *All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"* They were not asking by what authority He cast out demons, as they did in section 41. What they were asking was: Could this be the Jewish Messiah? He is doing what Messiah alone was supposed to be able to do.

And, while they were willing to raise the question, could this be the Messiah? They were not willing to answer the question for themselves.

And they are looking to the leaders to make that decision for them.

We see this throughout Jewish history. And whichever way the leaders go, the people are sure to follow.

We see it frequently in the pages of the Old Testament. When the king did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, the people followed. But when he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, they also followed.

Even in our day, when we witness to our Jewish contacts, eventually they always raise the same objection: if Jesus was the Messiah, how come our rabbis don't believe on him. That is the leadership complex. In New Testament times because of the stranglehold Pharisaism has upon the masses, because of the application of Mishnaic Law, as we detailed previously, this leadership complex was very strong. So again, while they are willing to raise the question, could this be the son of David, they are not willing to answer it for themselves. They are still looking to the leaders to make that decision for them.

So some of the Jews are still labouring under the leadership complex, and they report what has occurred to the Pharisees.

Sanhedrin

And because the Pharisees know that this is the sign He promised to give them, they would have to respond.

Read their response in verses 47 – 48.

How did they respond?

Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council.

This is a meeting of the Sanhedrin, the rulers of Israel.

Again, the Sanhedrin was comprised of 71 members carefully divided along party lines.

- 24 seats went to the chief priests, who were all Sadducees.
- 24 seats went to the elders, who were all Pharisees.
- 22 more seats went to the scribes, who were all Pharisees.
- The last seat went to the high priest, himself a Sadducee.

So the Sanhedrin was composed of both Sadducees and Pharisees.

Their concern

And they do not deny the fact of His signs. They acknowledge that: *This man is performing many signs.*

What is it they are concerned about?

They were not seeking after truth. Instead, they were seeking ways to protect their own selfish interests.

If Jesus gathered too many followers, He might get the attention of the Roman authorities; and this could hurt the Jewish cause, both the recognition of the Jewish nation and the place of these men as the leaders of that nation.

Caiaphas

And now we meet the high priest of that time, Caiaphas, a Sadducee who conducted the proceedings.

Read verses 49 – 52.

Did you notice the irony here?

Caiaphas says: *it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.*

This was true, but not true in the sense that he meant it.

How did Caiaphas meant it?

Caiaphas means that it is better for Jesus to be killed on behalf of Israel so that Israel itself is not destroyed by Rome.

But, as John points out, in essence what he said is true, although not in the way that Caiaphas intended it.

Jesus really did die for the nation so that the nation would not perish. He died to make their salvation possible, and not only their salvation, but also the salvation of both Jew and Gentile of all nations.

But this is not what Caiaphas had in mind.

And, not only are his words true in a sense that he did not intend, but also the destruction of Israel that he hoped to avoid by killing Jesus, would come about precisely because they rejected Him.

In 70 AD the Romans did destroy Jerusalem. And this was the judgment that came as a direct consequence of their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.

And remember, John wrote his gospel about 85 to 90 AD, 15 – 20 years after Jerusalem was destroyed.

This is the first of several ironies that John points out in His gospel.

The Sanhedrin's decision

Now read the decision of the Sanhedrin, and Jesus' response, in verses 53 – 54.

So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

And so by this action the Sanhedrin, led by Caiaphas the high priest, rejects the first occurrence of the sign of Jonah.

Jesus departs

At this point Jesus departs to a city called Ephraim, north of Jerusalem. This is His final departure from Judea until the time comes for Him to make His final journey for His death.

Three messianic miracles

There were three messianic miracles:

1. *The healing of the Jewish leper*

The result of the first messianic miracle was that the intensive investigation of Jesus' Messiahship began.

2. *The healing of the mute demoniac*

The result of the second messianic miracle was the decree that Jesus was not the Messiah on the basis of demon possession.

3. *The healing of the man born blind*

The leadership's response to the third messianic miracle was that anyone who owned Jesus as their Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.

Three signs of Jonah

There will be three occurrences of the sign of Jonah:

1. *The resurrection of Lazarus*

The first occurrence of the sign of Jonah is the resurrection of Lazarus after being dead for four days.

And the resurrection of Lazarus resulted in the issue of a death warrant by the Sanhedrin.

2. *The resurrection of Jesus*

The second sign of Jonah is the fulfilment of Matthew 12:39-40

³⁹ *But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

This too was rejected and resulted in the persecution of the church.

3. *The resurrection of the two witnesses*

The third sign of Jonah will be the resurrection of the two witnesses in the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 11:3-13).

And the result will be that all the Jews living in Jerusalem at that time will believe.

We'll look at this again at the end of our study of the Life of the Messiah.

3. Instruction in Light of Rejection, § 123, Luke 17:11-37

a. The Personal Witness to Caiaphas, Luke 17:11-19

Here in section 123 we see that Jesus did have a sense of humour.

Read verses 11 – 19.

Last journey to Jerusalem

At the end of the last section, in response to the Sanhedrin's decision to kill Him, Jesus left Jerusalem and went north to the city of Ephraim.

Here we see that he continued going north. And now we find Him passing between Samaria and Galilee, where He begins His final journey to Jerusalem. And again He will travel on the eastern side of the Jordan in Perea.

Ten lepers healed

Now remember the first messianic miracle, which we reviewed at the end of the last section. When Jesus healed just one Jewish leper at the beginning of His ministry the leaders began their intense investigation of His Messianic claims.

But this time He heals not just one leper, but 10 lepers, 9 of whom are Jewish. And one of them is a Samaritan.

And when they ask for healing, coming to Him on the basis of their personal need, notice what He tells them to do.

¹⁴ *When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."*
And the head of the priesthood is Caiaphas.

Witness to Caiaphas

So now Caiaphas, who had just rejected the Messiahship of Jesus, and led the Sanhedrin to reject the Messiahship of Jesus, receives a tenfold witness to the Messianic claims of Jesus. Because ...

- 10 times over he has to sacrifice two birds.
- 10 times over, for seven days he has to answer three questions.
 - Yes, they were all declared lepers.
 - Yes, they were healed of leprosy.
 - And 10 times over, it was a man named Jesus of Nazareth who did the healing.

Faith

One comes back, before he goes to Jerusalem, to thank Him and that one happened to be a Samaritan.

Jesus points out that, for him and for the others, it was their faith that healed them.

And although they all had the faith to be healed, only one came back to say thank you.

b. The New Form of the Kingdom Program, Luke 17:20-21

Now some Pharisees come to Him with a question. But because they are unbelievers, His answer is incomplete.

Read verses 20-21.

Their question concerns when the Kingdom of God was going to be set up, a question they would debate among themselves.

Notice what He said to them.

"The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Now they are asking Him about the messianic kingdom that will come at the end of the age.

But He answers them in terms of the mystery kingdom that is coming as a result of their rejection of Him.

It is called a mystery because it is something that was not revealed anywhere in the Old Testament. But now, since His rejection, He has been teaching His disciples about it.

And He tells them three things about it.

1. It is not coming in a way that can be watched, *with signs to be observed*.

They are still looking for signs, but they have rejected the signs they were given. And the new form of the kingdom is coming without signs for them to observe.

2. It is not confined to a particular location that someone should say, “ it is here,” or “it is there.”

3. And as to when it is coming: it is already right here in your midst.

Even though they can't see it because of their unbelief, it is already present among them.

c. Instruction Concerning the Second Coming, Luke 17:22-37

Then He goes on to instruct His disciples about His second coming.

And He will have more to say to them about this when we come to the Olivet Discourse in section 144.

His coming will be very obvious

Read verses 22-24.

He begins by telling them that His coming will be delayed, and they will be longing for His return, but not seeing it.

Then while they are longing for His return, there will be those who report that He has already returned and can be found here or there.

But they are not to believe them and go running after them.

When He comes back everybody will see Him. It won't be like the first coming.

His second coming will be very visible. It will be obvious to everybody everywhere.

But first, rejection by this generation

But notice what must come first.

Read verse 25.

So, before the second coming can occur, whenever it is, what must first happen is the rejection of the first coming!

And notice once more He refers specifically to this generation. This generation alone is guilty of the unique and unpardonable sin.

Judgment comes unexpectedly

Now read verses 26-30.

Here He gives them two examples of past judgements. One from the days of Noah, and one from the days of Lot.

As Noah prepared the ark for the flood, the people continued in their normal daily routine. They ate, drank, and married. One day Noah boarded the ark. The rains came. Everyone except Noah and his family perished without warning.

The same thing went on in Lot's day. People carried out the normal routines of life. Then one day Lot quietly left the cities, and God rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah. And the cities vanished from history.

What are the common elements in these examples?

There are three common elements.

1. Life was going on as normal – eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting.
2. Noah and Lot and their families were taken out of the situation.
3. Then judgment came when those who were left were not expecting it.

And Jesus says it will be the same when the Son of Man is revealed. His second coming will be preceded by a judgment that we call the Great Tribulation. It is also called the Time of Jacob's Trouble, and the Day of the Lord.

And the points observed in these past examples will also apply to this future judgment.

1. The righteous will be taken to safety before it comes,
2. And when it comes, no one will suspect anything until it is too late. Life will be going on as usual and things will be quite normal on the earth. Weddings will be interrupted. Commerce will be interrupted. Farm routines and building works will all be interrupted.

Flee

Read verses 31 – 33.

On that day, He says, in other words, during the tribulation, there will be an urgent need to flee from persecution.

Do you remember what happened to Lot's wife?

The angel who rescued them from the city told them not to look back. But she looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Her problem was that, while she was escaping the judgment of Sodom, her heart belonged to Sodom, and so she too died in the judgment.

And so, when the judgment of the Great Tribulation comes, those who are on the earth at the time will have to make a clear decision as to where they stand with Jesus.

Those who seek to keep their lives are those who reject Jesus and try to preserve their way of life, clinging to the way of life that is being condemned. But they will lose their lives, many in the present judgment and all of them when they stand before the Judge.

And those who choose to stand with Jesus will be killed as martyrs, but even so they will preserve their lives for ever.

Rapture

Then Jesus describes the rapture.

Read verses 34 – 36.

Just as Noah and his family were taken into safety in the ark before the flood came down to destroy all the unbelievers who were left,

and just as Lot and his family were taken into safety in another place while judgment came down on those who were left in Sodom and Gomorrah,

even so, one will be taken into safety with Him, and one will be left to face judgment.

Review

So lets review what He taught here.

The Pharisees came to Him with a question about when the Kingdom of God was going to be set up.

And they were asking Him about the messianic kingdom which was still to come. But He answers them about the mystery kingdom that was already present as a result of His rejection.

He tells them that it is already here, but they don't see it because of their unbelief.

Then He goes on to instruct His disciples about His second coming at the end of this age.

He tells them that His coming will be very obvious to everyone everywhere.

But first, as He points out to them, He must be rejected by this generation.

Then He shows them, with two examples of past judgements, that the judgment at the end of the age will come unexpectedly on the unrighteous, while life is proceeding as usual.

And the same examples show that the righteous will be taken to safety before the judgment begins.

Then He says that those who cling to the way of life that is condemned will perish, but those who are martyred for following Him will preserve their lives.

Then He finishes with a description of the rapture by which the righteous will be taken to safety with Him, while the unrighteous will be left to face judgment.

And only at the end of the judgment of the great tribulation will the second coming occur.

Where will the Son of Man be revealed

This raises another question for the disciples.

Read verse 37.

They are curious to know where His second coming will occur.

The body refers to Israel, who is in hiding at the time.

And the vultures refer to the Gentile armies that are gathering against Israel to destroy them.

In other words, when He comes, He will come to the place where Israel is hiding and the Gentile armies are approaching to destroy them.

These things will come up again in the Olivet discourse in section 144.

J. Instruction in Prayer, § 124, Luke 18:1-14

Now Jesus gives His disciples two lessons on prayer, and each lesson is in the form of a parable.

And as we read these lessons, notice their structure.

They both have three parts.

- i. Luke begins by telling us the purpose of the parable.
- ii. Then Jesus gives the parable.
- iii. And finally, Jesus makes the application of the parable.

1. Perpetual Prayer, Luke 18:1-8

Read the first lesson in verses 1-8.

The parable

Lets start with the parable. What are the key elements of this parable?

- a. A judge who is unrighteous. He *did not fear God, and he did not respect man*.
- b. A widow with a need for justice.
- c. The widow persistently came to the judge to seek justice.
- d. The unrighteous judge eventually gives in to her persistence and grants her justice.

Purpose

Now what purpose did Luke give for this parable?

He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.

Why was this encouragement necessary?

Remember, He has just been instructing them about His second coming, telling them that the kingdom will not be set up in this generation after all, but that His coming will be delayed so that they will be longing for it, and not seeing it.

And because of that delay and their longing for His return, there will be a tendency to *lose heart*.

And therefore, He tells them, they are to continue praying, as He taught them earlier: *Thy Kingdom come*.

His application

Then He makes His application, and His argument is a typical Jewish one.

He points out that if the unrighteous judge will finally respond because of persistence, how much more can they expect God, who is the righteous judge, to respond to their petitions.

Content of persistent petition

And what is the content of their petition to be?

Look at verses 7 and 8.

Will not God bring about justice for His elect ... I tell you He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

When, according to prophecy, will God bring about justice for His elect?

Justice will come with the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. (Isaiah 9:7)

And Jesus, at the end of verse 8, links the arrival of justice with His second coming. When He comes to bring justice, *will He find faith on the earth?* He asks.

And so the subject of this persistent praying here is the justice that will come with the Messiah's second coming to establish His Kingdom on earth.

He is teaching them that, while the coming of the Kingdom is delayed, we are not to lose heart, but to pray persistently at all times that His Kingdom will come.

And He will indeed bring it. And with it will come justice for His elect.

2. Humble Prayer, Luke 18:9-14

The second lesson follows the same structure: a purpose, a parable, and an application.

Read it in verses 9-14.

Parable

In the parable He draws a contrast between two men who went to the temple compound during the hour of prayer.

Pharisee

Describe the Pharisee.

The Pharisee used the time to let God know how lucky God was to have him on His team.

In his prayer he brags that he fasts twice a week, meaning Mondays and Thursdays. Those were the two Pharisaic fast days.

He gives tithes of all that he gets.

And the Pharisee simply focuses on his righteous actions, trying to convince God to do good for him.

Tax Collector

But stands in contrast to the Pharisee. And he presents a more humble prayer.

What is his prayer?

He says *have mercy on me*. The word mercy is literally "be propitiated".

And the word “propitiate” means to satisfy the wrath of God against sin. God’s wrath against sin is satisfied by Messiah’s death.

So he recognises his sin. He recognises his unworthiness in God’s sight.

And the action he performs is a sign of mourning. He stands afar off, and he won’t so much as lift his eyes up to heaven.

These are the actions of mourning, and he demonstrates how to pray in a humble way.

Application

And the application comes in verse 14.

As Jesus points out, it is not the Pharisee who went home justified. It is the publican who went home justified.

Then He repeats the motif found in this part of His ministry:

everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

And so, being humble means correctly recognising our sin and our unworthiness in God’s sight, and that we are justified by God’s mercy in satisfying His wrath by the Messiah’s death.

K. Instruction on Divorce, § 125, Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 19:1-12

Now in this section we find Jesus teaching the Pharisees and His disciples about divorce.

Read Mathew 19:1 – 3, and as we read, notice the setting and the occasion for His teaching.

Perea

First of all, notice where Jesus is when this question arises.

Both Mark and Matthew record that He has left Galilee and He is going to the region of Judea, and He is *beyond the Jordan*.

And we will look at the significance of this very shortly.

Pharisaism

But first let me give you some background on the Pharisees.

The Pharisees themselves were divided over this question.

And the disagreement was over the meaning of two Hebrew words found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the words *‘ervah dabar*, translated in the NASB as *some indecency*. Literally the words mean *a matter or manner of uncleanness*.

Now their question was: what did that actually mean?

There were two rabbinic schools in the first century: the school of Hillel, and the school of Shammai.

Both of these rabbis began their schools in the first century BC. And by the time of Jesus they were no longer living, but the schools they began continued.

The view of Hillel was more open, and the view of Shammai was more strict.

Hillel

The Hillel view is that the phrase *‘ervah dabar* refers to any cause. So a man could divorce his wife for any cause.

Notice the way the Pharisees raise their question in verse 3.

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”

That is the Hillel view.

For example, Hillel said that a man could divorce his wife if she mis-cooked his food. And even if she put too much salt in his food, that is grounds for divorce!

A later rabbi, rabbi Akiva, who followed the school of Hillel in the second century AD, says that if a husband finds another woman more beautiful than his wife, he can divorce his wife.

So, in the school of Hillel, a husband could divorce his wife for any cause.

Shammai

On the other hand, the school of Shammai was more limited; you could only divorce your wife for sexual immorality.

Rabbinic School	View	Reason for Divorce
Hillel	More open	Any cause
Shammai	More strict	Sexual immorality

Testing Him

Now, according to verse 3, what was the motive for the Pharisees' question?

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him.

Testing Him?

The word, *testing*, is a word that means *to put to the test*, or it can mean *to tempt*.

So how would this question put Him to the test in a way that would advance their objective of having him killed?

This is where His location, mentioned by both Mark and Matthew, becomes important.

He was still in the region of Perea which is under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas.

And what did Herod Antipas do to John the Baptist?

When John the Baptist spoke out against the royal marriage of Herod and Herodias, he ended up being arrested and then beheaded.

So their hope here is that He will say something about the marriage of Antipas and Herodias and as a result they hope that He will also end up suffering their wrath.

That is why the question the Pharisees raise is a testing of Him.

Jesus' response

In response Jesus points out 5 things.

1. God's intent

In both Mark's account and Matthew's account, He begins by pointing them to the writings of Moses.

Read Matthew verses 4 – 6.

This is a clear statement of God's original intent for marriage.

The original intent of God was: marriage is permanent, and without a divorce.

2. *Divorce permitted*

Now the Pharisees have a follow-up question which leads to the second point.

Read verses 7 – 8.

So when the Pharisees asked Him why Moses commanded a man to write a bill of divorcement, Jesus points out that Moses did not command divorce, he only permitted it.

And what was the reason he permitted it?

He permitted it because of the hardness of their hearts.

Divorce was never commanded. It was only permitted.

The Biblical ideal is always forgiveness and restoration: reconciliation, not divorce.

3. *Both ways*

His third point is found in verses 11 – 12 of Mark's account, where He speak out against the one-sidedness of the Jewish law.

Read verses 11 – 12 of Mark's account.

Even in Israel today, a woman cannot divorce her husband. Divorce only works one way. A man can divorce his wife, but she cannot divorce him.

And in rabbinic thinking the man does not commit adultery against his wife, only the wife commits adultery against her husband.

But Jesus points out adultery goes both ways. Adultery can be committed both by the husband against the wife and by the wife against the husband.

4. *Only one ground*

Now read Matthew's account in verse 9.

Here Jesus makes only one exception.

And He only allows one ground for divorce and that is immorality.

And some translations say fornication here. The Greek word is *porneia* which is the source for our word pornography.

It refers to any sexual immorality, whether it is pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, homosexuality, lesbianism, or bestiality.

There is only one ground for divorce, and that is sexual immorality of any kind.

And again, this only allows for divorce, it does not require it.

So He sides with the school of Shammai here: only fornication or immorality is a valid basis for divorce.

5. Singleness is a gift

Now read the reaction of the disciples to this teaching in verses 10 – 12.

And how do the disciples respond?

“If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.”

If we cannot divorce our wives for any reason we want to, then it doesn't pay to get married.

And that provides Jesus with the opportunity to make His fifth point.

¹¹ *But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.*

The word *given* means to be given as a gift.

Their question is: Should a person remain single?

And His answer is: As a general principle, no, but those who have the gift of singleness can make that choice.

Paul refers to the gift of singleness is in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.

¹ *Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. ² But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ³ The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. ⁵ Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ But this I say by way of concession, not of command. ⁷ Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.*

For those with the gift of singleness, that would be a good choice to make because they can devote all of their time to the work of the Lord. A married person has less time for the work of the Lord. And those married with children have even less time. But a single person can give their whole time to the work of the Lord. And therefore that is viewed as being a good spiritual choice, but it should be limited to those who have the gift of singleness.

So Jesus points out, in verse 12, that some are born eunuchs, and some are made eunuchs by others when they are castrated.

But some become eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

So He concludes with the principle: *He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.*

And those who are *able to accept this* are those who are given the gift of singleness.

In Arnold's' travels visiting churches he often comes across people who say they are hungering for the gift of tongues, hungering and thirsting for the gift of prophecy, but there is not much of a run on the gift of singleness! He doesn't hear people saying they are hungering and thirsting for the gift of singleness. And yet that's a very good gift to have according to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7.

Divorce in OT & NT, a summary

This is not the whole teaching on divorce and remarriage. Let me summarise the teaching on divorce and remarriage in the Old Testament and the New.

Old Testament

In the Old Testament there were two grounds for divorce:

1. Sexual incompatibility

The first ground for divorce is in Deuteronomy 24, and that is sexual incompatibility.

Now what about sexual immorality, you ask?

Keep in mind that in the Mosaic Law sexual immorality was not grounds for divorce.

And why not?

Because someone guilty of immorality would be stoned to death. It was grounds for execution.

And that renders the innocent party a widow or widower, and there is no problem with a widow or widower remarrying.

So the grounds for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is sexual incompatibility.

2. Religious incompatibility

The second ground for divorce in the Old Testament, comes out of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and it was religious incompatibility.

When Jews married Gentile women who continued to practice idolatry they were commanded to divorce those wives.

The problem was not their being Gentiles, but their being non-converts to the Biblical faith.

And if you had Biblical grounds for divorce in the Old Testament it automatically allowed for remarriage, so, in both cases they were allowed to remarry.

Rescinded in the New Testament

Now sexual incompatibility as a reason for divorce is rescinded in the New Testament here in section 125. It is not allowed as a reason for divorce in this section.

And religious incompatibility is rescinded in 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.

¹² *But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her.* ¹³ *And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.*

So Paul writes that if two unbelievers marry, and one person chooses to become a believer and the unbeliever doesn't like that and asks for a divorce, then the believer is told not to fight the divorce, but to grant it. Incompatibility as a ground for divorce is now limited to this condition.

There are two grounds for divorce in the New Testament:

1. *Sexual immorality*

One is the one we talked about in this section, sexual immorality.

2. *An unbelieving spouse wants to leave a marriage*

The second ground for divorce is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15.

¹⁵ *Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.*

In the event that one of them becomes a believer after marriage, the unbelieving one is to be allowed to leave the marriage.

And the believer is told not to fight to prevent the divorce in this case.

In both these cases where there are grounds for divorce, it would allow for remarriage to occur.

But it is limited to these two situations.

L. Instruction on Entrance into the Kingdom, § 126, Mark 10:13–16; Matthew 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17

Now read Mark's account in section 126, Mark 10: 13 – 16.

What is He teaching here?

His teaching here is that the way we enter the Kingdom is by means of childlike faith.

And this is the only way to enter the kingdom.

He says:

“Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

M. Instruction on Eternal Life, § 127, Mark 10:17-31; Matthew 19:16-20:16; Luke 18:18-30

A Ruler's question

Now what happens in section 127?

Read verses 17 – 18 in Mark's account.

Urgency

First of all, notice some details that Mark gives in verse 17.

Jesus is *setting out on a journey*. He is leaving the place where He has been staying, and we know from section 123 that He is on His way to Jerusalem.

And as He sets out this *man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him* a question.

What does this convey to us?

For this man, the question is urgent. He has an urgent desire to know the answer.

The man

What do we know about this man?

Read Luke 18:18, 23.

Luke tells us in verse 18 of his account that he was a ruler, which means he was either a president of a synagogue, or he was a member of the Sanhedrin.

And then he tells us in verse 23 that he was extremely rich.

And Mark tells us that he knelt before Jesus, which is a posture of respect.

The question of eternal life

And what was his urgent question?

Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

He is very much concerned about his spiritual eternal benefits.

Now because he was a wealthy ruler, from a rabbinic standpoint he was already a recipient of divine favour.

But in his case he obviously recognized that something was missing.

And Jesus has been claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God, which means He was intrinsically good.

There are two different words in Greek that mean good. One is *agathos*, which means intrinsically good, goodness is part of his nature. This is the word used in this context. The second word is *kalos*, which means externally pleasing, or externally good.

So, although this man, as the Pharisees taught, was the recipient of divine favour, he recognized that there was still something missing. And he recognizes that Jesus is intrinsically good.

And so the question he raises is: what is the thing I need to do to have eternal life?

Good?

Jesus responded in His typical Jewish way with a question of His own.

Read it in verse 18 of Mark.

Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

Jesus has been claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and He claimed to be one with God.

And therefore He claimed to be *agathos*, intrinsically good. And His question to the ruler is essentially: Does he agree with this?

Now what answer should this man have given Jesus?

What the ruler should have answered is: I called you good because you are God.

And by that answer he would have answered his own question, because by accepting Jesus as the God-man Messiah he would have eternal life.

But the man never answers Jesus. He does not respond to the question Jesus raises.

Mosaic Law

So Jesus now takes him to the Mosaic Law.

Read Mark, verse 19.

And Jesus quotes several of the commandments, but not all of them.

What is the common theme in the commandments that Jesus quotes?

They are all commandments concerning human relationships. There is a reversal in the order of the sixth and seventh commandments, but that is not uncommon during this period. He quotes only the commandments concerning human relationships.

The ruler's reply

Now read the man's answer in verse 20.

Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.

As long as he could remember, from his youth up, he has kept these commandments. So he did pretty well there.

Yet he knows he hasn't quite made it.

So, as Matthew records in verse 20, he raises another question: *what am I still lacking?*

His one lack

Jesus will answer his question, not only by showing him what he lacked, but by explaining what to do about it.

Read Mark verse 21.

²¹ *Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."*

And what was the one thing this man lacked?

While he has been very good in keeping the commandments concerning human relationships, he has not been very good at keeping the commands regarding his relationship to God. Those he has not kept so well.

And what was hindering him from keeping the commandments regarding his relationship with God?

What had been keeping him from trusting God was his wealth.

Therefore it was his wealth that was keeping him from having eternal life.

The problem was not with the wealth itself, but with the person's tendency to trust the wealth rather than God.

And the one thing he lacked was a trust in God that enabled him to keep the commandments relating to his relationship to God.

Do three things

So, to help this man see what he still lacked, Jesus tells him to do three things. What are they?

1. Love God

First of all, sell all of your possessions. Get rid of your wealth.

And what will that show?

It will show that he loves God more than he loves his things, his wealth.

And that way he will fulfil the first most important commandment of the Mosaic Law.

2. Love your neighbour

Secondly, give to the poor.

And what will that show?

It will show his love for his neighbour, a real love for his neighbour resulting from his love for God.

Again, if he keeps the greatest commandment, to love God, then he will also keep the second greatest commandment, to love his neighbour.

3. Follow Me

And thirdly, *follow Me*.

In other words, accept Jesus to be the Messiah.

The ruler's response

Now how does the man respond to this?

Read verse 22.

²² *But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.*

Hard for the wealthy to enter the kingdom

Now, in view of what they have just witnessed, Jesus turns to His disciples to teach them how hard it is for the wealthy to enter the kingdom.

Read verses 23 – 24a.

Notice that once again Jesus contradicts the common Pharisaic view about wealth being a sign of divine favour.

How does this view of wealth hinder them from coming to God?

The problem is the tendency of the wealthy class to trust in their wealth.

If wealth was truly a sign of divine favour, and if you have wealth then you are already a recipient of divine favour, and so you already have eternal life.

And therefore they didn't put their trust in God. They put their trust in their wealth.

Disciples amazed

Notice the amazement of the disciples. They too grew up with this teaching. So what Jesus is teaching is amazing to them.

Camel

So Jesus continues the lesson.

Read verses 24b – 25.

He says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Common myth

There are tourist guides in Israel that came up with a story that a lot of tourists come home with: that there used to be a gate in Jerusalem called the eye of a needle. It was a small gate, so to get the camel through it you had to get the camel to go down to its knees and squeeze him through the gate.

But there are so many other gates around Jerusalem, so why even bother?

The fact is there was no such gate. There never was any such gate anywhere in the walls of Jerusalem.

Needle

He really is talking about a needle.

This is easier to see in the Greek text because Mark and Matthew use a Greek word that means a sewing needle.

But Luke, again showing his medical profession, used a different Greek word. He used a word that means a surgeon's needle.

So Jesus really is talking about a needle.

And how hard is it for a camel to go through the eye of a needle?

It is impossible. And that is the point.

Astonishment

Read the response of the disciples in verse 26.

They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?"

Now *they were even more astonished* because, if even the rich can't be saved, what chance does anyone else have.

So their question is *then who can be saved?*

It is possible with God

Jesus then makes the point that He has been working towards throughout this lesson.

Read verse 27.

And what is His point?

What is impossible for man is possible with God, and even rich people can be saved.

And salvation is the work of God, not the work of man.

This rich ruler came to Jesus with a question, asking, "*what shall I do to inherit eternal life.*"

He knew that he didn't have eternal life. And he wanted to know what he needed to do.

The answer is: There is nothing he can do to earn eternal life. With man it is impossible. But all things are possible with God. And he will have eternal life if he simply trusts God to give it to him.

And this takes him back to Jesus' first question: "*Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.*"

Peter's response

The wealthy ruler was told to sell all his possessions and to follow Jesus. In the light of this Peter has a question for Jesus.

Read verse 27 in Matthew's account.

Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?

So he asks what reward will they have from following Him.

Jesus' response

And Jesus responds by saying three things. The first only applies to the apostles and the second and third apply to all believers.

i. Twelve thrones

Read Matthew's verse 28.

The disciples will someday sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And they will have authority over the twelve restored tribes in the Messianic Kingdom.

In the Kingdom there will be a government with two separate branches.

There will be a Jewish branch of government and a Gentile branch of government.

And co-ruling over the Gentile branch of government will be the church saints.

Co-ruling over the Jewish branch of government will be the resurrected king David, and with David the twelve apostles will be ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel.

So this promise is limited to them.

ii. Restoration in this age

Read verse 29 of Mark's account.

And the second promise is that there will be a restoration in this life.

The restoration is not necessarily in the physical realm.

For example, He says you will have new brothers and sisters and mothers. But you don't have a literal new mother, brothers, and sisters.

So it's not true in a literal physical sense.

And in the same way, it doesn't necessarily mean physical wealth. It could be physical wealth for some, but not necessarily.

Nevertheless there will be measures of restoration in this life.

Arnold relates the following:

I was expelled from home when I finished high school.

So the day after my graduation I left California on my way back towards New York City. I began College that Fall.

By the time I finished the four years of College I had three different keys on my key ring for three different homes. One was in Levittown Long Island. One was in Baltimore, Maryland. And one was in Cape Mane, New Jersey.

And the people who had these houses never adopted me, but they treated me as a son, and to this day I call them Mom & Pop, though some have passed away. And their children call me brother, and I call them brother and sister.

When I graduated College, the family in Cape Mane New Jersey took out an ad in the paper. I suspect somebody reading it thought there was a bad mistake, because it says “Mr. & Mrs. Charles Catell announce the graduation of their son, Arnold G Fruchtenbaum.”

And so I experienced this restoration in this life.

And notice it is *along with persecutions*. We are not exempt from that.

iii. *Eternal life in the age to come*

And the third promise is, *in the age to come, eternal life*.

So these are the rewards for discipleship. For the apostles there will be twelve thrones in the kingdom.

And for the rest of us, who have given up everything to follow Him, there will be both a restoration in this present life, and eternal life in the kingdom to come.

The last shall be first, and the first last

But He hasn't finished His answer to Peter's question yet. He has one more point to make.

Read verse 31 of Mark and also Matthew 20:1 – 16.

And notice how he both begins and concludes: *the last shall be first, and the first last*.

A parable of rewards

So the parable illustrates this principle, and it completes His teaching in answer to Peter's question about the rewards of discipleship.

What is the main point made in the parable?

The point of the parable is that rewards will not be based on seniority.

And it teaches three things.

1. Labourers are to work in the vineyard and leave the rewards to Him.
2. God will be just and fair, and He will be gracious.
3. God has a right to do as He chooses in dispensing His rewards.

N. Instruction Concerning His Death, § 128, Mark 10:32–45; Matthew 20:17–28; Luke 18:31–34

Going up to Jerusalem

Read Mark 10:32.

Jesus is now on His final journey towards Jerusalem.

And when Mark and Matthew report that He was going up to Jerusalem, note that their road takes them across the Jordan river, which is approximately 1300 feet below sea level at that point, and Jerusalem is 2,450 feet above sea level.

So they are beginning to climb about 3,700 feet (1.1 Km). and the distance will be about 30 Km.

And as they travel, Jesus is walking on ahead of the disciples, and others are following after them.

How do these two groups react tot the fact that He is leaving Perea and going up t Jerusalem?

The disciples *were amazed, and those who followed were fearful.*

Why?

Because they know that the Jewish leaders are looking for an opportunity to kill Him.

His coming death and resurrection

And now He teaches His disciples for the third time concerning His coming death and resurrection.

Read Luke 18:31 and Mark verse 33.

Here He gives them more specific detail than He has given them before, and He makes 11 points. And the first three are found in Luke verse 31, and the others are in Mark verse 33.

1. First, He must go to Jerusalem.
2. Then, secondly, He tells them that what is about to take place is the fulfilment of what the prophets wrote about the Son of Man.
3. And thirdly, now it the time for their fulfilment.
He is going up to Jerusalem for the very purpose of fulfilling what was written about Him.
4. He will fall into the hands of the chief priest (Sadducees) and the scribes (Pharisees).
5. The Jews will condemn Him to death.
6. The Jews will turn Him over to the Gentiles.
7. The Gentiles will mock Him. - Isaiah 50:6
8. The Gentiles will spit on Him. – Isaiah 50:6
9. The Gentiles will scourge Him. - Isaiah 50:6
10. The Gentiles will kill Him. - Daniel 9:26
11. He will then be resurrected on the third day. - Isaiah 53:10-11

They didn't understand

Now read verse 34 of Matthew's account.

But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

Once again we are told they did not understand what He was saying.

And their lack of understanding is seen in the very next incident.

James' & John's request

Read Matthew 20:20 – 28.

The mother of two of the disciples, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, is Salome, which is the Greek word for the Hebrew Shulamit.

And she approaches Jesus saying: When your Kingdom is established, please command that these two sons will be next to you, one on your right hand and one on your left hand.

So they are still under the impression that He is about to set up the messianic kingdom, in spite of what He has just told them, and what He has been teaching them since His rejection by the leaders of Israel.

Jesus' response

Jesus points out that what is approaching is not the establishment of the Kingdom, but His own death.

And He points out three things to them.

1. Read Matthew 20:22 – 23a.

Those closest to the King must reach that position the same way He did, which was by means of suffering.

By way of observation, there are two sons. James ends up being the first martyr. He will be the first of the apostolic group to die. In Acts 12 he will be beheaded. And John, her other son will be the last apostle to die, and he will be the only one that will die of old age. Her two sons become the first and the last of the apostles to die.

2. Read Matthew 20:23b.

His second point is that only the Father can appoint those who will be sitting next to Him. The Father will appoint who will sit next to the King.

3. Read Matthew 20:24 – 28.

Thirdly, rulership and authority can be obtained strictly by means of being a servant.

Position in the Kingdom will not be based upon personal ambitions or based upon private requests, but will be assigned by God the Father to those who have actively served as servants.

O. The Healing of the Blind Men, § 129, Mark 10:46–52; Matthew 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43

Section 129 records the healing of the blind men.

Jericho

Read Mark 10:46a and Luke 18:35a.

Now was He leaving Jericho, or was He approaching Jericho?

This is one of those points where people argue against the inspiration of the New Testament.

Mark says: *they came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho* the event occurs.

Matthew says it was: *as they were leaving Jericho*.

And Luke says, *As Jesus was approaching Jericho*.

So which is it, is this happening on His way to Jericho, or on His way out of Jericho?

Actually, the correct answer is very simple.

Two Jerichos

In first century Israel, as you were travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem, you would normally go by way of Perea. And when you cross the Jordan River and go up to Jerusalem, you end up going through two different Jerichos.

There was the Old Testament Jericho, the Jericho that has been there since Old Testament times.

But Herod the Great built New Testament Jericho about three or four miles south of Old Testament Jericho.

And so, as He is coming out of Old Testament Jericho and moving into New Testament Jericho, and there is countryside in between, where this event occurs.

So there is no contradiction here. He was leaving Old Testament Jericho and arriving at New Testament Jericho.

Two blind men

Read Mark 10:46b – 48.

Now Matthew records that there were two blind men here, but Luke and Mark focus on the prominent one, named Bartimaeus.

Son of David

And when they realize who was walking there they cry out for a miracle.

Notice the basis of their request.

How did they address Jesus?

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

So they cry out for mercy on the basis that He is the Son of David.

That is His messianic title, and He has been rejected as the Messiah. So on that basis He will not respond.

He will not perform the miracle on the basis of the fact that He is the Messiah.

Privacy

But notice how He does respond. He will ensure three things before He does the miracle.

Read Mark 10:49 – 50.

So he is taken away from the crowd and brought to Jesus.

This ensures the privacy of what follows. It will not be a public miracle for the crowds, but it will be a private act.

Faith

And how did Bartimaeus respond when he was called?

Throwing aside his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

Have you ever thought what it means for a blind man to throw his cloak aside?

Because he cannot see, throwing the garment away haphazardly means he would never be able to find it again later!

So obviously it is an act of faith on his part that, since Jesus called him, he would finally be given his sight.

He can leave his garment behind, and go back and find it later, because his sight will be restored!

That expresses his faith.

Personal need

Now read Mark 10:51.

And here we find the expression of personal need.

So, before healing him, Jesus has established privacy, faith, and personal need.

Then He heals the man by telling him,

Go; your faith has made you well.

Again emphasizing that this miracle is done on the basis of faith.

And this has been His practice since His rejection in section 61.

P. Instruction Concerning the Kingdom Program, § 130, Luke 19:1-28

1. Personal Faith, Luke 19:1-10

Now read Luke 19:1 – 10 where we read the well known story of Zaccheus.

The Jericho Jesus entered and was passing through here was the New Testament Jericho built by Herod.

Zaccheus

And there He meets a man named Zaccheus.

What do we know about this man, Zaccheus?

He was a chief tax collector, which refers to the fact that there were other tax collectors working under his authority.

Therefore not only would he receive an income from his own collections, he would also receive a percentage from what the other publicans collected.

So in this manner he became somewhat wealthy.

And he says he was short, (which means he was under 5' 4", Arnold's height). So he climbed a tree to get a better look at Jesus.

When Jesus saw him He says, come down, I must stay with you tonight.

This event leads to the salvation of Zaccheus so that he will make a commitment that whatever he has defrauded he will restore. His commitment was the fruit of his salvation.

Individual Jews come to faith

Notice what Jesus said to him in verse 9.

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."

Earlier, in section 110 dealing with the healing of the woman who had been bent double for 18 years, she was referred to as a daughter of Abraham.

Here Zaccheus is described as a son of Abraham.

What is the significance of this description?

Notice the indefinite object, indicated in English by the indefinite article. He is a son of Abraham, one of many.

And the point is that as a nation they are under judgment and Jesus is no longer dealing with them as a nation.

But He will deal with Jewish individuals, and individual Jews can come to faith. And here is one example, a son of Abraham.

And to repeat, since His rejection His focus has been on individual Jews coming to faith and receiving salvation as distinct from the Jews as a nation. The nation as such has rejected Him and is under judgment, but individual Jews are coming to faith.

2. Postponed Kingdom, Luke 19:11-28

Purpose

Then He tells a parable, and Luke begins by telling us the reason why Jesus told them the parable.

Read it in verse 11.

While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

They still do not understand the program of death and resurrection. And they are still convinced that when He arrives in Jerusalem He will finally set up the Messianic Kingdom.

And the purpose of the parable is to dissuade them from that belief.

The Kingdom will not be set up at this time because of Israel's rejection of His Messianic claims.

And so this is a parable of the postponed kingdom.

Parable

And in it Jesus will make six points concerning the postponement kingdom.

Read verses 12 – 14.

Here He describes the fact that the kingdom will be postponed and what will happen during the period of its postponement.

What are the three points He makes in these verses?

1. *The King's journey*

In verse 12: The King must leave in order to receive his kingdom, and he will return.

And the application is that the Messiah will be leaving the earth until He receives His kingdom from His Father, and then He will return.

2. *Servants*

In verse 13: The Servants of the King are left behind to carry on his business until he returns.

And the application is that the servants of the Messiah are left behind to carry on the ministry He has given them until He returns.

3. *Citizens*

In verse 14: The citizens will reject the kingdom offer.

And so too, the nation of Israel will reject their Messiah and His offer of the Kingdom.

4. *Return*

Now read verse 15.

What does this verse describe?

While verses 12 – 14 describe the need for the postponement and what is to happen while the king is absent, verse 15 describes what will happen upon the return of the king.

And first of all note that: The King will return, and so eventually the Messiah will return.

5. *Judgment of servants*

Then also notice that: When he returns He calls His servants to give an account of what they had done for Him in His absence.

And verses 16 – 26 elaborate on this judgment.

Those who labour

Read verses 16 – 18.

What is He telling them here?

Those who were faithful in doing what the king had given them to do while He was absent were rewarded with authority over a number of cities in the kingdom.

And the application is that those who are faithful in labouring for the Messiah will be rewarded when He comes to establish His kingdom.

And what is the basis of the judgment?

The judgment is based on, or determined by, the work that was done for the king.

And what is the nature of the rewards?

The rewards are positions of authority in the Kingdom.

And the extent of that authority will be appropriate for each individual, and will be determined by the King.

Those who do nothing

But not all of the king's servants were faithfully serving Him while he was gone.

Read verses 20 – 26.

How would you describe this servant?

This servant had nothing to show his king except what he was originally given. And so he had made no use of what he was given.

And what was the result of the judgment for him?

There was no reward for him.

In fact, not only was he not rewarded, what he was given was taken away from him and given to one of the faithful servants.

And the application is simple. Those who choose not to labour for the Lord at all, although they are given certain things to start with, will find that what they were given is taken away and will be given to someone else.

And thus there will be believers in the Kingdom who have absolutely nothing to show for their work for the Lord. And they will not be given positions of authority in the kingdom.

Summary

The servants of the Messiah will be judged upon His return.

And while the basis for the judgement is the work that was done for Him, work that is the evidence of their faithfulness, the rewards that are given are positions of authority in the Kingdom.

And each position of authority will be appropriate for the one who receives it.

But there will also be those believers who will be saved and enter the kingdom, yet they will have no authority whatsoever because they were not faithfully serving the Messiah before He returned.

6. *Judgment of citizens*

Now read verse 27, where the king deals with his citizens.

So there will be the judgment of the citizens who have rejected the kingdom.

And for that generation of Jews which rejected their Messiah, that judgement will happen in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Rome.

Going up to Jerusalem

Read verse 28:

After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

Notice again the words “*up to Jerusalem*”.

This is typical of Luke. And it is a very Jewish way of writing. You always go up to Jerusalem, and down from Jerusalem. You don't merely go to and from, but up to, or down from Jerusalem.

Now the stage is set ...

And that concludes this section, and this section concludes the sixth main division of the Messiah's life, where the focus of His ministry has been on His preparation of the disciples for what lies ahead.

Now the stage is set for the next major division of His life, beginning in section 131, where we will look at the last week of His life as it unfolds.

End Notes

ⁱ Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

ⁱⁱ *ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Zodhiates, opt. cit.

^{iv} Borchert, G. L. (1996). *John 1–11* (Vol. 25A, p. 330). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^v Wuest, K. S. (1961). *The New Testament: an expanded translation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Kenneth Wuest's translation uses as many English words as are necessary to bring out the richness, force, and clarity of the Greek text. He follows the Greek word order and reflects the emphases and contrasts found in the original text.

^{vi} Zodhiates, opt. cit.