

# The Life of the Messiah in His Jewish Context

## Volume 3

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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](http://www.ariel.org).

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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](http://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](http://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](http://www.gospelharmony.vear.info)

You can contact me at [eric.vear@gmail.com](mailto: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.

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

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## VII THE OFFICIAL PRESENTATION OF THE KING, § 131-143

We now come to the seventh main division of Jesus' life, The Official Presentation of the King, which will lead to His official rejection. And why we call this division of His life "The Official Presentation of the King" will become clear as we discuss the significance of the events that take place during this period of His life.

### A. The Arrival in Bethany, § 131, John 11:55–12:1, 12:9–11

Section 131 gives us the setting for the events to follow, which we know as "the Triumphal Entry". And it is rich with details about the occasion – when it happened, who was there, why they were there, what they were doing, and what motivated them.

Read it now in John 11:55–12:1, 12:9–11.

*Date – 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 31 March, AD 30 – Friday*

First of all, when do these things happen?

Notice what John tells us about the timing of these events. He tells us two things. What are they?

First he tells us that *the Passover of the Jews was near*.

Then he gives us the exact date when Jesus came to Bethany. He says it was *six days before the Passover*.

When is Passover?

Read Exodus 12:1-6 to find out about two important dates.

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. <sup>3</sup> "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup> 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. <sup>5</sup> 'Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup> 'You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.

On the tenth day of the first month they are to take an unblemished lamb from their flock. We will look at the significance of this in the next section.

And according to Exodus 12:6, Passover is observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, the Jewish month of Nisan.

John writes that Jesus came to Bethany *six days before the Passover*. And that makes it Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, one week before He dies.

On our Gentile calendar it is March 31 AD 30.

### *Passover*

This is the fourth Passover mentioned in His public ministry. The first one was right at the beginning of His public ministry.

And so, the four Passovers make 3 years of active ministry.

And He was baptized roughly six months before the first Passover. That's why people say that His ministry was about three and a half years long.

But the active ministry was almost exactly three years.

Again, this is the Passover when He will die.

### *Where are they?*

That answers our questions about when these things happen. The next question is: where do they happen?

In 11:55 we read that many Jews are going up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

And in 12:1 we read that Jesus came to Bethany.

### *Bethany and Bethpage*

Bethany is located on the lower eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives, an easy walk over the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem, a distance of about 2.4 km.

And as you walk from Bethany over the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem you go by another town, Bethpage.

Both of these towns play a role in the next section.

### *Who was there?*

Now John gives us quite a bit of information about who was there, why they were there, and what they were doing.

Who are these individuals and groups?

### *Many Jews*

First he mentions that many Jews went up to Jerusalem out of the country to purify themselves because the Passover was near. This would be their annual habit, and the population of Jerusalem swells at this time of year.

And what were they doing?

They were seeking Jesus and wondering among themselves if He would come to the feast.

And why would they be wondering this? He was a Jew who habitually kept the Passover along with every other requirement of the Mosaic Law. So why would they be wondering?

### *Death warrant*

Because, as John says in verse 57,

*... the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he was to report it, so that they might seize Him.*

We have already noted that in response to the resurrection of Lazarus, and lead by Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin decided to put Jesus to death. But Jesus had withdrawn from areas they controlled.

Now He would come to Jerusalem for the Passover and the Jewish leaders saw this as an opportune time to arrest Jesus. So they instructed the crowds to report any sighting of Jesus to them.

Thus their decision to put Him to death is now reaching the crowds. And so they begin to wonder amongst themselves if He will even come to the feast.

### *Lazarus*

Now, in verse 9 we see a large crowd of the Jews gathering at Bethany.

Why were they gathering in Bethany?

*... not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.*

Why does this catch their attention? What was unique about the resurrection of Lazarus?

While there had been resurrections by others in the Old Testament, what is unique about this resurrection is that it happened on the fourth day, which in rabbinic theology would not be allowed to happen unless the Messiah came.

The raising of Lazarus becomes the first sign of Jonah, which requires the three day period in the grave.

### *Irrational leaders*

Notice the emotional and illogical way the leaders are behaving now.

The chief priests, by the way, were Sadducees.

And in verse 10 we see that it is the chief priests in particular who take action.

*But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also.*

And why did they want to put Lazarus to death?

Verse 11 gives the reason:

*because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.*

Can you imagine the confusion in their minds.

Sadducees do not believe in resurrection of the dead. So, how rude and presumptuous of Lazarus to be raised from the dead!

The leaders were so illogical that, not only were they conspiring to do away with Jesus, but they also wanted to see Lazarus dead again, because by coming back to life he was testifying to the Messiahship of Jesus, and *many of the Jews were ... believing in Him.*

They did not keep him in the grave the first time! What hope would they have now?

*A personal application*

And, while we are laughing at the Sadducees here, let us be careful that we are not laughing at ourselves.

Do we hold to some theory or idea so strongly that we are unable to recognise that the evidence before our eyes stands in contradiction to that idea?

It might be a question of theology, or a question of science, or something else.

And we can easily find examples of what others are doing. Can we also see what we ourselves are doing?

*Results of the first sign of Jonah*

Now there is one more thing to notice before we move on. We see here two results of the first occurrence of the sign of Jonah.

What are they?

The leaders have rejected the sign. They have rejected Jesus and are planning to kill Him. They have issued His death warrant and given orders that anyone who knows His whereabouts is to report it to them *so that they might seize Him*.

But on account of Lazarus, because of his resurrection, *many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Him*.

*The stage is set*

Thus John has set the stage and given us the background for the events we call the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.

## **B. The Triumphal Entry, § 132, Mark 11:1-11, 14-17; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19**

*Date – 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 2 April, AD 30 – Sunday*

As we have already noted, according to John, Jesus arrived at Bethany *six days before the Passover*, which was Friday the 8<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

And most likely, although it is not recorded in the gospel accounts, Jesus spent the Sabbath day at Bethany and had supper at Martha's house.

Then the events of the Triumphal Entry occur on the day after the Sabbath, on Sunday the tenth of Nisan, which is April 02, AD 30.

And we will see the significance of this date soon, but first let's see what happened.

*Miracle*

Read Mark 11:1-6.

Bethany is a village on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives which is to the east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley. Bethpage is nearby and on the way to Jerusalem.

Notice the miracle that occurs here. One which is often missed. What is it?

Jesus says, *you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat.*

It has never had anyone sit on it before, so what would it normally do? It would buck. But the animal does not buck.

This is a miracle and it demonstrates His authority over all of His creation.

*The Lord has need of it*

And if anybody objects to them taking the animal away what are they to say?

They are simply to say "*the Lord has need of it.*" And that will be sufficient to let the animal go.

The title *Lord* is given to the Messiah by King David in Psalm 110:1

*The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."*

This demonstrates His authority as the Messiah.

*Prophecy fulfilled*

Now both Matthew and Luke record that this event is a fulfillment of prophecy and they quote from Zechariah 9:9.

Read Matthew 21:4-5.

God knew beforehand what He intended to do.

## Questions

Now read Matthew's account from verse 6 to verse 9, Matthew 21:6-9.

Something happens here that should catch our attention! But we have heard this passage read so often and we probably haven't noticed it.

This passage is making obvious to Matthew's Jewish audience something which we don't see until we understand some Jewish context. And there are several things to observe.

Are you curious? As you look over the passage again, are there things there that raise questions in your mind?

## Palm branches

One of these things is the crowd's use of palm branches.

In verse 8 Matthew says some of the crowd *were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road.*

John tells us in verse 13 what kind of branches they were ... : *the branches of the palm trees.*

Why would they be spreading out palm branches? What is the significance of doing this? And why is Matthew reporting it?

This behaviour of the crowd actually stands out like a beacon on a hill because the Jews don't usually spread out palm branches at the time of Passover which occurs in the Spring. That's what they do at the feast of Tabernacles, which is in the Autumn. (Leviticus 23:40)

*Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.*

## Tabernacles and the Kingdom

Now what would they be thinking? 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.

What we are seeing here is that the multitudes are making the same mistake that Peter made at the transfiguration.

They are making the faulty assumption that Jesus is about to set up the Messianic Kingdom.

And therefore they are doing things that would normally not be done at the Passover, but would be done at the Feast of Tabernacles.

### *Hosanna!*

They are also saying things that are normally said at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Furthermore they cry out: *hosanna!* Now Hosanna is simply the Hellenized form for the Hebrew Hoshanah, "save us now!" The "s" sound is hardened since there is no "sh" in Greek.

And there is a series of prayers in Judaism known as the Hoshanah Prayers or Hoshanot Prayers, which are prayed at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, not at the time of the Feast of the Passover.

### *Hosanna in the highest*

At the end of Matthew 21:9, the people are saying *Hosanna in the highest!*

What does that mean?

In Hebrew it would be *Hoshanah Rabbah*.

What does Hoshanah Rabbah mean?

"Hoshanah" or "Hoshana" literally means "please save (us)" or "save us now!" in Hebrew, and

"Rabbah" or "Rabba" means "great" in Hebrew.

Taken together, these Hebrew words mean: the "great salvation".

The day of Hoshanah Rabbah is the seventh day and final day in the seven-day festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles).

The name for the special synagogue service for the seventh day of Sukkot is the same name as that for the day: Hoshanah Rabbah.

So Matthew's use of the expression *Hosanna in the highest* would immediately bring to mind the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### *Prayers from Tabernacles*

And there is a series of prayers in Judaism known as the Hoshanah Prayers or Hoshanot Prayers, which are prayed at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, not at the time of the Feast of the Passover.

The expressions *Hosanna*, *Hosanna to the Son of David*, and *Hosanna in the highest* are all titles of prayers that are used at the Feast of Tabernacles, and yet here they are using them at the Passover season.

### *Feast of Tabernacles*

All these things, the palm branches, *Hosanna in the highest*, and the Hosanna Prayers, emphasize that the people have the feast of tabernacles in mind.

*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*

Notice the phrase they are using to greet Him: *blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*.

This expression of greeting is reported by all four gospel writers.

Luke says in 19:38,

*BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*

And John says in verse 13,

*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.*

We came across this phrase in section 114, where Jesus told them that He won't return until they say, *blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*.

In the first century Jewish context that was the official Jewish greeting for the Messiah.

And rabbis would teach that whenever the Messiah comes He must be welcomed with these words, for they come out of the Messianic Psalm in the Old Testament, Psalm 118:26.

*References to the Messianic Kingdom*

So the things they are doing and the things they are saying clearly indicate that they believe He is about to establish the Messianic Kingdom when He finishes the ride.

But Jesus is not offering them the Messianic Kingdom! Israel has already rejected Him as their Messiah. Once the unpardonable sin is committed, it remains unpardonable. And the consequent judgment will come.

*Maccabees*

In recorded history the Jewish people only did this on two other occasions, both in reference to the Maccabee brothers.

First of all on behalf of Judah Maccabee, in 2 Maccabees 10:7. And later on to his brother Simon, the last of the Maccabee brothers still living, in 1 Maccabees 13:51.

In both cases it followed a victory against the Greek Syrians. And they were anticipating the Messianic Kingdom being set up.

Here there has been no military conquest at all. But they are anticipating the Messianic Kingdom to be set up.

*Theological significance of the ride*

Now we have explained the behaviour of the crowd.

But why is Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey? And why is He allowing the crowds to shout out these things?

Certainly He is doing it to fulfil prophecy. But there is more to it than that.

What is He actually accomplishing with this ride into Jerusalem?

### *Significance of the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan*

The key that will help us see the answer to these questions is found in the significance of the date on which these events occurred – the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

Earlier we read Exodus 12:1-6 to find out about two important dates. In verse 3 Moses records the Lord saying:

<sup>3</sup> *“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, ‘On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household.*

On the tenth day of the first month they are to take an unblemished lamb from their flock. And verse 5 adds: *Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old.*

So from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month the Passover lamb would be inspected to make sure it was without blemish.

The significance of this rite is not, as sometimes has been taught, that He is re-offering of the Messianic Kingdom. Nowhere in all four gospels does He ever re-offer the Messianic Kingdom to that generation of Israel.

On the appointed day, the very same day the literal lambs were being set aside, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, He was set aside from the flock of Israel to be the Passover Lamb.

And, just as the literal lambs were examined, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> He was tested to demonstrate that He was without blemish and therefore qualified to be the Passover Lamb who would die for our sins, once and for all.

### *Verbal testimony to His Messianic claims*

Now while the people are proclaiming His Messiahship, what are the leaders doing?

Read Luke 19:39–40.

<sup>39</sup> *Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”*

They are still rejecting Him.

<sup>40</sup> *But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”*

Why would the stones cry out if the disciples were silent?

On this day, the day the Passover lamb was set aside, there must be a verbal testimony to His Messianic claims!

### *Prophecy of judgement*

Read verses 41-44 of Luke 19 and notice the prophecy He makes concerning the city of Jerusalem and the reason for it.

<sup>41</sup> *When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, <sup>42</sup>saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup>“For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, <sup>44</sup>and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”*

What is it that they could have known which is now hidden from their eyes?

The things which make for peace.

What are these things?

The things which make for peace are the things pertaining to the Messianic Kingdom, because only when the Messianic Kingdom is established will they have peace.

Why are these things hidden from them?

They are hidden from them because they *did not recognize the time of your visitation*. In other words they did not recognize their Messiah when He came to them.

And what is the consequence for the city?

The judgment that has been in place ever since section 61 and which was fulfilled in AD 70.

*Responses*

*City*

Now read Matthew 21:10-14 to see the response of the city.

Matthew verse 10 says,

*When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred.*

The Greek word is much stronger. It means to be shaken, as if by an earthquake. The word means

*“To agitate, to shake with the idea of shock, cause to tremble with fear, concussion.”<sup>i</sup>*

And that indicates that there was general understanding of the significance of this day.

*Leaders*

Read the response of the leaders in verses 15-16.

Matthew points out that again the leaders were moved with indignation.

And Jesus will not accept their challenge to quieten the multitudes down because, as we already noted, on this day, the day the Passover lamb was set aside, there must be a verbal testimony to His Messianic claims.

*Jesus*

And His acceptance of the praises of the multitude shows that He is accepting their claims about Him being the Messiah.

<sup>11b</sup> *and after looking around at everything, He left for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.*

## C. The Authority of the King, § 133-134, Mark 11:12-18; Matthew 21:18-19a, 12-13; Luke 19:45-48

Date – 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 3 April, AD 30 – Monday

Now we come to section 133 which records two events that demonstrate the authority of the King.

And the first thing to note is that both Matthew and Mark begin by pointing out that it is the next day. That makes it the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, which would be Monday April 3 AD 30.

### 1. The Cursing of the Fig Tree, § 133, Mark 11:12-14; Matthew 21:18-19a

Read Mark 11:12-14.

*The Fig Tree*

What is the burning question here?

The question most of us have difficulty with is:

If it was not the season for figs, then why did He curse the fig tree for not having figs!!? It wasn't supposed to have figs at this point of time!

Actually, it wasn't the lack of figs that brought about the curse. And it wasn't figs Jesus was expecting to find.

In verse 13, Mark emphasises the fact that the tree had leaves on it. He says that it was *in leaf*, and he says that Jesus *found nothing but leaves*. Then he says *it was not the season for figs*.

So if it's too early to find figs on the tree, why would Jesus who was hungry go to see *if perhaps He would find anything on it?* Surely He knows it's too early for figs?

To understand this we need to know more about the fig trees in Israel.

On the fig trees in Israel, when the leaves come out, there are little buds form at the same time. And those buds are edible. The figs come out about six weeks later, in about mid-June.

The fact that this fig tree had leaves meant that it also should have had those nodules that could be eaten. But when He went over to it there was nothing there for Him to eat.

And so the fig tree was making a profession of something that it did not have.

*Israel*

In this context it becomes a picture for Israel. Israel claims to know the one true God and should have been able to provide spiritual nourishment for those who came to her. But Israel also has become fruitless and therefore falls under a curse.

In Mark 11:14 He says: *May no one ever eat fruit from you again!* And the word *ever* here translates three Greek words, *eis ton aiona*, which literally means *in this age*.

So, for this present age Israel will prove to be a fruitless son.

### *Humanity and Deity*

Also notice the mixture of His humanity and His divinity.

The fact that *He became hungry* shows His humanity.

And the cursing of the fig tree that withers within 24 hours, as we will see in section 136, is a display of His deity.

## **2. Possession of the Temple, § 134 Mark 11:15-18; Matthew 21:12-13; Luke 19:45-48**

Now in section 134 we have a second event, the possession of the temple occurring on the same day, the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Monday April 3 AD 30.

Read Mark's account, verses 11:15-18.

This is a repetition of the first act of His public ministry three years earlier when He went up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover. (Recorded in section 31, John 2:13-22).

### *His authority*

Once again, at the last Passover of His public ministry, He is found exercising His Messianic authority over the temple.

While He repeats what He did the first time, there are a couple of elements which are new.

For example, as Mark points out in verse 16, this time *He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple*.

And so He not only cleanses the temple compound, He also takes control of it, and nobody is able to pass through it without His permission.

Thus He shows His authority to cleanse it, His authority to possess it, and His authority to safeguard it.

And once again by overthrowing the tables of the money changers and the sacrifice sellers, He also overthrows the private business venture of Annas the high priest.

### *Responses*

What was the response of the chief priests and the scribes?

They were seeking *how to destroy Him*.

And why didn't they just do it? Why didn't they seize Him then and there?

Mark says *whole crowd was astonished at His teaching*.

And Luke says in verse 48, *they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said*.

Fear of the reaction that would occur among the people keeps them from taking action too quickly.

So they needed an opportunity to arrest Jesus when He was away from the multitudes. Judas will shortly provide that opportunity.

## D. The Invitations by the King, § 135, John 12:20-50

It is still Monday.

### 1. The Invitation, John 12:20-36

*Request of Gentiles*

Turn to section 135 and read John 12:20-22.

Who were these people who came to see Jesus?

Greeks coming to worship at the feast meant that these were Gentile converts to Judaism.

Why did they come to Philip when they were seeking Jesus?

Being Gentiles they would not be able to go beyond the court of the Gentiles to reach Jesus. But Philip would be able to go in to tell Jesus they wanted to see Him.

Then why did Philip go to Andrew instead of Jesus?

Philip doesn't quite know what to do.

As we learned from the encounter with the Gerasene demoniac, and again with the Syro-Phoenician woman, Jesus is not accepting Gentile disciples at this stage of His ministry, and His ministry at this time is to the Jews. And perhaps Philip has the same prejudice that Peter had and which God addressed in a vision at Joppa.

So he goes to Andrew, but Andrew doesn't know what to do either, so they both go to Jesus.

*Jesus' Answer*

Now let's see how Jesus answers. Read verses 23-33.

In His answer Jesus once again spells out the program of His death and resurrection which is now imminent, and which His disciples still don't understand.

And in His answer He gives four results that will be brought about by His death. Can you see what they are?

1. First of all, by His death He will provide life, verses 23-24: <sup>23</sup>*And Jesus \* answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*
2. By His death He will judge the world, verse 31. *Now judgment is upon this world.*
3. By His death He will defeat Satan, verse 31. *Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*
4. Only after His death can Gentiles freely come to Him, verse 32. <sup>32</sup>*"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."*

So, only after He has been lifted up, which He pointed out to signify by what kind of death He will die, only after the events of His death can Gentiles freely come to Him.

So the basic answer to the Greeks for now is that they cannot come to Jesus at this point in time.

### *Invitation to eternal life*

He also gives an invitation to salvation, but notice that the focus is now on the individual in verses 25-26:

<sup>25</sup>“He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. <sup>26</sup>“If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

Verse 25 is an invitation to salvation, and verse 26 is an invitation to discipleship.

### *Bat Kol*

In verse 28, for the third time we have a Bat Kol, where God the Father speaks audibly from heaven. The first one was at His baptism, the second at His transfiguration, and now at this is the third time.

It makes a simple statement, which is typical of a Bat Kol, promising that He has glorified His name and He will glorify it again.

God has glorified His name through the life and work of His Son, and now He will glorify it through the death and resurrection of His Son.

### *The crowd's response*

How did the crowd around Him respond to all this?

Read verses 34 – 36.

The people were still questioning Him.

How could He be the Messiah? The Messiah is eternal and therefore cannot die. So who is this Son of Man who is going to die?

### *Light and darkness*

Jesus answers them in terms of light and darkness.

And the conflict between light and darkness is a sub-theme of John's gospel which is beyond the scope of this course to detail.

His answer is an invitation to walk in the Light and accept the Light while it is still present among them. It is an invitation to believe in Him.

### *Jesus withdraws*

And after answering them in this way, He withdraws from the crowds.

## **2. John's Summary of Messiah's Ministry, John 12:37-50**

And the reason He withdraws is found in the second part of this section where John gives a summary of the Messiah's ministry. And it comes in two parts.

### **a. Summary of Israel, John 12:37-43**

Read verses 37 – 43 to see how he summarises Israel's response to the ministry of their Messiah.

### *Wilful disobedience*

How would you characterise their response from verse 37?

Notice that *He had performed many signs before them*. They had been given many opportunities to believe.

Notice also the tense at the end of verse 37: *yet they were not believing in Him*. This suggests that they kept on not believing in spite of many opportunities they were given to believe.

As far as Israel is concerned, he says they can be characterised by wilful disobedience.

### *Signs and wonders*

What does this say about the popular idea that in order to convince people we need to perform miracles, signs and wonders?

It contradicts that idea. Signs didn't work in Biblical history. They didn't work in the gospels. Miracles are beneficial for people who believe, but for those who don't believe, even in the midst of many signs and wonders which have never been done before or since, they still find reasons not to believe.

### *Blindness*

Did their wilful disobedience take God by surprise or catch Him unprepared?

John quotes from Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 to show that this unbelief and their consequent blindness were anticipated by God.

As we saw in Matthew 12, in section 61, once Israel rejected the Messiahship of Jesus, this blindness was imposed on the people by God, and so, as Paul writes in Romans 11:25-26, *a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. It is a partial hardening, a partial blindness. There are always Jewish people coming to faith.

### *Many believed*

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, John also points out in verses 42-43 that even among the Pharisees there were people who came to faith.

They did believe, but they would not openly confess Him because of fear, and they preferred *the approval of men rather than the approval of God*.

### *Summary*

So on one hand there were those who chose not to believe and on the other hand there were those who did believe, who were convinced He was the Messiah, but they chose not to make their belief public because of their fear or pride.

### **b. Summary of Jesus, John 12:44-50**

Now read Jesus' summary of His own ministry in verses 44 – 50.

In these verses He makes 6 points about His ministry. Can you see them?

1. He was sent by the Father. Verse 44.
2. He came to testify of the Father, to reveal the Father. Verse 45.
3. He is the Light. Verse 46.
4. Rejection will result in judgement by the Father. Verses 47 – 48.
5. Acceptance will result in salvation. Verse 50a.
6. He speaks what the Father gave Him to speak. Verses 49 – 50.

And verse 46 is another example of John's sub-theme of light and darkness.

## **E. The Proof of Authority, § 136, Mark 11:19-25; Matthew 21:19b-22**

### *Daily movements*

Read Mark 11:19. (See also Luke 21:37 in section 144.)

The gospel writers point out that He went out teaching regularly on a daily basis at the temple.

*Date – 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 4 April, AD 30 – Tuesday*

Mark verse 20 begins: *As they were passing by in the morning.* So another night has passed.

And it is now the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

### *The withered fig tree*

Now what do they discover on the way to Jerusalem that morning?

Read Mark 11:20-21.

The very next morning after the fig tree was cursed, they notice that the fig tree has withered. It has all withered, from the roots up, and all in one day. Peter and the other disciples were amazed!

And they asked *“How did the fig tree wither all at once?”*

### *Believe God*

In response to their astonishment Jesus teaches them two lessons about prayer.

And the first is found in verses 22 – 24 of Mark's account.

Read Mark 11:22 – 24.

Does this passage create any questions in your mind?

Is He talking about a literal mountain?

Is this a formula for receiving anything we want?

Now we'll talk about the mountain in a moment, but Jesus does not begin with the mountain.

*Prayer condition - faith*

He begins with a statement that is the key to this passage: *Have faith in God.*

This is the focus of His statements here, and He mentions it four times. Can you see it?

*Have faith in God ... does not doubt ... but believes ... believe.*

Even the statement to the mountain, *be taken up and cast into the sea*, uses the passive voice which means that it is not the speaker performing the action. And in this context it implies that God is doing it.

He begins by instructing them to *have faith in God*. And then He goes on to say that believing God is actually a necessary condition for answered prayer. If we are going to receive what we ask for in prayer then we must believe that God will grant it to us.

*Prayer subject – this mountain*

Now we come to the mountain. Which mountain is He talking about here?

Both gospel writers record that Jesus referred to *this mountain*. And once again the Greek is very emphatic. He literally says: *whoever says to the mountain – this one*. He is referring to a specific mountain.

Which mountain do you think He is referring to?

If he means a literal mountain, He would be referring to the mountain on which Jerusalem stands, the mountain that He is approaching. That is the mountain in the immediate context here.

Would God actually throw that particular mountain into the sea?

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?

In the previous section, speaking of His imminent death, in John 12:31, Jesus says: *Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

So the kingdom in view here is the Satanic kingdom, a kingdom that is under judgment and whose ruler will be cast out.

You may remember that in section 87, Matthew 17:20, immediately after dealing with a dumb demon that the disciples had been unable to cast out, Jesus made a similar statement. In that context we concluded that *this mountain* most likely refers to the Satanic Kingdom and not a physical mountain like Mt. Hermon.

Once again the expression, *this mountain*, most likely refers to the Satanic Kingdom and not a physical mountain.

*Prayer subject – all things*

And why did He say, in verse 24, *all things for which you pray*?

Is this, as some say, encouraging us that we can have anything we want provided we believe?

Notice the word, *therefore*, at the beginning of this sentence. Thus the two sentences are joined together and the expression *all things* is limited by the context.

*Not only ... but even*

Now notice how Matthew records what Jesus said. Read Matthew 21:21.

<sup>21</sup> *And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen.*

*Not only ... but even.*

The withered fig tree is the lesser work. If they have faith, God will accomplish the greater work for them.

*Summary*

Thus, rather than teaching that we can rearrange the landscape if we don't doubt, or that we can have anything we want if we will believe it, Jesus is instructing the disciples to have faith in God, and to exercise that faith by expecting God to overcome the kingdom of darkness in response to their requests.

And what was the answer to the disciples' question? "*How did the fig tree wither all at once?*"

God did it. And furthermore, if they have faith in God, He will not only do the same for them, He will even overcome the kingdom of darkness when they ask and trust Him to.

*Prayer condition - forgiveness*

Then He gives them a second condition for answered prayer.

Read Mark 11:25.

He tells them that it is necessary to forgive others anything we have against them in order to be forgiven by God. And this is also a prerequisite to our prayers.

## F. The Authority of the King Challenged: The Testing of the Lamb, § 137 – 140

Now it is still Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

And in sections 137 – 140 we find the authority of the King being challenged. This is the period during which the Passover lamb is tested.

During this same period Jesus will be tested by four different groups of Jewish leaders, each trying to trap Him in some way.

There are two things they would like to accomplish. First of all they want to find a way to discredit Him before the people. And secondly, they want to find a specific charge against Him so that He could be punished, either by Jewish or Roman law, or both.

### 1. By Priests and Elders, § 137, Mark 11:27–12:12; Matthew 21:23–22:14; Luke 20:1–19

#### a. *The Attack. Mark 11:27-28; Matthew 21:23; Luke 20:1-2*

The first attack comes from the priests and elders. The priests were Sadducees and the elders were Pharisees. So this is a combined Sadducean and Pharisaic attack.

Read about it in Matthew verse 23.

What is the issue raised by their question?

The issue concerns His authority. The question is *by what authority are You doing these things*, because in the view of the rabbis authoritative teaching required previous rabbinic authorization.

We have already noted that others kept quoting this rabbi or that rabbi to prove their point and give authority to what they were saying. You can see that in Jewish writing to this day.

But Jesus quotes no scribe, no rabbi, no Pharisee. When He interprets the text of the Scripture in general and the Law in particular, He is the one who gave those Scriptures and therefore He has the right to interpret it.

#### b. *The Answer*

So in typical Jewish manner He responds to their question with a question.

Read Matthew 21:24-27.

Why did Jesus ask them this question about the source of John's baptism?

Their answer to that question would reveal either their sincerity, or their duplicity.

If they were sincerely enquiring about the source of His authority then Jesus' question would lead them to the answer they sought.

Now what would it mean if John received his ministry from heaven?

Then Jesus can say that He received His authority from John, because John is the one who called Him *the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*.

And, on the other hand, what would it mean if they say John's ministry is from men?

That would mean that he did not have any divine calling, and then they would be the ones discredited before the people because the people saw John as a prophet and a saint.

Not only would they be discredited. Luke records in verse 6 that they were afraid of being stoned to death because the people were convinced that John was a prophet.

And therefore they are now in the very trap they tried to put Jesus in. So they simply refuse to answer the question.

And Jesus responds: because you won't answer My question, *neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

And why not?

By their answer to His question they have declared that they have already decided not to believe Him!

Now Jesus proceeds to give three parables to these leaders of Israel.

#### (1) The Parable of the Two Sons, Matthew 21:28-32

And the first parable is the parable of the two sons.

##### *Parable*

Read Matthew 21:28 – 31a.

What is the point made in the parable?

It is indicated by Jesus' question, *which of the two did the will of his father?* And the point is that sonship is proven by obedience.

The father asked his first son to go out and work in the field and the son said, "no, I'm not going to do that", but he went ahead and did it anyway. The second son said he will do it but ends up not doing it. So which son proved to be obedient: the one who said "yes" but did not go and do it; or the one who said "no" but went ahead and did it anyway. The answer is obvious.

##### *Application*

And what application does He make?

read verses 31b & 32.

Who do the two sons represent?

These leaders of the Jewish people, who saw themselves as being the righteous ones, who felt they would have easy entry into the Kingdom, and have authority in the Kingdom, are the ones who will fail to get in. They are the ones who said "yes", but didn't do what the Lord said.

But those who said "no", and then regretted it and obeyed, are the tax collectors and prostitutes. They will be in the kingdom and these leaders will be excluded.

(2) The Parable of the Householder, Mark 12:1-12; Matthew 21:33-46; Luke 20:9-19

The second parable is the parable of the landowner or householder. In it Jesus quotes from the parable of the vineyard found in Isaiah 5:1-7 in which Isaiah says: *the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah His delightful plant.*

*The parable*

Read Matthew 21:33 – 39.

What are the main elements of the parable and who or what do they represent?

The elements are the landowner, the vineyard, and the vine-growers, the slaves of the landowner, and the son of the landowner.

The landowner in the parable is God the Father. The son is the Messiah. The vineyard is Israel.

And the vine-growers are the Jewish leaders who were to work the land and produce the fruit, and then keep a portion for themselves. But a portion was to go back to the landowner.

And the landowner's slaves are the prophets which God the Father has sent to Israel.

In verses 34 – 36 Matthew points out that he sends out three sets of servants. Some were totally rejected, some were beaten, and some were killed. The three categories would be: the pre-exilic prophets, before the Babylonian exile; then came the post-exilic prophets; and then came John and his disciples.

*The climax*

The climax of the parable is reached when the landowner sends his son expecting the vine-growers to respect him.

How do the vine-growers respond to this?

They kill the son assuming that they will end up being not merely the vine-growers, but the actual owners of the property.

*The main point*

And what is the main point Jesus is making with the parable?

He is telling them that the Jewish leaders, whom God set over the house of Israel, have killed the prophets who were sent to them; and now they will kill the Son also.

*The question*

Then He follows through with a question?

Read His question and their answer in verses 40 and 41 of Matthew's account.

Thus the priests and elders pronounce their own judgment, which He will repeat to them!

### *The chief cornerstone*

But first He takes them to the messianic Psalm 118 and quotes verses 21 – 23.

Read it in verse 42.

*'THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone'.*

And what is the point He is making?

The point is this: They have rejected the messianic stone, but that same stone will someday become the head of the corner. Not only will many individuals believe in the Messiah whom they have rejected, but the day will come when all Israel will believe!

### *Judgement*

Then He makes application of the judgment which the leaders themselves have already pronounced upon the vine-growers in the parable.

Read verse 43 of Matthew's account.

Notice that Matthew is the only gospel writer to include this statement. Matthew, of course, is writing to a Jewish audience. And for them it is particularly relevant. But it is not so relevant for the Gentile audiences of Mark and Luke.

*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it.*

*given to a people, producing the fruit of it*

Now two important questions here are:

- i. From whom has the kingdom been taken?
- ii. And to whom will it be given?

Some interpret this to mean that the kingdom of God was taken away from Israel and given to the church. That is the unanimous view among replacement theologians. And it is a view among some dispensationalists.

But a second view, and the one more likely intended by Jesus, is that the kingdom of God has been taken away from the Pharisees and that generation of Israel which rejected it to be re-offered to a future Jewish generation that will accept it.

The Greek word translated people here is *ethnos*, meaning a nation or people or race, a description that is not applied to the church.

And He is talking to the Pharisees and elders, saying, *the kingdom of God will be taken away from you.*

To repeat: the kingdom of God has been taken away from the Jewish leaders of that day and from that generation to be reoffered to a future Jewish generation that will accept it.

*This stone*

That's the application for the nation. But there is also an application for individual Jews.

Read verse 44.

<sup>44</sup>*“And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”*

Who is *this stone*?

The stone is the Messiah. (compare with Isaiah 8:13-14.)

On the one hand, because they refused to accept Him as the Messiah, they stumbled over the stone. And as a result of their stumbling they will be broken to pieces.

But on the other hand, because of their continuous unbelief, eventually the stone will arise and fall upon them. And the result is they will be scattered like dust.

*Response*

How did they respond to this?

Read verses 45 – 46.

First, notice that *they understood that He was speaking about them*.

So the parable is addressed in not so much to Israel as a whole but to these Pharisees and elders in particular. They understood this.

The kingdom is not taken away from Israel. It is taken away from the Jewish leaders of that generation. And it is destined to be re-offered to a future Jewish generation which we will see again when we deal with section 144.

### (3) The Parable of the Wedding, Matthew 22:1-14

Then comes the third parable, the parable of the wedding, where the main idea is that those who were invited will not partake of the marriage feast, but others will.

Read Matthew 22:1 – 14.

*Invited guests*

In those days the wedding ceremony was followed by a seven day wedding feast. And the invitation was already sent out to those that would be part of the wedding feast. Once the wedding feast was ready servants would go out to let the invited people know that they can now come.

When this king has prepared his wedding feast and he sends out his servants to call those who were invited to come, they simply made excuses. And some mistreated and killed his servants.

Who do the invited guests represent? This generation of Israel who have rejected Him.

And how did the king respond to this rejection?

There were basically two responses of the king.

### *Judgement*

The first response is in verse 7: *the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire.*

And this is exactly what would now happen to this generation and the city of Jerusalem in AD 70.

In verse 8 He says, *those who were invited were not worthy.* That was this generation. They are not worthy to come.

### *Other invitees*

Therefore the king makes his second response: he now sends out his slaves to invite others to the wedding feast which is already prepared.

Who are these ones who are now invited?

Anyone who will come, both Jew and Gentile.

Here verse 9 they are described as coming from *the main highways*, which may emphasise the Gentiles. In section 115 (Luke 14:15-24), when Jesus was dining in a Pharisees house and told this same parable, the king sent out his servants twice: first into the streets and lanes of the city, and then into the highways.

First of all they go around the streets of the city. The people found there are the Jewish people outside the leadership who came to repentance and came to faith. Secondly they also went out to the byways and the highways and these would be the Gentiles who also participate in the wedding feast.

But His main point is that those who were invited, that generation of Israel, will not be found at the wedding feast because they rejected the invitation. And the wedding feast will be celebrated by all those who accept the king's invitation to come.

### *Wedding garments*

Now verses 11-13 raise another question. The king saw a man without wedding clothes and he threw him out.

And the question is: why would he throw him out? Perhaps he couldn't afford a wedding garment.

But in the context of that day the host provided the wedding garments for the guests to wear at the feast.

So, if this man was not dressed in wedding clothes, it was because he chose not to accept what was offered to him.

And consequently he goes out to the place of outer darkness. I'll say more about the outer darkness when we get to the Olivet Discourse later on.

## **2. By Pharisees and Herodians, § 138, Mark 12:13-17; Matthew 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26**

The priests and elders confronted Him with a question concerning the source of His authority.

Now the Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Him with a question of politics.

Pharisees and Herodians were on opposite ends of the political spectrum. The Pharisees were opposed to Roman rule of any form. But the Herodians were willing to accept Roman rule if it came through the house of Herod. And so Herodians supported Roman rule through the house of Herod; the Pharisees were opposed to it.

Because these two groups were on opposite ends of the political spectrum, they were able to formulate a question such that whichever way Jesus answers He could be accused either by one or the other.

**a. *The Attack, Mark 12:13-15a; Matthew 22:15-17; Luke 20:20-22***

Read Matthew 22:15 – 17.

The question they raise is whether it is lawful to give taxes to Caesar or not.

How would this trap Him?

The Pharisees taught that those who pay tribute to Caesar own Caesar as king, and to accept Caesar as king is to reject Jehovah as king.

Now obviously they had to pay tribute. They had no choice. But they would pay it indirectly to show that they were being forced to do something they considered illegal.

So if He says it is legal to pay taxes then He could arouse the anger of the people, and more significantly at this point in Jewish history, the anger of the Zealots who would kill people who supported Rome in any form.

On the other hand, if He said no, then they could accuse Him before the Roman governors since telling people not to pay tribute happens to be an act of rebellion against Rome.

Thus they sought to trap Him.

**b. *The Answer, Mark 12:15b-17; Matthew 22:18-22; Luke 20:23-26***

Now Jesus knows they are trying to entrap Him.

Read His response in Matthew 22:18 – 21.

*The coin*

He says, “*Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.*” Not just any kind of coin, but the coin used for the tribute money.

Why that particular coin, what was significant about it?

Notice that *they brought Him a denarius*. They didn’t have one with them to give Him. So they had to go and find one and bring it to Him.

Nobody would carry that kind of coin because it would have the image of Caesar on it.

Furthermore they could not put that kind of coin in the temple treasury, because they could not have images of people or animals on coins for the temple treasury. And that is why they had the money changers to exchange Roman coinage for temple currency that could be used to pay the half shekel tax and make the offerings.

*The principle*

Then He asked them, *“Whose likeness and inscription is this?”* And they said to Him, *“Caesar’s.”*

Then He laid down the principle in verse 17: *Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*

And what is the general principle here?

The principle is that there is a delegated authority as well as an absolute authority.

Absolute authority lies with God and He determines who rules over whom, when, and where. As Daniel says, He raises up kings, He puts down kings, He even has the basest of men to sit upon thrones. And all human governments, including Caesar’s, only have delegated authority.

So because God delegates authority to governments, paying taxes, even to Caesar, does not mean rejection of God’s authority. Actually it means submission to God’s authority!

*Silenced!*

So they were unable to trap Him as Luke points out.

Read Luke 20:26 as well as Matthew 22:22.

And what is their response?

*They were amazed at His answer, they became silent, and leaving Him and went away.*

### **3. By Sadducees, § 139, Mark 12:18–27; Matthew 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40**

#### **a. *The Attack, Mark 12:18-23; Matthew 22:23-28; Luke 20:27-33***

We have seen Jesus tested with a question of authority and a question of politics.

The next question is a theological one and it comes from the Sadducees.

Read Matthew 22:23 – 28.

One of the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerned their view of the resurrection. The Pharisees did believe in a future resurrection when the Messiah came. But the Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection. (And that’s why they were sad, you see!)

And the Sadducees always liked to ask the Pharisees trick questions to make them look stupid, and often succeeded. Now they try one of these trick questions on Jesus.

#### **b. *The Answer, Mark 12:24-27, Matthew 22:29-33; Luke 20:34-40***

*The reason for their problem*

He begins His answer by pointing out to them the reason for their problem.

Read Mark 12:24.

*Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?”*

He then proceeds to answer their question by reference to both the power of God and the Scriptures.

### *Scriptures not quoted*

But when He refers to the Scriptures notice what He does not do. There are three passages from the Old Testament that clearly teach resurrection, but which He does not quote. He does not quote Daniel 12:2. He does not quote Isaiah 26:19. He doesn't quote Job 19:25-26.

Daniel 12:2 (NASB95)

<sup>2</sup> *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.*

Isaiah 26:19 (NASB95)

<sup>19</sup> *Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.*

Job 19:25–26 (NASB95)

<sup>25</sup> *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. <sup>26</sup> "Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;*

And there is a good reason why He does not quote from these passages.

Another difference between Pharisees and Sadducees was this. The Pharisees believed you can derive doctrine from any part of Scripture, be it the Law, the Prophets, or the Writings. The Sadducees said, no, you cannot do that. Every doctrine must have its origin in the five books of Moses. You can use the Prophets and the Writings to illustrate doctrine, but the origin of every doctrine must come from the five books of Moses.

They saw no indication of anything being taught about resurrection in the five books of Moses, and chose not to believe in it.

Therefore to quote from Isaiah or Daniel or Job, while that was authoritative for the Pharisees, simply would not be authoritative for the Sadducees.

And so He had to find some other way to prove it.

### *Proofs of resurrection*

He points out three things to them.

- 1) He begins by referring to the power of God.

Read Luke 29:34 – 36.

The resurrection is not merely a reawakening. The final resurrection is a transformation where the body changes from one type to another. And *they cannot even die any more.*

As Paul will later tell us it changes from mortality to immortality, from corruption to incorruption. And the new body does not reproduce itself.

And the answer to their question is: she won't be married to anybody; there won't be any marriage relationships in heaven in the glorified state. He says they will be like the angels in heaven, *being sons of the resurrection.*

This says nothing about angels on earth who are fallen. But angels in heaven don't marry and are not given in marriage. And humans in heaven won't marry or be given in marriage, though here on earth we obviously do.

- 2) Secondly he quotes Exodus 3:6, the second book of Moses.

Read Mark 12:26.

*Abrahamic covenant*

Why does He quote this to them?

*'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'.*

This was the Old Testament terminology for the Abrahamic covenant. Today we have simplified our terminology and we say, "the Abrahamic covenant", but in the Bible it is a sentence as it is here: the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

So, by quoting this passage, He is referring them to the Abrahamic covenant.

But where in the Abrahamic covenant is there a promise of resurrection?

*The principle*

The promise is found in a very simple principle. If God makes a promise to an individual, and that individual dies before the promise is fulfilled, then God is obligated to raise that person back to life because every promise of God must be fulfilled, and furthermore it must be fulfilled to the one to whom the promise was made.

*An illustration*

That's a point that replacement theology misses so much!

If you have two sons and you promise your first son a bicycle, and you go and buy the bicycle and give it to your second son, you haven't fulfilled your promise because you made the promise to your first son.

Whatever else you want to do for your second son, the promise to your first son must still be fulfilled.

And whatever extra blessings He may have for the church, and there are quite a few, they cannot nullify the promises made to Israel.

*Abraham*

Now read Hebrews 11:17-19.

*<sup>17</sup> By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; <sup>18</sup> it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." <sup>19</sup> He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.*

Here we see that this principle was in Abraham's mind when he was so willing to plunge the knife into Isaac's throat.

But God didn't say anything about a resurrection to him, so how did Abraham know that?

By the time he was asked to offer up Isaac he had learned that the God he worshiped was a promise keeping God, a covenant keeping God. And by that time God had made certain promises about Isaac that were not yet fulfilled. Therefore Abraham knew that if he killed Isaac God would raise him back to life.

#### *Promises to Abraham, Isaac , and Jacob*

So what did God promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

There are many, but one promise is particularly relevant to Jesus' argument.

And to all three men He said the same thing: "to you and to your seed I will give this land." Not only to your descendants will I give this land. To all three men He said, "To you and to your seed I will give this land."

When those three men died how much of the land did they own?

One burial cave they had to pay good money for, one plot of land in Shechem they had to pay good money for, and several wells. That was the extent of their real estate holdings.

And so how would God ever keep His promises to the patriarchs?

They died without ever having much of anything. Therefore He must raise them back to life!

And we saw earlier in the gospels (Matthew 8:11 in section 55) that Jesus said people will come from all directions into the land in the kingdom and they will fellowship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In that day they will be in the land promised to them, finally enjoying it.

#### *Summary*

So contained in the unfulfilled promises made to the patriarchs is the promise of resurrection, because every promise of God must be fulfilled to the one to whom it was made.

And this promise was made to the patriarchs. So it will be fulfilled to the patriarchs.

And that is where the resurrection can be seen in the Abrahamic covenant.

3) And His third point brings them back to the power of God.

Read Luke 20:38.

God has a living relationship with the patriarchs, and therefore He cannot leave them dead. The present living relationship is with the souls and spirits of these men. The body is currently dead, but it is necessary for the body to be brought back to life.

#### *Results*

There are three results of this encounter.

Read Matthew 22:33 and Luke 20:39 – 40.

- 1) The people are astonished at what He is saying. It is a new interpretation of Exodus 3:6 which they had not understood before. (Matthew 22:33)
- 2) Secondly, even the Pharisees (scribes) were a bit impressed because it gave them new ammunition against the Sadducees. (Luke 20:39)
- 3) And thirdly the Sadducees were now silenced. There will be no more questions coming from them. (Luke 20:40)

#### 4. By Pharisees, § 140, Mark 12:28-34; Matthew 22:34-40

##### a. *The Attack, Mark 12:28; Matthew 22:34-36*

Read Matthew 22:3 – 36.

This is the fourth attack, and again it is a question of theology.

Mark identifies the questioner as a scribe. The scribes were the ones who had all of these laws memorised.

And Matthew records that it was a lawyer, and the lawyers were experts in these laws.

And the question that he raises is: what is the most important commandment?

##### b. *The Answer, Mark 12:29-34; Matthew 22:37-40*

*The answer*

Read Jesus' answer in Matthew 22:37 – 40.

Jesus answers the question beyond what was asked. He gives them the first most important commandment, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5: You must love God with your whole being.

And then He gives them the second most important commandment, found in Leviticus 19:18, which is to love your neighbour as yourself.

Of the 613 commandments in the Mosaic Law these were the two most important ones. And notice these two are not among the Ten Commandments. Two of the most important commandments are not found among the ten! That is why we shouldn't separate the ten from the others. They are all part of the Mosaic Law.

Why are these two commandments the two greatest commandments?

All the commandments deal with either human relationship to God, or human relationships among humanity.

If we love God with our whole being we will naturally keep all the commandments concerning our relationship to Him.

If we love our neighbour as ourselves we will naturally keep the commandments applicable to human relationships.

And therefore *on these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.* (Matthew 22:40)

*The outcome*

Now read the lawyer's reply, and the outcome of this challenge in Mark 12:32 – 34.

What was the outcome?

On this issue the Pharisaic lawyer did agree. And Jesus *said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God"*.

And now the Pharisees have also been silenced.

*After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.*

## G. The Challenge by the King, § 141, Mark 12:35–37; Matthew 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–44

It is still Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

They have attacked Him four times and four times He has answered them. They didn't provide any evidence to discredit Him before the people or to take Him before the Romans.

*Jesus' question*

Now He has a question for them.

Read Matthew 22:41 – 46.

In verse 41 we see that He addressed this question to the Pharisees.

He begins by asking them, "whose son is the Messiah supposed to be?" And they answered correctly, "*the son of David.*"

Then comes the tricky part of the question.

*He \*said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET" ' ? If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"*

If the Messiah is the son of David, then how come David calls Him Lord in Psalm 110:1? A father does not call his son Lord.

*Answer*

How would you answer this?

The answer lies in the one thing about the Messiah that the Pharisees did not understand: They didn't understand that Messiah would be the God-man.

As to His humanity, He is the son of David.

As to His deity, He is the Lord of David.

But that was foreign to their thinking, and they were therefore unable to answer His question.

*The Lamb without spot or blemish*

And now the Pharisees are further silenced.

So this period of testing of the lamb has shown Him to be the Lamb without spot and without blemish.

Their attempt to find a basis for execution so far has failed.

## H. The Judgment by the King, § 142, Mark 12:38–40; Matthew 23:1–39; Luke 20:45–47

Now we come to section 142: The Judgement by the King in which He denounces the leaders of Israel.

Chapter 23 of Matthew is the most detailed of the three accounts, mainly because he traces the consequences of the unpardonable sin more than Mark, Luke, and John do.

This whole chapter has one theme and that is the formal rejection and public condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees, the leadership of Israel of that day.

And this lengthy denunciation marks the close of His public ministry exactly three years after it began. It began and finished at the time of the Passover.

It is still Tuesday of the last week, the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

We can divide this chapter into three parts.

### 1. To the Disciples and Multitudes, Matthew. 23:1-12

In the first part He speaks to the disciples and the multitudes about the Pharisees, and He will say five things about them.

#### 1) *Seat of Moses*

Read His first point in Matthew 23:1-3.

Is there a problem here: has Jesus just contradicted Himself?

He says, *all that [the Pharisees] tell you, do and observe.*

During His ministry we have seen Jesus consistently disobeying the religious laws of the Pharisees. Is He now admonishing His disciples and the crowd to obey them?

This statement has been misinterpreted by many, including some in the Messianic movement.

And the issue is that Jesus appears to say that we have to do what the rabbis tell us to do. Well the rabbis would tell you to quit believing in Jesus. Then what do you do? Unfortunately some Messianic Jews have renounced their faith using this same logic.

How can we solve this problem? Is He really teaching them to obey the laws of the Pharisees?

*Answer*

Once again the answer lies in better understanding the context.

Notice the word, *therefore*, at the beginning of verse 3:

*therefore all that they tell you, do and observe.*

Why are they to do all that the Pharisees tell them?

Because the Pharisees *have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.*



Here is a picture of a stone seat that was discovered in a synagogue of Chorazin, and there are Hebrew inscriptions on this seat and the Hebrew says "The seat of Moses".

And what is the significance of Moses' Seat?

Understanding its importance is the key to understanding what Jesus means here.

And it has to do with the application of case law in a civil court, not a religious one.

The seat of Moses is the place where two litigants would come together before a judge who would decide their case. And whatever the judge said was the final verdict. There was no further appeal, and they must go ahead and fulfill whatever the judge said.

So what Jesus is saying to them is this:

In matters of civil law, because of their position, they are to be respected and obeyed.

But in matters of righteousness, do not follow their example because they say one thing and do another. They are hypocrites.

## 2) *Heavy burdens*

Now read His second point in verse 4.

What are the heavy burdens that they put on men's shoulders?

They are guilty of making the Mishnah a burden upon others while they find ways to get around it.

## 3) *Self-seeking and self-righteous*

Read verses 5-7.

How would you describe these people?

They are self-seeking and self-righteous.

When they do obey the Mosaic Law, they are not being motivated to obey these laws based upon the love of God which is the only true motivation for being obedient. They are being obedient only for the sake of being seen by other men, so that others will see how spiritual they are.

*they broaden their phylacteries*

What does He mean when He says *they broaden their phylacteries*?

Phylacteries are small black boxes, and to this day orthodox Jews, in their morning prayers, tie one around the forehead, and they tie one around their left hand if they are right-handed and around their right hand if they are left-handed. This is in obedience to Deuteronomy 6:8.

Inside the box are three passages of Scripture: Exodus 12:2-16 (Abrahamic covenant); Deuteronomy 6:4-9, (the famous "Hear, O Israel!" passage); and Deuteronomy 11:13-21 (blessings for obedience).

Now this was the right thing to do, but they made these boxes unusually large just to be seen of others.

*They lengthen the tassels*

In verse five He also mentioned that *they lengthen the tassels of their garments*.

This refers to the tassels that all orthodox Jews wear on the corners of their garments. And this too is in keeping with a divine commandment found in Deuteronomy 22:12.

It was the right thing to do, but they made them unusually long just to be seen of others.

*Motivation*

What is motivating these Pharisees?

Jesus points out in verse 5 that they do these things *to be noticed by men*.

And, as He explained in the Sermon on the Mount, because they are motivated only to be seen by others, that is the only reward they will get. There will be no reward coming from heaven.

4) *Man-exulting titles*

Read verses 8-12.

What is the issue here?

They are guilty of desiring man-exulting titles.

He points out they love to be called rabbi, teacher, father, master.

These were not merely titles used for positions of authority. If that's all they were they would not be a problem.

But in Pharisaism, having these titles gave the person with the title a lot of authority over a disciple, far more authority than the Bible would allow one person to have over another.

In fact the rabbi was supposed to be the most important person in your life. The rabbinic writings say that if both your parent and your rabbi are taken into captivity and offered up for ransom, you must first work to ransom the rabbi. Then you can ransom your parent.

But those who believe in the Messiah must be characterised by the opposite tendencies, humbling themselves.

5) *They prostitute their religion*

And His fifth point is found only in Luke's & Mark's accounts.

Read Mark 12:40.

How did they *devour widows' houses*?

First of all, in the Mosaic Law the widows were to receive special protection.

Therefore no Pharisee would foreclose on the home of a widow (seize the home of a widow who was unable to repay her loan) until he first prayed about it. Then having prayed about it he would go ahead and do it anyway.

They used these prayers to hide their covetousness. Their prayers were only a means to increase their wealth, and so they were guilty of prostituting their religion.

These are five things He says about the Pharisees to the disciples and to the crowds who were listening.

## 2. To the Pharisees, Matthew. 23:13-36

Then, in the second part of the passage, He goes on to address the Pharisees directly.

And He pronounces seven woes upon the them. And six of them begin with the same words:

*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*

So He will point out to them various aspects of their hypocrisy.

1) *They keep Jews from the Kingdom*

Read the first woe in Mathew 23:13.

Why does He call them hypocrites?

*Because [they] shut off the kingdom of heaven from people.*

And how do they *shut off the kingdom of heaven from people*?

He gives two reasons:

- i. First of all they do not enter in themselves, because they are rejecting His Messianic claims.
- ii. And secondly, they prevent others from entering in by leading the nation to reject Him as well.

And why is this hypocritical?

Because, while they profess to be entering into the Kingdom themselves and to be bringing others into the kingdom with them, they are, in fact doing the opposite. They are keeping people, especially Jewish people, out of the Kingdom.

This is the reason for the first woe.

## 2) *They keep Gentiles from the Kingdom*

Read the second woe in verse 15.

What reason does He give here for their hypocrisy?

They are zealous to make proselytes of the Gentiles. But, professing to bring them into the Kingdom, they are actually bringing them into even greater bondage in the kingdom of darkness.

And that bondage was expressed in their legalism. The converts to Pharisaism were often more zealous in their legalism than the Pharisees themselves.

This is the reason for the second woe.

*Comparison of first two woes*

Now compare the first and second woes. What do you notice?

In the first woe they are condemned for hindering those who are entering the kingdom.

In the second woe they are condemned for going out to bring yet others into bondage.

## 3) *Inverted priorities*

Read the third woe in verses 16-22.

What is the primary issue here?

Jesus points it out with the question He asks and repeats.

With each example He asks the same question: *which is more important*, the sanctified or the sanctifier.

And so, while we might simply condemn their deception, Jesus condemns them because they gave priority to the sanctified over the sanctifier.

The first example, in rabbinic theology: If you swear by the temple you don't have to keep your oath, but if you swear by the gold in the temple you do have to keep your oath. But what makes this gold so special? As to its makeup it is not different from gold found elsewhere in the world. What makes this gold special was where it was placed – in the holy temple. The temple sanctifies the gold, not vice versa. But here they switch the priorities.

The second example is: If you swear by the altar then you don't have to keep your oath, but if you swear by the sacrifice on the altar you then have to keep your oath. But what makes the dead body of that animal special? As to its makeup it is not different from any other dead body of the same kind of animal elsewhere in the world. What made it special was where it was placed – upon the holy altar. The altar sanctifies the gift, not vice versa.

And by means of swearing these kinds of oaths, they give priority to the sanctified, instead of giving it to the sanctifier.

This is the basis for the third woe.

#### 4) *Majoring on minor points*

Now read the fourth woe in verses 23 & 24.

Why are they condemned here?

For dwelling on the minor points of the Law while ignoring the major points of the Law.

He says they *tithe mint and dill and cummin*. These were three of the smallest seeds known in Israel of the first century. They were careful to tithe even of the smallest seed.

This was not the wrong thing to do, because He says *these things you ought to have done*.

The problem is that they ignored the more important aspects of the Law, such as justice, and mercy, and faith.

And so they dwelt on the minor points of the Law while ignoring the major points of the Law.

This is the reason for the fourth woe.

#### 5) *External behaviour without internal righteousness*

Read the fifth woe in verses 25-26.

What is the issue this time?

They concern themselves with the demands of the Law on their external behaviour while ignoring the demands of the Law on their internal being.

They concerned themselves with washing their hands, but not with cleansing their hearts.

He compares them to those who, after eating, wash the outside of the cup and bowl leaving the inside dirty. But on the inside they will eat again and the old food will corrupt the new food.

What is the only way they can be clean on the outside?

By first cleaning the inside!

*Blind*

Now notice how many times He calls the *blind*.

Within the third, fourth, and fifth woes, five times He calls them blind – five times!

a. First of all in verse 16, *you blind guides*.

They are blind guides because multitudes followed their practices. And their followers thought they were being led into life without realising that they were being led by spiritually blind guides.

b. Verse 17, *You fools and blind men!*

c. Verse 19, *you blind men*.

d. Verse 24, *you blind guides*.

e. Verse 26, *you blind Pharisee*.

6) *Whitewashed tombs*

Read the sixth woe in verses 27-28.

What is this about?

This woe is because outwardly they appeared to be very spiritual and religious, but inwardly they are corrupt.

He compares them with whitewashed tombs.

And to this day in Israel all tombs receive a fresh white coat of paint. The purpose of that has to do with anyone from the tribe of Levi. A Levite could not walk over a grave or come into contact with a tomb. So as the Levites are walking down the road, to be sure these tombs are very visible to them, every year they get a fresh coat of white paint.

So, on the outside they look white and fresh and clean, but nothing inside has changed. They are still full of unclean, corrupting, dead men's bones.

All of their religious practices and thousands of new rules gave the appearance of how religious they are. But that changes nothing in the internal man. It is still corrupt!

7) *The blood of all the prophets*

Now we come to the seventh woe.

Read verses 29-33.

What were the Pharisees claiming about themselves?

The Pharisees claimed to honour the prophets by building their tombs and decorating their monuments.

And they deny any responsibility or support for the actions of their forefathers.

How does this highlight their hypocrisy?

The prophets told of the Messiah and His coming.

And everything that the prophets were going to say about the coming of the Messiah had by that time been said. The Old Testament canon had already been closed for about four and a half centuries.

Furthermore, John the Baptist came as the forerunner announcing the soon coming of the King.

Jesus Himself proclaimed His Messiahship and authenticated it with miracles, signs and wonders.

Yet in spite of this they rejected His claims.

And to reject His Messiahship automatically means to reject the Old Testament prophets.

No one can claim, not even the orthodox Jew can claim, to believe the prophets and reject the Messiahship of Jesus. It's a package deal. To believe one is to believe the other. To reject one is to reject the other.

Consequently, by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah they have also rejected the prophets.

Therefore they are hypocrites.

While claiming to honour the prophets they have rejected them.

And thus they are *filling up the measure of the guilt of their fathers*.

*Therefore ...*

Jesus continues, *therefore ...*

What will be the consequence for them?

Read verses 34 – 36.

*Therefore*, because they have rejected the prophets and have rejected Him, He points out that they will be held responsible not only for rejecting His Messiahship, but also for the blood of all the Old Testament prophets.

Now one thing to keep in mind is that the order of the Bible that Jesus uses is the Jewish order and not the order we have today in the Christian Bible. The number of books in the Jewish Old Testament and in the Christian Old Testament is the same. But the order is not the same. The first book is, of course, the same – Genesis. The last book in the Jewish order is not Malachi, but Second Chronicles.

Now notice in verse 35 He names two men: Able, found in the first book, Genesis; and Zechariah, found in the book of Second Chronicles, the last book in the Jewish order.

And by naming these two men He says they will be accountable for everything from Genesis to Second Chronicles.

This was a Jewish figure of speech meaning the whole body of revealed written truth – much as we would say today: from Genesis to Revelation, our figure of speech today for the whole body of revealed written truth.

*This generation*

Now look at verse 36. *Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.* Note those two words yet again: *this generation*.

This generation, guilty of the unpardonable sin, would now be held accountable for the whole body of revealed written truth.

### **3. The Lament, Matthew. 23:37-39**

In the third part of this chapter He closes His public ministry with a lament.

*Three messages*

Read verses 37 – 38.

Here He summarises three messages to Israel. What are they?

#### **1. *His Rejection***

In verse 37, He often liked to spread His hands out and offer Israel the Messianic protection offered by the prophets. But He says *and you were unwilling* - when they rejected Him.

#### **2. *Their Desolation***

So in verse 38, their house is destined to lie desolate. It is destined to be destroyed forty years hence.

### 3. *His Return*

Now look at verse 39. Still addressing the Jewish leaders notice what He says.

*“For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”*

We have mentioned before that this is the official Messianic greeting. When the Messiah comes they will greet Him with these words.

And they would never say these words of Jesus unless they first accepted Him to be the Messianic King.

*The pre-condition*

And notice the words, *until you say*.

So, here Jesus is laying down the pre-condition to the second coming.

He won't return until the Jewish people accept Him to be the Messiah and ask Him to come back.

*Rapture and second coming*

One of the key differences between the timing of the rapture and the second coming lies right here.

Can you see it?

The rapture has no pre-conditions at all. It could happen at any moment in time. It could happen right now.

The second coming does have one key pre-condition, which is Israel's national salvation. Until the whole nation comes to faith there will be no second coming!

We will say more about this in our closing comments when we finish our course.

### *Three implications*

If we clearly understand the pre-condition to the second coming, then there are three other important things that we will also understand clearly.

Three things follow on from this pre-condition. Can you anticipate them?

#### 1) *Anti-Semitism*

First of all we will understand the Biblical foundations of anti-Semitism, and why Satan has always had this long war against the Jews, trying to destroy the Jews at every opportunity.

Satan knows that once Jesus comes back his career is over.

He also knows that Jesus will not come back until the Jews ask Him to come back. So, if he can succeed in wiping out the Jews before they have a chance to plead for Messiah's return, there will be no second coming, and Satan's career will be saved forever.

That is why there has always been this continuous war against the Jews since the days of Abraham. And that is why things like the crusades occurred. That is why the Russian pogroms occurred. That's why the Nazi holocaust occurred.

And that is why Revelation 12 says that once Satan is confined in the tribulation and knows his time is short, he expends all his energies to try to wipe out the Jews once and for all.

Anti-Semitism in any form, whether it is active or passive, whether it is ethnic, whether it is nationalistic, whether it is religious, whether it is economic, political, sociological, or theological, it is part of Satan's bandwagon to avoid the second coming.

#### 2) *The odious Name*

Secondly, we will understand why Satan has used one name more than any other name to persecute Jews.

And since the fourth century, 95% of all persecutions of the Jews were in Jesus' name, in the name of the church and the cross – ninety five percent!

Satan knows the name they have to call upon to bring Him back, so he has a strategy to make that name odious in the Jewish community. And it has become odious.

So in the Jewish community, when a Jew accepts Jesus, he is not merely changing what he believes, or his religion, or his faith. He is joining the people who are responsible for killing your parents, your brothers, your sisters, your cousins.

And this is part of the Satanic strategy to avoid the second coming.

### 3) *Jewish evangelism*

And that brings us to the third point – why it is important to be faithful in carrying out Jewish evangelism and Jewish missions.

Part of the ministry to the Jewish community is to distinguish the Jesus of Scripture from the Jesus of Jewish and church history, so that, in spite of all that faulty programming, they can finally come to see who the real Jesus is.

Sadly, in our day there are several evangelical groups that have all kinds of programs for Israel. All 'do good' programs. But they have a policy not to share the gospel with the Jews to avoid offending them.

And they say God told them to do this. God did not tell them to do that! The one thing Satan doesn't want the Jews to get is the gospel, and so they fall into Satan's trap. It is good to do nice things for Israel, but not at the cost of the gospel.

The proclamation of the gospel cannot be compromised under any circumstances. But that is what has taken place.

And so you should pick a Jewish ministry to support, and make sure that whatever else they may do on behalf of Israel and the Jewish people, they don't compromise on finding opportunities to share the gospel with Jewish people.

## I. Instruction at the Treasury, § 143, Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4

### *Location*

The area where He was teaching was near the treasury.

The treasury section had thirteen large offering boxes. Each box was for a specific need of either the temple or the people. And they could donate into any of those boxes.

### *Observation*

Read Mark 12:41 – 44.

What was Jesus observing?

And as He sat there He pointed out to His disciples how those who are wealthy were bringing a lot of money but it didn't really hurt their ability to spend. But there was a widow who put in two mites which was the absolute minimum allowed to be put in.

### *Implication*

What implications follow from this?

The wealthy could give a lot of money and didn't have to trust God to provide for them. But when she gave everything that she had, she had to trust the Lord that she would get to eat again, and to sleep under a roof again.

### *Illustration*

This observation illustrates the contrast between external righteousness and internal righteousness that He has just been teaching about in section 142.

Because of her internal righteousness before the Lord she was able externally to be willing to pay all that she has. The others were merely external with no internal changes.

### *Still Tuesday*

It is still Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

## VIII THE PREPARATION FOR THE DEATH OF THE KING, § 144-163

The previous division of the Messiah's life saw Him set apart as the Passover Lamb and tested by various groups until, as Matthew records,

*No one was able to answer Him a word,  
nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.*

Now the eighth main division of Jesus' life is the preparation for the death of the King.

Here we will see things such as:

His prophecies concerning both near and distant events,  
His last Passover meal,  
His promises and admonitions to His disciples, and  
His high priestly prayer.

It is still Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

### A. The Prophecies of the King, § 144, Mark 13:1-37; Matthew 24-25; Luke 21:5-38

Just as section 142 marked the end of Jesus' public ministry, so section 144 marks the end of His prophetic ministry.

It contains a very extensive prophecy with both near prophecies and distant prophecies.

And the subjects Jesus discusses here are covered far more extensively in Arnold's book "The Footsteps of the Messiah". But in this course we will stay close to the text in front of us.

#### 1. The Historical Setting, Mark 13:1-2; Matthew. 24:1-2; Luke 21:5-6

##### *Occasion*

What was the occasion for these prophecies?

Read Matthew 24:1 and Mark 13:1.

They are now leaving the temple compound for the last time.

And what are the disciples thinking about?

They point out to Jesus the buildings that made up the temple compound. And they especially focus on the stones that were used.

Why might they be focused on the buildings and the stones of the temple?

A little earlier that day, Jesus had said to Jerusalem: *Behold, your house is being left to you desolate!*

Perhaps they were contemplating the contrast between such destruction and the magnificence of these buildings.

And indeed, at this point of time in the land of Israel, the stones that were used were the largest stones for buildings ever known. A lot of them measured 10 to 12 feet and weighed several tons.

### *Temple construction project*

Actually, they were looking at buildings that were still under construction. Herod the Great began rebuilding the temple compound in the year 20 BC. And while the temple building itself was completed rather quickly because of its importance, the rest of the compound was still being built even as these words were spoken.

In fact, they would not be finished until the year 64 AD, about 84 years after the reconstruction began, and 6 years before it was all destroyed by the Romans.

### *Prophecy*

Jesus responds to them with a prophecy in keeping with what He has been saying since His rejection in section 61.

Read what He says in Matthew 24:2.

*Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.*

He prophesies a complete destruction of the entire temple compound area.

### *Fulfilment*

And how was this prophecy eventually fulfilled?

In the closing segments of the war in the year AD 70, against the order of Titus, a Roman soldier threw a torch into the first room of the building.

While the temple walls were overlaid with gold, the gold was overlaid with curtains and wall coverings. And as they caught fire they began to melt the gold and the liquid gold began to seep between the stones.

Later on, to reach the gold the Romans had to remove all the stones from on top of each other.

So there are no remains of any of the buildings of the temple compound.

### *Stones*

By the way, in case you are wondering, the western wall or the Wailing Wall is not the wall of a building. It was the wall that surrounded the temple compound.

The prophecy applied only to the buildings and not to the outer wall.

## **2. The Three Questions, Mark 13:3-4; Matthew. 24:3; Luke 21:7**

### *Bewilderment*

By now the disciples are quite puzzled about the establishment of the kingdom.

They believe Jesus is the Messiah, but the leaders of Israel have rejected Him.

So the kingdom cannot be established at this time.

Jesus has denounced those leaders, pronouncing woes upon them.

He says He will not return until Israel requests His return.

But how can that happen since Israel's leaders have rejected Him and He has denounced them.

He told them that Jerusalem will be left desolate.

And now He adds that not one stone of the temple will be left upon another.

And yet, when the kingdom is established, the Messiah will reign in Jerusalem.

#### *Questions*

And as they walked from the temple compound through the Kidron Valley and onto the Mount of Olives, this bewilderment leads them to formulate some questions.

Read all three gospel accounts, Mark 13:3 – 4; Matthew 24:3; Luke 21:7.

Notice in passing that Jesus is sitting down. This is the position of a rabbi, and He always taught in a sitting position.

And while Matthew simply says the disciples came to Him, Mark specifies that the questions came from four disciples, Peter, James, John, and Andrew.

### *Three questions*

Now what are their questions?

Notice especially how Matthew records them. He has three clauses, each referring to a different event.

- 1) *Tell us, when will these things happen?*

Which things?

The antecedent to these things is the prophecy of the preceding section, the destruction of Jerusalem.

*Tell us, when will Jerusalem be destroyed?*

- 2) *Secondly, what will be the sign of Your coming?*

What is the sign that the second coming is about to occur.

- 3) *And thirdly, of the end of the age?*

What is the sign that *the end of the age* has begun?

And what do they mean by *the end of the age*?

Remember that in the Jewish thinking of that day there were only two ages: the age in which we are now living; and the age to come. And the age to come is always the Messianic Kingdom.

So the point of the last question is: what is the sign that this age is about to end and the new age, the Messianic age is about to begin.

Now notice how Luke records the first question.

*Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?*

So each of their three questions is also a request for a sign.

### *The overall question*

What is the common thread that runs through all of these questions?

They are all aspects of one overarching question: When and how will the Messianic Kingdom come into being?

There will be a destruction of Jerusalem at the end of this age. Zechariah prophesied that Jerusalem will be captured and plundered before the Kingdom is established (Zechariah 14:2).

Obviously the Messiah must return before the Kingdom begins.

And the end of this age will precede the beginning of the next age, which is the Kingdom.

These are three events that will take place before the Kingdom is established.

So the basic purpose of their questions, and therefore the basic purpose of Jesus response is to answer the question:

When and how will the Messianic Kingdom come into being?

#### *Observations about the Olivet Discourse*

And He will answer all three of their questions, but not in the same order in which they were asked. He will answer them in the order 3, 1, 2: the end of the age, the destruction of Jerusalem, and His return.

Not all the gospel writers provide answers to all three questions.

It is Luke who focuses on the first question about the sign of Jerusalem's destruction. Remember that Jerusalem happens to be one of Luke's four main concerns, and therefore he would naturally focus on what Jesus said about Jerusalem.

Mark and Matthew both ignore Jesus' answer to the first question and focus on the second and third questions.

This section is called "the Olivet Discourse" because it takes place on the Mount of Olives.

In His answer, Jesus mostly follows a chronological order, and when He departs from that order, He indicates it in some way, as we will see.

### **3. The General Characteristics of the Church Age, Mark 13:5-7; Matthew. 24:4-6; Luke 21:8-9**

Now, to see how Jesus begins to answer their questions, read Matthew 24:4 – 6.

How do these statements address their questions?

A more literal translation of the end of verse 6 would be: *It is inevitable in the nature of things for this to happen, but that is not yet the end.*

In other words, He is telling them two things that are not signs of the end of the age. Rather, they are things that will be characteristic of the present age, which is the church age.

#### 1) *False Messiahs*

What is the first characteristic of the church age?

The rise of false messiahs.

Jesus Himself was the first person in Jewish history who claimed to be the Messiah.

After Him came a long line of false messiahs beginning in the year 132 AD with a man named Simon Bar Coseba who became known as Simon Bar Cochba, and continuing into the late 1800's with a man named Jacob Frank from Poland.

Between these two there were many false messiah's in Jewish history. The most famous one who had the largest following around the world was a man named Sabbetal Tzvi in the 1600s.

There were also false messiahs among the Gentiles from time to time, including Rev. Sun Yung Moon, who claimed to be the second coming of Jesus. He had a large following both in the east and the west and founded the Unification Church.

But no matter how many such movements there are, no matter how large they are, no matter how much attention they get, this will characterise the whole age.

It is not a sign of the last days.

## 2) *Rumours of wars*

And what is the second thing that will characterise the whole age?

*You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars.*

This refers to local wars, and a local war here or a local war there is not a sign of the last days.

People often assume that anything that happens in the Middle East must be significant in some way, and sometimes it is, but often it is not.

Some books came out trying to prove that the first gulf war fulfilled certain prophecies. But the Bible nowhere spoke of a war between the USA and Iraq. It was certainly significant politically, but not Biblically or prophetically.

So keep in mind that just because a war happens somewhere in the world or in the Middle East in particular, it is not a sign of the last days.

These are two characteristics of the present age.

There will be false messiahs, and there will be both wars and rumors of wars, but these are the inevitable result of the nature of the age, and they do not indicate that the end of the age is near.

Rather, these common characteristics of the age form the background against which He will contrast the sign that the end of the age is near.

## 4. **The Sign of the End of the Age, Mark 13:8; Matthew. 24:7-8; Luke 21:10-11**

Read Matthew verses 7 – 8.

And what is the sign that the end of the age is near?

*Hebrew idiom*

The key to understanding what Jesus is talking about is to find out the meaning of the Hebrew idiom, *nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.*

Taken in the Jewish context of the time when it was spoken, this is an idiom referring to total conflict in the area under consideration.

### *Old Testament Usage*

We can find examples of its use in two Old Testament passages.

Turn to Isaiah 19:1 – 4.

<sup>1</sup> *The oracle concerning Egypt. Behold, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt; The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.* <sup>2</sup> *“So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians; And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor, City against city and kingdom against kingdom.* <sup>3</sup> *“Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them; And I will confound their strategy, So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead And to mediums and spiritists.* <sup>4</sup> *“Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master, And a mighty king will rule over them,” declares the Lord God of hosts.*

What is the area in view in this context?

In this passage the land of Egypt is in view and the idiom refers to a conflict all over the land of Egypt.

Now look at 2 Chronicles 15:1-7.

<sup>1</sup> *Now the Spirit of God came on Azariah the son of Oded,* <sup>2</sup> *and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Listen to me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.* <sup>3</sup> *“For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law.* <sup>4</sup> *“But in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him.* <sup>5</sup> *“In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands.* <sup>6</sup> *“Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress.* <sup>7</sup> *“But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work.”*

What area is in view here?

This time it is the Middle East that is in view, and the idiom refers to conflict all over the Middle East.

So the phrase is used of a total conflict in the area that is in focus in the context: for Isaiah that is Egypt; and for 2 Chronicles it is the Middle East.

### *Jesus’ usage*

What area does Jesus have in view as He is speaking?

In the Olivet Discourse the whole world is in view.

This is clear both from the nature of the question He is answering, and from other references to the world later in the context. In Matthew’s gospel the world is mentioned in verses 14, 21, 30, 31, & 35. In Mark’s gospel: verses 27, & 31. In Luke’s gospel: verses 26, 33, & 35.

### *Usage in Jesus' day*

In the literature of Jesus' day the expression, *nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*, was a Jewish idiom for a world war preceding the coming of the Messiah.

One Jewish source known as the Bereshit Rabbah states:

*If you shall see the kingdoms rising against each other in turn, [kingdom against kingdom and nation against nation], then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah (XLII:4).*

The word "footsteps" here refers to a series of all the events that will bring about the coming of the Messiah. In Judaism this would be the only coming of the Messiah.

Another Jewish source known as the *Zohar Chadash* states:

*At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world. Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites.*

### *Jesus' answer to the third question*

As we have already noted, it is clear that Jesus has the whole world in view, and so He is talking about a world-wide conflict.

And that stands in contrast to the wars and rumors of wars He has just mentioned as being normal for this present age. When you see a world war in contrast to local wars, that is the sign that the last days have begun.

### *Beginning of birth pangs*

Now what is He saying about birth pangs?

He says, in verse 8, that *all these things*, the world war and the famines and earthquakes, *are merely the beginning of birth pangs*.

And how are birth pangs related to the end of this age and the coming of the kingdom?

The word translated *birth pangs* refers to the series of pains a woman experiences before giving birth to a baby.

In the last days of this age, there will be a series of birth pangs, or a series of events that will occur before the birth of the new Messianic Age.

And here Jesus focuses on *the beginning of birth pangs* or the very first birth pang.

So that answers the third question: what is the sign that the last days have begun?

When you see a world war in contrast to local wars.

### *Fulfilment*

I do agree with those who hold that we live in the last days, and I would begin the last days with the First World War in 1914-1918.

The Second World War was a continuation of the First World War. And both world wars had a very decisive impact on Jewish history. World War I gave impetus to the growth of the Zionist movement, and World War II led to the reestablishment of the Jewish State three years after the war ended.

The sign that the end of the age has begun is the worldwide conflict fulfilled by World War I and World War II.

And the beginning of birth pangs, the first in a series of events leading to the arrival of the Kingdom has already occurred.

## 5. The Personal Experiences of the Apostles, Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19

Now He has answered their third question, but before He moves on to the next question He has an important personal message for them.

Read it in Luke 21:12 – 19.

*When?*

Notice the timing He gives for what He describes here. When these persecutions will take place?

He says: *But before all these things ...*

So He is departing from His normal chronological flow of events to tell them what will happen before the last days of this age begin.

*What He tells them*

And altogether He tells them nine things.

Nine things that flow in a continuous thread of thought with a single astonishing theme.

See if you can pick it up as we look at the details He gives them.

What are the nine things He tells them here?

1. Verse 12 talks about their rejection and persecution.

Notice who is doing the persecution. There are actually two groups of persecutors here.

Those who bring them *to the synagogues* would be Jews.

So they will be rejected and persecuted by the Jewish community.

2. But the *kings and governors* would be Gentiles. And they will also be persecuted by the Gentiles.

3. Although they are being persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles, periods of persecution will provide them opportunities to testify. (verse 13)

4. The gospel will be proclaimed in spite of opposition. (Mark 13:10)

It will be proclaimed everywhere – to all nations.

This is a point that Paul confirms in Romans 10:8f and Colossians 1:6, 23. The gospel is proclaimed to all nations.

5. When they are brought before a court of law, whether it is a Jewish court of law or a Gentile court of law, they do not need to worry about how they will give their defense.

When the time comes they will be given divine utterance.

They will be able to speak and defend the faith and the others won't be able to withstand it. (14-15)

6. Not only will they be rejected by both Jewish and Gentile society, it gets more personal in Mark 13:12 & Luke 21:16.

They will be rejected by their families and friends. And some will be killed.

Of these eleven apostles who stay with Him, ten will die the death of a martyr. (16)

7. They will be hated by all. (17)

8. Now read Luke 21:18 again.

*Yet not a hair of your head will perish.*

What does He mean by this?

The Greek is quite emphatic: *Yet a hair of your head will by no means perish, or will certainly not perish.*

Now what does He mean by the word *perish*?

After His rejection, when He was telling them about the persecutions that would follow as a result, He used the same word when He said to them in Matthew 10:28 (in section 70).

Read it again.

<sup>28</sup> *“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Here the word is translated *destroy*.

It does not indicate extinction or annihilation, but only change from one state of being to another. God does not cause either soul or body to cease to exist in hell, but the state of being has certainly changed.

And what does He say that God is able to destroy in hell?

He *is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*. Both soul and body will be in hell, and with the body will be the hair on the head.

So when He now says to them, *Yet not a hair of your head will perish*, He is telling them that not even a hair of their heads will end up in hell.

In other words, their eternal salvation is secure.

And He is telling them exactly what He told them earlier, that they should not be afraid of those who are able to persecute them and kill them.

Their spiritual salvation is guaranteed and their eternal life is secure!

And consequently, although they will not see the end of this age, they will see the Kingdom when it comes.

9. And verse 19 is another verse that, at first sight, is difficult to understand.

Read Luke 21:19.

What does He mean by this?

The ASV translates it : *In your patience you shall win your souls.*

And the word, *gain* (NASB) or *win* (ASV) usually means to acquire or purchase with a price.

And if salvation is by grace and not by works, then obviously He is not telling them that they can gain their own souls by means of their patience.

And in fact, He has just reminded them that their own souls are eternally secure.

So it is more likely that He is telling them that, in spite of opposition coming from both Jews and Gentiles and from both family members and friends, they will win many souls to the Lord by their patient endurance.

#### *The thread of thought*

Now, step back to see the overall thread of thought so far.

This age will, because of its very essence, be characterised by the appearance of false messiahs and by both wars and rumours of wars.

But the end of the age will be preceded by a series of events, like birth pangs, and the first of these will be a world-wide conflict.

But they were not to expect the end of the age to come too soon.

#### *The apostles' personal future*

In fact, Jesus predicted that many of them would be martyred before the end of the age ever begins.

What they will see is persecution and imprisonment, and accusations before kings and governors.

They are to take courage for these things will provide opportunities for their testimony and the preaching of the gospel to all nations.

And they will be given what to say when they need it. No one will be able to refute them.

They will be betrayed by those closest to them, both family and friends. They will be hated because of His name, and some of them will be put to death.

Nevertheless their eternal life is secure, they will see the Kingdom, and they will win many souls for the Kingdom.

## **6. The Sign of the Fall of Jerusalem, Luke 21:20-24**

Then, as Luke records, He gives them the answer to their first question.

#### *The sign*

Read Luke 21:20

*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.*

This is the sign that the destruction of Jerusalem is near: *When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies.*

*Warning*

Read verses 21 – 22.

Then He gives a warning to Jewish believers living in a day which came between 66 and 70 AD.

What does He tell them to do?

They are not to take up swords to help defend the city. Rather, they are to find a way to abandon it. If they are outside the city, they are not to go in to help defend it. Those in the city must get out, and those outside of it must not go in.

And why is this?

*because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.*

Because to do otherwise would be to fight against the determined purposes of God as recorded in the written prophecies.

*Woe*

Read verses 23 – 24.

He points out at that *there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people.*

Who does He mean by *this people*?

*This people* here would be the Jewish people.

They will be killed with the sword, and dispersed as captives into all the nations.

### *The Times of the Gentiles*

And how long will Jerusalem be trampled under foot by the Gentiles?

*Until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

What is *the times of the Gentiles* referring to?

The Times of the Gentiles is the period of time where the Gentiles hold domination over the Jewish people.

It began with the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC when the last Davidic king sitting upon the throne was removed. There has not been a Davidic king sitting upon the throne since then.

The Times of the Gentiles will only end when once again a Davidic king is sitting upon the throne of David. And that will happen when the Messiah establishes His Kingdom.

### *Fulfilment*

How was the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction fulfilled?

The way the fulfillment came initially is this: In the year 66 AD the Roman army came and besieged the city of Jerusalem assuming they were only facing a local revolt.

And the Messianic community of Jerusalem took that to be the sign that Jesus was speaking about and they had to leave the city. But with the Romans sitting out there they could not do so.

But the general of the Romans, Cestus Gallus began to realize that the revolt was much more extensive and Jewish forces were cutting his supply lines. He was forced to lift the siege and returned to Caesarea.

And so temporarily the city was no longer under siege, and then the Messianic community took the opportunity to abandon the city. They were joined by Jewish believers from Judaea, from the Galilee, from the Golan. They went to a city called Pella just south of the sea of Galilee but on the other side of the river, and therefore outside of the war zone.

A total of 1,100,000 Jews were killed in the Roman war between 66 and 70 AD.

But not a single Jewish believer lost his life because of his obedience to these admonitions here.

### *Conclusion*

So with these words Jesus answered their first question, the sign of the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

Now He has answered their third question asking for the sign that the end of the age is near, and He has given them some personal instruction to the effect that they will not personally see this sign, and He has answered the first question asking for a sign that Jerusalem's destruction is about to take place.

## **7. The Great Tribulation, Mark 13:14-23; Matthew. 24:9-28**

Jesus has answered two of the disciples' questions – the sign that the end of the age is approaching, and the sign that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed. Now He begins to pave the way for the answer to their second question: what will be the sign of His coming?

a. *The First Half, Matthew 24:9-14*

Read Matthew 24:9 – 14.

This passage raises a number of questions for us.

First of all the events described here are similar to those we have just seen when He was explaining to the disciples what their own personal future would be, in Mark 13:9-13 and Luke 21:12-19.

And some commentators consider this passage to be dealing with the same things.

But similarity is not sameness. And the differences are significant.

*When?*

For instance, the gospel writers are actually quite specific about the different time periods they are describing.

What did Luke say about the time period he was describing?

In 21:12 he begins: *but before all these things*, clearly indicating that what he describes occurs before the first birth pang.

What does Matthew say about when these events occur?

He begins in verse 9 with the word, *Then*, pointing out that the Messiah is now describing what will come after the first birth pang found in verses 7 – 8.

And he emphasises this at the beginning of verse 10 by saying: *At that time*. At that time which comes after the first birth pang.

So Luke and Matthew clearly have different time periods in mind.

Here Matthew describes events in the first half of the Tribulation that will come some time after the sign of the First World War.

*Who?*

Now who is doing the killing and hating here?

At the end of verse 9 He says: *you will be hated by all nations because of My name*.

And the word for *nations*, to their Jewish ears, refers to the Gentile nations.

So the Gentile nations are delivering them to tribulation, killing them and hating them.

And who are they killing and hating?

The disciples? Jesus has already told them they won't live to see the first birth pang, and these events occur after the first birth pang.

While Gentile believers will also suffer at this time, I believe Jesus has the Jewish people in mind here, and specifically the Jewish people of the first half of the tribulation.

The reason for this is that His focus in verses 9 to 12 appears to be on the Jewish people. We will see this as we proceed.

*Because of My name*

Why will they be killed and hated by all nations?

Because of His name!

Why will Israel be hated and killed because of His name?

Because Satan knows his time is short. He knows that if the Jews survive until the end they will call on Jesus' name and He will come to them. So to achieve his purpose he must kill every Jew before they call on that name.

Will Gentile believers also suffer because of His name?

Yes, and for a related reason. Gentiles who believe in Jesus are able to influence Jewish people to call on His name. So they will also be subject to tribulation.

*What the Jews do to each other (verses 10 – 12)*

In verse 9 He describes what the Gentiles are doing to the Jews.

Then in verses 10 – 12 He describes what the Jews are doing to each other!

*Stumble (verse 10)*

Now look at verse 10.

What does He mean by saying: *many will fall away*?

The Greek word is **skandalízō** meaning figuratively to be a stumbling block to someone, to cause to stumble at or in something, to give a cause of offense to someone<sup>ii</sup>.

The ASV translates it better as: then shall many stumble.

Does that bring to mind other passages of Scripture?

Read Isaiah 8:14 – 15.

<sup>14</sup> *"Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> "Many will stumble over them, Then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught."*

For those Jews who believe, the Messiah will become a sanctuary. But for those who do not believe, He will be a rock to stumble over.

The apostle Peter quotes from Isaiah.

Read 1 Peter 2:6 – 8.

<sup>6</sup> *For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."* <sup>7</sup> *This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,"* <sup>8</sup> *and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.*

This same idea of the stone of stumbling is also found in Matthew 21:44; Luke 2:34; Romans 9:31; 1 Corinthians 1:23.

So the Jews will stumble because of their unbelief and disobedience. And as a result they will betray one another and hate one another.

#### *False prophets (verse 11)*

And also in verse 11, *many false prophets will arise and will mislead many*. This is also foreseen by Zechariah in Zechariah 13:2-6.

#### *Lawlessness*

What is lawlessness?

John writes in 1 John 3:4.

<sup>4</sup> *Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

And by implication, lawlessness is sin, iniquity, and unrighteousness. (Also see Romans 4:7)

#### *Multiplied (verse 12)*

In verse 12, Jesus says *lawlessness is increased*. And the verb means: To make full and hence to multiply or increase.

And the apostle Paul tells the Thessalonians that a time will come when evil will no longer be restrained (II Thessalonians 2:6-7).

<sup>6</sup> *And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.* <sup>7</sup> *For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.*

#### *Love grows cold*

So there will be a great increase in lawlessness, which implies an increase of sin, iniquity, and unrighteousness.

And the result will be that *most people's love will grow cold*.

*All Israel will be saved! (verse 13)*

Now read verse 13 again.

*But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.*

This is a puzzling verse. Is He proclaiming a salvation by works? How can we understand it?

*Saved*

First of all, what kind of salvation is He talking about?

The word translated, *will be saved*, is a word that is used both for physical salvation and for spiritual salvation.

But this sentence would be superfluous if it was speaking about physical salvation. If it is to say anything significant, it must be referring to spiritual salvation.

So it says that those who endure to the end will be saved and have eternal life, and they will be in the coming Kingdom.

*By works of endurance?*

Does this mean that they are saved by their work of endurance?

Not at all! Salvation is by grace alone, and not by works.

So why does He say, *the one who endures to the end, he will be saved?*

*Who?*

Of whom can it be said that if they endure to the end they will be saved?

There is only one group in all the world for whom this is true!

Read Zechariah 13:8 – 9.

<sup>8</sup> *“It will come about in all the land,” Declares the Lord, “That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it.*

<sup>9</sup> *“And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ And they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’ ”*

Those Jews who are still alive at the end of the Tribulation will be saved.

And they are saved, not because of their endurance, but because, at that time, right at the end of the tribulation, they will believe and call on His name!

### *Contrast*

Now notice Jesus begins this statement with the word, *but ...*

What is the contrast? How is this statement in contrast with what He has just said?

The contrast is actually astonishing!

He has just told them that Jews will be persecuted and hated and killed, many will stumble through unbelief and hate one another, and love will grow cold because lawlessness has increased.

Then He makes His contrast: *BUT*.

In spite of all the killing, at the very time when it might seem no longer possible, there will still be Jews alive at the end of the tribulation!

And in spite of the increase of lawlessness and the stumbling in unbelief, those who survive until the end will believe!

So, contrary to what appears to be happening, there will indeed be those who survive! And they will all believe and call on His name!

This is what Paul refers to in Romans 11:26, where he says: *all Israel will be saved!*

### *Gentiles (verse 14)*

Now we come to verse 14, and His focus shifts. Read it again.

*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

Who comes into focus now?

The Gentiles.

Before the end will come, all the Gentiles will hear the gospel of the kingdom. They will all know that this age is about to end and the kingdom is about to begin.

How will this be accomplished?

That is detailed in Revelation 7:1-8. The gospel will be proclaimed by the 144,000 Jews. And by means of the 144,000 Jews the gospel will be proclaimed throughout the world.

The results of the ministry of the 144,000 are recorded in Revelation 7:9-17, where it clearly states that *a great multitude* of Gentiles will come to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.

*Summary of the first half of the tribulation*

So to summarize.

Jesus is preparing to tell them about the sign of His second coming.

And He tells them what will happen to Israel, and to the Gentile nations during the first half of the tribulation.

Israel will be hated and killed by all the nations because of His name.

Many of them will stumble over Him because of their unbelief and disobedience.

Consequently they will betray each other and hate each other.

And false prophets will mislead them.

And their love will grow cold.

Nevertheless, there will be those who survive until the end. And they will all be saved!

And the good news of the kingdom will be preached to all the gentile nations.

And then the end will come.

**b. The Second Half, Mark 13:14-23; Matthew. 24:15-28**

Then notice how Matthew continues in the next section: *therefore ...*

Why-fore? Because of the certainty that, no matter how bad it gets, there will be those who endure to the end and are saved. No matter how dark it becomes, there is hope. *Therefore ...*

*Abomination of Desolation*

Read verse 15 of Matthew 24.

Having described the first half of the Tribulation, Jesus now describes the event that will mark the beginning of the second half.

*The Abomination of Desolation ... standing in the holy place.*

What is the *Abomination of Desolation*?

It will involve two stages.

Read II Thessalonians 2:3-4.

*<sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.*

The *first* stage will be when the Antichrist will take over the Jewish Temple, sit down in the Holy of Holies, and declare himself to be god, call upon the whole world to worship him as god and receive the mark of 666 to signify their acceptance of him as deity.

Read Revelation 13:11-15.

*<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. <sup>12</sup> He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. <sup>14</sup> And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. <sup>15</sup> And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

The *second* stage of the Abomination of Desolation (at the end of verse 14) will be when the False Prophet will make an image of the Antichrist and stand it up in the Holy of Holies (Revelation 13:11-15; Daniel 12:11).

And as Jesus says, Daniel the prophet speaks of this event. We see this in three passages.

Daniel 9:27

<sup>27</sup> *“And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*

Daniel 11:31

<sup>31</sup> *“Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.*

Daniel 12:11

<sup>11</sup> *“From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.*

This act of the Abomination of Desolation will signal that the second and worse half of the Tribulation has begun.

*When you see ... then ..., for then ..., then ...*

Now, before we move on to read the rest of this section, notice the structure in what He says.

We have already looked at His *therefore*, which links what He is now saying with what He has just said. Therefore, because no matter how dark it becomes there is hope in the certain knowledge that those who endure to the end will be saved.

Now notice the next word: *when*. Therefore when you see the Abomination of Desolation ...

So the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation marks a point in time.

Now also notice how He begins in verses 16, 21, and 23:

*then ..., for then ..., then ...*

Now Jesus describes three things that follow that point in time.

1) *Flee to the mountains*

Read the first in verses 16 – 20.

What must they do when they see of the Abomination of Desolation?

He says: *then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.*

So the Abomination of Desolation will be the signal for the Jews to flee out of the Land of Israel.

This flight is also recorded in Revelation 12:13-17, which you can read in your own time.

The present state of Israel will continue to exist in constant turmoil until the midpoint of the Tribulation. But mid-tribulation it will collapse and there will be one more forced exile from the land.

### *Speedily*

And what is the emphasis in verses 18 and 19?

The emphasis of this passage is a sense of urgency in Israel's flight. In fact, the whole emphasis is on speed and quickness. If you happen to be on the house-top, don't go down into the house to get any possessions. As soon as your foot touches the ground make your way out of the country. Or if you happen to be out in the field when you see this event occurring, don't go back to the living quarters to take so much as a coat. From the place you are ploughing, make your way out of the country.

At this point world-wide anti-Semitism will break out in full force and the satanic goal, described in Revelation 12, to annihilate all the Jews before they can call for the Messiah's return, begins in earnest.

### *Difficulties*

Then He points out three difficulties they will have in making a quick escape.

What are they?

- i. The first difficulty is for women who are pregnant or have infants.

In both cases, this makes quick flight difficult as any woman in that condition can certainly verify.

- ii. The second difficulty is in relation to the winter.

How would winter make it more difficult to flee?

#### *Rain season*

In America or Australia we have rain in all four seasons, but not so in Israel.

The rain season begins at the end of October. Rains will fall in November, December, January, & February, and begin to peter out in March and die out by mid-April.

So from mid-April to mid-October no rain falls.

#### *Wadis*

Another difference is in the way highways are built.

In America if a highway comes to a gully, even if it is a dry waterway, the American way is to build a bridge across it.

Not so in Israel, where the road is paved into the water gullies and up and out again. These water gullies are called wadis.

A wadi is dry all of summer.

But in the rainy season tons of water come down carrying lots of rock and debris often destroying these highways.

When the Jews have to flee the land they will have to flee to Petra by means of these wadis. And if it happens in the winter it will be much more dangerous.

*Modern example*

Just how dangerous it can be was emphasised some years ago when forty French tourists were walking down a wadi heading for an archaeological site.

It was not raining where they were walking, but it had been raining elsewhere. The waters came down and 38 of them drowned. Only two survived.

*So ...*

*So, ... pray that your flight will not be in the winter.*

- iii. The third difficulty is in relation to the Sabbath

How would the Sabbath cause them difficulty?

The Sabbath is a day when all public transportation closes down.

Unless you have an automobile that will make escape so much more difficult.

For these two reasons, they are advised to pray that this Abomination of Desolation, which will indeed come to pass, will not come on the Sabbath day or during the winter months, during the rainy season.

2) *There will be Great Tribulation*

Read verses 21 – 22.

Notice how He begins these two verses: *for then*.

And what follows is the reason why those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains when the Abomination of Desolation is set up in the temple.

And what is that reason?

The tribulation at that time will be greater than any other since the beginning of the world.

Satan's attempt to annihilate the Jews once and for all will have begun in earnest (as detailed in Revelation 12).

*How great?*

How great will that tribulation be?

Look at the emphatic statement in verse 22:

*Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved;  
but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

So great will that tribulation be that the very existence of the elect nation, Israel, is threatened.

And for that reason those days will be cut short, so that the Jewish people as a people, Israel, will survive this terrible period, though greatly reduced in number.

*1,260 days – cut short?*

What does He mean when He says:

*Unless those days had been cut short.*

People have taken this to mean that the Tribulation won't last exactly seven years, or the second half won't last exactly three and a half years.

But that would violate other passages that give us an exact time period of 1,260 days.

The wording here simply means "to be suddenly cut short".

*Those days*, the days of persecution, will be cut short at exactly 1,260 days. While they are in full swing, they will suddenly be stopped.

The period of persecution will not be allowed to continue one second beyond its allotted time. The allotted time is 1,260 days. Once that is reached it will be suddenly cut short and will not be allowed to continue even one second longer.

And that is why the Jews will survive.

### 3) *Concerning the Messiah's return*

Now read verses 23 – 25.

In verse 23 Jesus' word, *then*, introduces the third thing He wants to tell them about this time *when you see the Abomination of Desolation ... standing in the holy place*.

*False Messiah's and false prophets*

What will happen at that time?

*false Messiahs and false prophets will arise  
and will show great signs and wonders,  
so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.*

There are also false prophets in the first half of the tribulation, but this time they will be given satanic power to perform signs and wonders to deceive many.

*False reports that the Messiah has come*

Read verses 26 – 28.

What does He describe in verse 26?

Jesus warned that there will be people saying that the Messiah has returned here or that the Messiah has returned there, and that the Second Coming has secretly occurred.

How are they to respond to these reports?

He warned the Jews of that day not to believe any such rumour and come out of hiding.

*There will be a visible sign*

How will they know that these reports are false?

Because, unlike His First Coming, the Second Coming will not be in secret.

When the Messiah returns the second time, all men will see it, for it will be like a flash of lightning surrounding the world!

And there will be no need for anyone to report that it has happened!

*Where?*

Now what does He mean in verse 28?

*where the body is, there will the vultures be gathered together.*

It is a cryptic answer to the question: where will He return?

The body is the body of Israel. And the vultures refer to the Gentile armies.

So, wherever the body of Israel is, that is where the Gentile armies will gather.

And wherever the Gentile armies gather, that is where the second coming will occur.

*Bozrah*

Where will that be?

From other passages we know it to be a city with the Hebrew name Bozrah. It is better known today by its Greek name, Petra.

That is where the "body" will be (Mic. 2:12-13).

That is where the "vultures" will be gathered to come against them (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-6).

And that will be the place of the Second Coming (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3).

*Summary of the second half of the tribulation*

Now the Messiah has told them about the events of the second half of the Tribulation.

It will begin when the Abomination of Desolation is set up in the temple.

Then those who are in Judea are to flee to the mountains.

Because then there will be a great tribulation, the greatest ever seen.

And then there will be false messiahs and false prophets.

And false reports that the Messiah has come.

But do not believe them, because the coming of the Son of Man will be as visible as lightning that flashes from the east to the west.

And He gives them a cryptic indication of where the second coming will take place.

All of this has been necessary preparation to set the scene for His answer to their second question: What will be the sign of His coming?

**8. The Second Coming, Mark 13:24-26; Matthew. 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-27**

Now He will give them the sign of His coming.

Read Matthew 24:29 – 30.

When does His coming happen?

*Immediately after the tribulation of those days.*

*Signs in the sun, moon, and stars*

What happens in verse 29?

There will be a total blackout with no light coming to the earth. The sun, the moon, and the stars will not be giving any light to the earth!

There will be five blackouts in the last days. One will come before the Tribulation starts. The second, third and fourth will be during the tribulation. And this one is immediately after the tribulation.

*And on the earth ...*

Now notice what Luke adds. Read Luke 21:25 – 26.

What happens to the oceans?

*The roaring of the sea and the waves.*

And how do men respond to all these signs?

*With dismay among the nations, perplexity, and fainting from fear and the expectation of the things that are coming on the world.*

Notice this is especially *among the nations*.

*The sign of the Son of Man*

And according to Matthew verse 30, *then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky*.

And what will that sign be?

When He comes, at the end of verse 30, it is *with power and great glory*.

This glory is obviously the *Shechinah* Glory.

At that time there will be no light from any heavenly body, and the darkness of that total blackout will be dispersed by the light of His Shekinah glory as He comes on the clouds.

And that is the answer to their second question.

The sign of the second coming is this: the light of His Shekinah glory will dispersing the darkness of the total blackout around the world.

*The second coming*

That is how He will come, and that is also the way the whole world will see the second coming.

The light of His Shekinah glory will disperse the darkness, enveloping the whole world.

*Summary*

The Messiah had now answered all three questions.

- i. The sign of the destruction of the Jewish Temple was to be the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies.
- ii. The sign that the end of the age had begun was to be a world- wide war.
- iii. The sign of the Second Coming would be the light of His *Shechinah* Glory breaking through the worldwide blackout.

The *first* sign was given in A.D. 66; the *second* sign was given in 1914-1918; and at the end of the Tribulation, the *third* sign will be given as well.

## **9. The Regathering of Israel, Mark 13:27; Matthew. 24:31**

Now, although Jesus has answered all three of the disciples' questions, He still has more to say about the last days.

Read Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27.

What is Jesus describing here?

And who are the angels sent out to gather together?

The regathering of Israel that will follow the second coming of the Messiah.

Post-tribulationists use these passages from Mark and Matthew to teach a post-tribulation rapture of the church. But notice the church is not the focus here.

*The elect*

First of all, the word *elect* is a word not only used for the church saints. It is used of three different groups.

- 1) It is used of the elect angels, angels that did not fall.
- 2) It is used of all of us who are believers.
- 3) It is used of Israel as the elect nation.

In this context Israel is in focus, and *the elect* refers to Israel, the elect nation.

We can see this both from what Jesus has been saying about the great tribulation that precedes His coming, and from the Old Testament passages Jesus is referring to.

#### *Matthew's focus - Israel*

Matthew summarises the final regathering of Israel revealed by the prophets, and his background is taken from Isaiah 27:12-13, where the final regathering will be with the sound of a great trumpet.

Read Isaiah 27:12–13

*<sup>12</sup> In that day the Lord will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. <sup>13</sup> It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.*

Isaiah says it is going to happen. Jesus adds that it is going to happen, only following the second coming.

And this is the purpose of what Jesus says here: to make clear that the world-wide regathering of Israel predicted by the prophets will only be fulfilled after the second coming.

#### *Mark's focus - Israel*

Now Mark says something similar, but not quite the same because he has a different passage in mind.

Read Deuteronomy 30:3–5

*<sup>3</sup> that then Jehovah thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither Jehovah thy God hath scattered thee. <sup>4</sup> If any of thine outcasts be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will Jehovah thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: <sup>5</sup> and Jehovah thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. (1901 ASV)*

This talks about the regathering of Israel both from the uttermost parts of heaven (in verse 4) and from the furthest part of the earth (in verse 3). And this is also the emphasis in Mark's passage.

#### *Both living and resurrected Israel*

So with Israel's final restoration following the second coming, we are going to see:

- i. the regathering of living Israel from the four corners of the earth, the Jews who survive the tribulation; and
- ii. the regathering of resurrected Israel from heaven, including the Old Testament saints like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

So both living Israel and resurrected Israel will be able to enjoy living in the land together.

*For further study*

(Further information about the restoration of Israel can be found in *The Footsteps of the Messiah*, pages 411-420, esp. 419-420.)

This part of the Olivet Discourse summarizes many Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 11:11-12:6; 43:5-7; Jer. 23:5-8; 31:7-14; Ezek. 11:16-21; 20:40-42; 36:22-31, *et. al.*), specifying that the final worldwide restoration will come only after the Second Coming, and not before.

## 10. The Exhortation, Luke 21:28

Read Luke 21:28.

<sup>28</sup> *“But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”*

Here He is giving them an exhortation. But what does He mean?

*These things*

First of all, what does He mean by *these things*?

He has just been answering their questions about the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the age, and the sign of His second coming.

Then what would He mean by the time *when these things begin to take place*?

The beginning of these things would be the destruction of Jerusalem.

*Redemption*

What does He mean by *redemption*?

He would not be referring to spiritual redemption, because that would already be accomplished on the cross.

*Redemption* also means deliverance from calamities and death.

He has certainly been describing the calamities and death that will occur during the tribulation.

*Drawing near*

Now what does *drawing near* mean?

The word is *eggízō*, meaning to come near, or approach.

And in the perfect tense it means to have drawn near, to be near, to be at hand. And that is how He used it at the beginning of His ministry in section 37 of the Harmony, in Mark 1:14 – 15.

*Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand ... "*

Now, in the present context, He uses the same word in the present tense, meaning that their redemption is approaching or drawing near.

In what sense was the kingdom of God at hand?

He is the Messiah, He is with them, and if they would accept Him to be their Messiah, then the kingdom would begin.

When they rejected Him, the offer of the kingdom was withdrawn and replaced by a proclamation of judgment – the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in AD 70.

Therefore the kingdom could not be established until after that judgment had occurred.

*Another generation*

But once that judgment was fulfilled, then once again the one thing that is required before the kingdom can be established is for Israel to accept His Messiahship.

And so, once again the kingdom of God is drawing near.

So far no generation of Jews has accepted Jesus to be their Messiah, but the generation of the Revelation will do so.

And one of the purposes of the tribulation is to bring that about, to cause that generation of Jews to recognize that He is their Messiah and to call on His name.

It will succeed in that purpose, and so the Kingdom is drawing near.

*Exhortation*

He tells them to *straighten up and lift up their heads*.

This means to straighten up as those who have hope, and lift up your heads as those who have courage.

*Rapture?*

Another view of his verse is that He is talking to believers about the imminence of the Rapture.

The exhortation, then, would be that believers should live with hope and courage because the rapture that will deliver them from the coming tribulation is at hand or imminent. And it has been imminent ever since the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

However, in Luke's context Jesus does not even describe the Rapture, and in the flow of His thought throughout His discourse Jesus has not yet come to the Rapture.

So, while the words themselves could be used of the Rapture, the context is clearly focused on the Second Coming at the end of the tribulation.

## **11. The Parable of the Fig Tree, Mark 13:28-31; Matthew. 24:32-35; Luke 21:29-33**

Now He gives them a parable to further encourage those Jews who will face the tribulation.

At the same time what He says here will form a contrasting background for the next topic He is about to introduce.

Read Matthew 24:32, and Luke 21:29-30.

This is the whole parable. And what follows is His application of the parable.

*Behold the fig tree and all the trees*

First of all, what is the importance of the fig tree here?

Some say that the fig tree is a symbol for Israel, but that is not the case.

Notice what Luke says: *Behold the fig tree and all the trees.*

While this is called “The Parable of the Fig Tree”, the fig tree is only representative of all the trees. It is not being used symbolically as some claim.

*Purpose of the illustration*

Now what is the point made by this illustration?

The point is this: When *the fig tree and all the trees* begin to blossom, it is a sure sign that summer is on its way, because the blossoming occurs in the spring, and summer follows spring.

*Application*

Now read His application in Matthew’s verses 33 – 35.

And what is the application?

Just as a blossoming fig tree means that summer is on its way, so when the events that Jesus has been speaking about occur, then they can know that His return is near.

*The kingdom of God*

Read Luke verse 31.

While Matthew is emphasising His coming, Luke is emphasising the result of His coming, the establishment of the kingdom.

*All these things*

And what are *all these things* that signal the soon return of the Lord?

By *all these things*, Jesus is referring to His description of the tribulation, and especially to the Abomination of Desolation.

When the Abomination of Desolation occurs, it will signal that the return of the Messiah is only 3½ years away.

And from the Prophet Daniel, whom Jesus specifically named, they would know that it will be exactly 1,260 days from the Abomination of Desolation until the Second Coming.

And notice the progression.

*When these things begin to take place ... your redemption is drawing near.*

*When you see all these things, recognise that He is near, right at the door.*

Ever since Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, their redemption has been drawing near.

Once the Abomination of Desolation occurs in the middle of the tribulation, He will be standing at the door ready to end this age and begin His Kingdom!

*This generation*

And why did He say, in verse 34,

*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place?*

The point is that the Jewish *generation* that sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be here at the Second Coming! It will not pass away!

Remember that the Abomination of Desolation signals Satan's and the Antichrist's final attempt to exterminate the Jews.

The fact that the Jewish generation which sees the Abomination of Desolation will still be here when the Messiah returns shows that Satan's attempt to destroy the Jews will fail.

And the Jewish saints of the second half of the Tribulation can receive comfort from these words.

*Summary*

So to summarise:

Just as the blossoming of the fig tree and all the trees tells you that it is spring and therefore summer is near, so when you see the Abomination of Desolation you will know that the return of the Messiah to set up His kingdom is near. In fact, He is right at the door!

And the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will survive Satan's best attempts to destroy it. They will still be there when He comes.

*Guarantee*

And what purpose does verse 35 serve?

It is His guarantee that what He has described will indeed take place just as He described it.

Heaven and earth are destined to pass away, but His words will not pass away.

And neither will that generation pass away.

It will happen just as He has described!

## **12. The Rapture, Mark 13:3 2; Matthew 24:36-42; Luke 21:34-36**

Now Jesus continues to expand their understanding of the bigger picture.

So far He has:

Given them the sign of Jerusalem's destruction.

Told them that the end of the age will be preceded by a series of birth pangs,

And given them the first birth pang.

He has:

Described the great tribulation that will come at the end of the age,

Given them the sign of His coming at the end of the tribulation,

Reassured them that Israel will survive to the end and that they will all be saved,

And He has described the regathering of all Israel, both the living and the dead.

Now He has one more event to add to the picture.

Read Matthew 24:36.

*That day and hour*

The first question here is: what does He mean by *that day and hour*? Which *day and hour* is He talking about?

He answers this question at the beginning of verse 37:

*For the coming of the Son of Man ...*

In other words He is talking about His coming.

And, since He has already been talking about the Second Coming, we might be tempted to think that He is still talking about His second coming (and many do).

But is He?

*Peri de*

In both Matthew's and Mark's accounts Jesus begins with the word, *but*.

And in both accounts, in the Greek it is the two words: *peri de*.

The word *de* is sufficient by itself to say 'but'.

The *peri de* construct is a contrastive introduction of a new subject. It means He has been talking about one subject up until now, but now He is introducing a new subject.

The most frequent use of this construct is in 1 Corinthians where it is translated *now concerning*.

Every time Paul introduces a new topic he says *peri de, now concerning*. Now concerning the things about which you wrote ... Now concerning things sacrificed to idols ... Now concerning spiritual gifts ... Now concerning the collection for the saints ... Now concerning Apollos our brother ... (I Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12; I Thes. 5:1; etc.)

So, by using the *peri de* construct, Jesus indicates that He is introducing a new subject which is distinct from the Second Coming He has just been describing.

And what is that new subject?

In verse 37, as we have seen, He calls that new subject *the coming of the Son of Man*.

So there is a *coming of the Son of Man* that is distinct from His second coming which He has already described.

And in His flow of thought through the Olivet Discourse, as He answers their request for the sign of His coming, He wants them to know about this other *coming of the Son of Man*.

We know it as the Rapture, and, as we proceed to look at what He says about it, we shall see how it is different from the second coming.

#### *Timing*

Now the first point He makes is concerning the timing of this coming of the Son of Man.

When will it occur?

No one will ever know. The angels in heaven do not know, the Son in His humanity does not know. Only the Father knows.

This stands in contrast to the Second Coming, which will be a dateable event.

The Second Coming happens exactly seven years from the date that the covenant is signed. It happens exactly 42 months or 1260 days after the abomination of desolation. So anyone in that period can compute the exact date that the Messiah will return.

But the Rapture will never be a dateable event.

The only clue given concerning the timing of the Rapture is that it will occur sometime before the Tribulation, and it may not necessarily occur just before the Tribulation.

#### *No sign*

Now read His second point in verses 37 – 39.

What will the coming of the Son of Man be like?

The Rapture comes when things are quite normal here on earth. There are no special signs.

We saw previously in the context of the Second Coming that things are very abnormal on the earth. There is a total blackout. There are convulsions throughout nature and in the heavens. There is dismay among the nations. There is fear.

In the Second Coming things are very abnormal. But at the Rapture things are going on very normally. People are marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking. These are normal every day conditions.

So, unlike the Second Coming, there will be no unusual events and there will be no sign given for the Rapture.

## Separation

Read His third point in verses 40 – 41.

### *Optional discussion*

The word translated *taken* is *paralambánō*, meaning: To take near, with, or to oneself, to receive to oneself.

And the word translated *left* is *aphiēmi*, meaning: To send forth or away, to let go from oneself.

By the way, the word *taken* in verse 39 is a different word. It is *airō*, meaning to take up and carry away, or to remove by carrying. The Flood carried away and removed all humanity except those in the ark.

*Paralambánō*, translated *will be taken* in verses 40 – 41, is better translated in John 14:3 *receive you to Myself*.

What is He describing here?

*One will be taken and one will be left.*

Who is taken?

Read John 14:1–3.

<sup>1</sup> “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Who is Jesus addressing?

Believers.

And what happens to them when He comes?

He will receive believers to Himself and they will be with Him where He is in heaven.

### *Rapture*

So when the Son of Man comes and the Rapture occurs, it will result in a separation of the believer from the unbeliever.

The believer will go with Jesus into the place in heaven that He has prepared for him. And the unbeliever will be excluded and remain on the earth.

### *Exhortation*

Read Matthew 24:42.

### *Be on the alert*

The exhortation is to *be on the alert* and to *be on guard*.

What does it mean to be on the alert?

A modern day example might be a driver driving near a school would need to be alert for young children who might suddenly rush onto the road. Seeing this the driver would need to take some action to avoid hitting the child. He would slow down or turn away.

### *Reason*

What reason does Matthew give for why it is necessary to be on the alert?

*For you do not know which day your Lord is coming.*

Which coming of the Lord is Jesus referring to here?

The coming of the Son of Man known as the Rapture.

### *Be on guard*

Luke gives us more details of this exhortation.

And while Matthew gives the reason for being alert, Luke gives us two things that can be avoided by being alert and two things that can be gained by being alert.

Read what can be avoided by being on guard in Luke 21:34.

Here are two things that can be avoided. In other words they are two results of not being on guard. What are they?

The first is hearts that are

*weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life.*

The Greek word translated *dissipation* means: A headache, a hangover, a shooting pain or a confusion in the head arising from intemperance in wine or strong liquors.<sup>iii</sup>

This is the first result of not being on guard.

And the second is

*Be on guard, so that ... that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.*

Now that raises at least two questions.

What is *that day*?

And how is it *like a trap*?

### *That day*

First, what is *that day*?

Notice that Luke has not described the Rapture as Mark and Matthew have.

So he is not referring to the Rapture.

In Luke's context, Jesus is referring to the great tribulation which He has just been describing.

*Like a trap*

Secondly, what are the characteristics of a trap?

A trap might be a cage or a hole in the ground that is disguised so that the creature to be caught cannot escape once inside. When the creature crosses a certain point, something about the trap will change. And the result will be that the creature cannot escape.

Now, how would the great tribulation be like a trap?

Read the answer in verses 35.

It is not a physical trap, but it is a period of time from which there is no escape for *all those who dwell on the face of all the earth* once it begins.

In other words, no one living on the earth at that time, no matter where they are on the earth, can escape the effects of the tribulation. It will fall upon all earth-dwellers.

And, as Jesus points out, its appearance will be sudden, like a trap going off.

*Inevitable?*

But is ending up in the trap inevitable?

No. He tells us to be on guard so that we can avoid the trap!

The nature of the tribulation, like a trap, is that once in it there is no escape.

The only way to escape it is to avoid it. And the only way to avoid it is to *be alert!* And hence the exhortation.

*The way of escape*

Read the way of escape from the trap in verse 36.

Here He repeats the exhortation to *keep on the alert* and gives them two things that will result.

The first result is that they will *escape all these things* – things that *will come upon all those who dwell upon the face of all the earth*.

And the second result shows how to avoid the trap and *escape all these things*.

What is the way of escape?

*To stand before the Son of Man.*

He has just said that it is not possible to escape if one is on the earth, therefore, to escape all these things, one must be off the earth, and in heaven, standing before the Son of Man.

This will be the result of the Rapture for believers: we will *stand before the Son of Man* in heaven, and by standing before Him we will *escape all these things*.

And this is the only way to escape the events of the tribulation.

*Believe*

And what is the only way to participate in the Rapture, and be taken up into heaven to stand before the Son of Man?

It is to believe in Him.

Therefore the exhortation to *be on guard* and to *be alert at all times* is an exhortation to unbelievers to believe!

And throughout the Olivet Discourse, to be on the alert, to be on guard, and to be ready all mean to be saved by believing in Him.

*Summary*

So, having described the events that will take place at the end of the age and the sign of His second coming, He now tells them about the coming of the Son of Man that will have no sign.

At this coming believers will be taken from the earth into heaven to stand before Him, and unbelievers will be left to experience the events of the tribulation.

So He exhorts them to believe while there is still time before He comes.

Once He comes there will be no escaping the earth and the tribulation will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

It will be like a trap without escape.

Therefore believe now, while there is still time!

And, as we shall see, the rest of this discourse will be spent emphasising just this point.

*For further reading*

For further reading

Re the Rapture: Footsteps pages 142-155; MBS039.

Re Olivet Discourse: Footsteps Appendix V, pages 621-649; MBS028

**13. Parables Urging Watchfulness, Readiness and Labour,  
Mark 13:33-37; Matthew. 24:43 - 25:30**

His Olivet Discourse is not merely a collection of isolated statements about the end times.

It has a continuous thread of thought which He weaves into a fabric depicting a vivid picture of the end of this present age.

And what follows is not five unrelated parables, but five parables that both illustrate His exhortation to *keep on the alert* and at the same time give more details about what will take place at the end of this age.

**a. *The Parable of the Porter, Mark 13:33-37***

Read the first parable, the parable of the porter, in Mark 13:33 – 37.

This parable answers the first question we had when we read the exhortation to be alert: what does it mean to be alert?

We used an illustration from our own times to answer that question. And that is exactly what Jesus does here. He illustrates what it means to be alert with a contemporary example.

And four times He says to be alert: in verses 33, 34, 35, & 37.

As we have already seen, to be alert in this context means to be saved. Only those who are saved are going to escape *these things*.

The message of this parable is : He is coming! Be on the alert!

**b. *The Parable of the Master of the House, Matthew 24:43-44***

When we need to be alert to something we need to know at least two things. We need to know what we are looking out for. And we need to know what to do about it when we see it.

The second parable illustrates just these points.

Read Matthew 24:43 – 44.

What are they to look out for?

His coming *at an hour when you do not think He will*.

And what are they to do about it?

They *also must be ready*.

Here the focus is on being ready.

The message of this parable is : He is coming! Be ready!

c. *The Parable of the Faithful Servant and the Evil Servant, Matthew 24:45-51*

The next question, of course, is how can they be ready?

Read the third parable in Matthew 24:45 – 51.

What is new in this parable that wasn't in the previous two?

*Contrast between believer and unbeliever*

There is a contrast between *the faithful and sensible slave* and the *evil slave*.

And how are they different?

The faithful one is expecting his master to return and is consequently labouring about his master's business.

The evil one is not expecting his master to return any time soon, and is consequently fulfilling his own evil desires.

So their different behaviour stems from their different attitude towards their master.

And this difference illustrates the answer to the question of how to be ready. To be ready means to believe the master.

Thus the first new thing introduced in this parable is the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever.

*Contrast between outcomes*

The second new thing introduced in this parable is the different outcomes for the believer and the unbeliever when their master returns.

What are the two outcomes?

For the *faithful and sensible slave* there is blessing and the reward of even greater responsibility.

But the *evil slave* will be taken by surprise when his master returns and will be punished most severely.

Weeping is for their lack of faith (their unbelief), and gnashing of teeth is for their pain.

*Kingdom*

Notice here that these are outcomes that will occur when the Kingdom is set up. Believers will be given responsibility in the Kingdom, but unbelievers will be confined to hell.

*Message*

The message of this parable is: He is coming! Be ready, believing in the Lord and labouring at His business! And the response to the Lord will determine one's experience during the Kingdom.

**d. *The Parable of the Ten Virgins, Matthew 25:1-13***

Now read the fourth parable in Matthew 25:1 – 13.

This parable compares the establishment of the kingdom of heaven with what takes place in a Jewish wedding.

*Jewish background*

What is the Jewish background for this parable?

In the Jewish wedding system, when the marriage was to be consummated, the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to fetch her and bring her to his home.

As he approached his own home, he would be met by a procession of virgins who would conduct the bride and groom to the marriage ceremony which would be followed by the marriage feast.

The virgins would have oil lamps to light the way in case the bridegroom arrived at night.

*Elements of the parable*

Now what are the elements of the parable and what do they represent?

The bridegroom represents the Messiah, and although not explicitly mentioned, his bride is the church, who will be with Him when He comes.

The wedding feast is symbolic of the Messianic Kingdom.

The virgins are those who are on the earth at the time of His return. And they are distinct from His bride who is already with Him. They represent the people on earth at the end of the tribulation when He returns to establish His Kingdom.

*Wise and foolish*

Now the virgins are described as either foolish or wise.

What does that mean?

Read Psalm 14:1 – 3.

*<sup>1</sup> The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. <sup>2</sup> The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand [are prudent], Who seek after God. <sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.*

The word translated *understand* in verse 2 means to be prudent or to wisely understand.

So David is contrasting the fool who says *in his heart, "There is no God"* with the prudent *who seek after God*.

In the Old Testament the contrast between the wise or prudent and the foolish is a contrast between believers and unbelievers.

Notice, in our parable in verse 10, that the *prudent* virgins are described as *those who were ready*. And to be ready, as we have already seen, is to believe.

### *Contrasting outcomes*

As well as contrasting the nature of the foolish and the prudent virgins, Jesus also contrasts what the bridegroom's return will mean for them.

*Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut.*

But when the foolish virgins came asking to enter, they were told '*Truly I say to you, I do not know you.*' And they were excluded from the wedding feast.

### *Meaning*

So this parable describes what will happen when the Kingdom is established.

Jesus, the Messiah, will return with His bride, the church.

Those who have become believers during the tribulation will enter into the Kingdom with Him, and the door will be shut.

There will be no further opportunity for people to enter the kingdom and the unbelievers will be excluded.

Therefore, with Him in the Kingdom will be the church saints who accompany Him as His bride when He returns and the tribulation saints who will enter with Him and His bride.

### *Exhortation*

Now, in view of what He has just been telling them about the establishment of the Kingdom, He repeats the exhortation to *be on the alert*.

Again this is a call to believe.

Why does He add, *for you do not know the day or the hour?*

There are two occasions when the Son of Man will come: the Rapture when He will come to fetch His bride, and the Second Coming when He will come with His bride to establish the Kingdom.

And the exhortation to *be on the alert*, which is to believe, applies both to those living before the Rapture and to those living after the Rapture.

Those living before the Rapture have the opportunity to participate in the Kingdom as His bride and therefore to escape the tribulation.

Those living during the tribulation have the opportunity to accompany the bride and Groom into the Kingdom.

And this opportunity will be the subject of His next and final parable.

**e. *The Parable of the Talents, Matthew 25:14-30***

Notice that this parable begins with the word, *for*, making it the second explanation for the exhortation of verse 13.

Read verses 14 – 30.

Jesus begins this parable saying, *for it is like ...*

What is it that is like the situation described in this parable?

It is the same kingdom described in the previous parable, and more specifically *it* refers to the events that will occur just before the coming of the Kingdom.

*Focus of the parable*

What is the focus or key point made by this parable?

In verse 19 He says, *Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them.*

And the key point made by the parable is that there will be an accounting when the master returns.

*Contrast*

What is the contrast brought out in this parable?

The contrast is between the *good and faithful slave* and the *wicked, lazy slave*.

And it is first of all between their two different responses to their master, and secondly it is between the two different outcomes of the settlement of accounts.

The *good and faithful slaves* are rewarded with responsibility for many things and enter into the joy of their master.

But the wicked slave is thrown out into the outer darkness, where *there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, again weeping over their unbelief and gnashing their teeth in pain.

*Message*

So how could we summarise the message of this parable?

The message of the parable is that everyone will be given an opportunity to serve their master, and when he comes they will have to account for how they used that opportunity.

Those who were faithful will be rewarded and enter into the joy of their master. But the wicked will be punished in outer darkness.

*Application*

Jesus Himself gives us the application in the passage that follows.

**14. The Judgment of the Gentiles, Matthew 25:31-46**

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

*When*

When does this judgment take place?

*When the Son of Man comes in His glory,* which He has already told us occurs at the end of the tribulation.

*Where*

Jesus did not tell us where this would take place, but the prophet Joel gives us that detail.

Read Joel 3:1–3.

<sup>1</sup> *“For behold, in those days and at that time, When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have divided up My land. <sup>3</sup> “They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.*

He will gather all the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat means ‘Jehovah judges’, and the valley is thought to be the Kidron Valley which is between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

*Who*

Who is gathered?

In verse 32 it says, *All the nations will be gathered before Him.*

The Greek word translated nations here simply means Gentiles, and that is its meaning here.

Joel’s prophecy also makes it clear that it is the Gentile nations that are gathered before Him for judgment.

And who are *these brothers of Mine* mentioned in verse 40?

There are three distinct groups of people mentioned in this passage: the sheep Gentiles, the goat Gentiles, and His brothers.

His brothers are clearly the Jewish people who survived the tribulation. They are all believers.

The sheep are the believing Gentiles, described in verse 37 as *the righteous*, and in verse 34 are told to *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. They are clearly saved people.

And the goats are the unbelieving Gentiles. They are told to *depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.*

*Basis for judgement*

And what determines whether a Gentile is a sheep who will stand on His right or a goat who will stand on His left?

It will be determined by their treatment of the Messiah’s brothers, the Jews, during the tribulation.

So is this salvation by works?

No. But as James tells us (James 2:14 – 26), our works demonstrate our faith. And if there are no works then faith is dead.

#### *Sheep*

Because the sheep Gentiles are already believers in Jesus the Messiah, they will refuse to cooperate with the Antichrist's attempts to destroy the Jews, and they will do what they can to help the Jews.

Thus they will prove their faith. And they are the ones who are alert, ready, and laboring as Jesus has described in His exhortation and in His parables.

#### *Goats*

On the other hand, the anti-Semitism of the goat Gentiles will prove their unbelief. They will submit to the Antichrist and join the ranks of the persecutors.

So they will not be on the alert and ready when He comes.

#### *Immediate destinies*

Notice that Jesus describes both the immediate destiny and the eternal destiny of the sheep and the goats.

Look at verses 34 and 41.

What are the two immediate destinies?

The sheep are told to *inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*.

And the goats are told to *depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*. They will be killed and spend the period of the Kingdom in hell.

#### *Ultimate destinies*

Now look at verse 46.

What are their ultimate destinies?

Eternal punishment for the goat Gentiles, and eternal life for the sheep Gentiles, who are again described as righteous.

### **15. Luke's Summary, Luke 21:37-38**

Read Luke 21:37 – 38.

<sup>37</sup> *Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.* <sup>38</sup> *And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.*

So we see His daily routine at this time was to spend the night on the Mount of Olives, and during the day He would go into the temple to teach all the people who would get up early in the morning to listen to Him.

### **16. A Summary of the Olivet Discourse**

#### *A shorter summary*

The disciples were puzzling over the establishment of the kingdom and brought three questions to Jesus, thinking that the answers to these simple questions would fill in the gaps necessary for them to complete their puzzle.

Jesus' answer exceeds their greatest imagination and gives them a vivid picture of the last days of this age.

<sup>(3)</sup> He begins by describing the characteristics of this age. There will be wars and rumours of wars until the end. These are not the signs to be looking at.

<sup>(4)</sup> Against that background, when you see nation rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, that is, when you see a world-wide war which will be accompanied by famines and earthquakes, then know that this is the beginning of birth pangs.

There will be a series of events that will precede the end of the age, and the world war will be the first of them.

<sup>(5)</sup> But you will not see these things. Before these things take place you will be persecuted, betrayed, and some of you killed. And your persecution will provide opportunity for your testimony.

<sup>(6)</sup> Then Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. It will fall and be destroyed and trodden under Gentile feet until the end.

<sup>(7)</sup> At the end of the age there will be a period of tribulation

<sup>(7a)</sup> In the first half many will stumble and betray and hate one another. Lawlessness will increase. But there will be those who survive to the end, and they will be saved.

Also during this time the gospel will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to the Gentiles.

<sup>(7b)</sup> The second half of the tribulation will begin with the abomination of desolation.

When that happens, those in Judea must flee to the mountains. This is urgent. Don't stop or go back for anything. Just flee.

Then there will be the greatest tribulation that has ever occurred or will ever occur.

And don't listen to those who say the Messiah has come and he is here or there.

When the Son of Man comes everyone will see Him, just as lightning flashes and is seen from the east to the west.

<sup>(8)</sup> Then there will be great distress on all the earth. The sun, moon, and stars will not give their light to the earth. The sea will be roaring. Men will be dismayed, perplexed, and fainting from fear.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.

The blackness of that sky will be dispelled by the great glory, the Shekinah glory of the Lord as He comes on the clouds.

<sup>(9)</sup> Then He will regather all Israel, both living and dead, from all parts of the earth and heaven.

<sup>(10)</sup> He finishes this part of His discourse with an exhortation to take hope and courage when these things begin.

<sup>(11)</sup> He gives the parable of the fig tree and all the trees. As Spring gives way to Summer, so these things precede His coming.

When you see all these things and find yourself in the midst of them, then know that He is near, right at the door, about to enter.

And furthermore, that generation will not be destroyed as Satan would hope. It will still be there at the end.

As surely as His words will not pass away, that generation will not pass away.

<sup>(12)</sup> Now He has answered all their questions, but there is more to tell which they could not have imagined.

Not only will He come at the end of the age when circumstances on the earth are very distressing, He will also come unexpectedly at a time when life is proceeding quite normally.

Then the believers will be taken up to be with Him in heaven. And so they will escape all these things that are about to take place.

<sup>(13)</sup> Then He spends a large amount of time exhorting those who will see these things to be alert, and to be ready.

If they are to escape the things that are coming upon the earth, they must believe Him now.

And then He describes His coming at the end of the age. Only those who believe will enter into the kingdom with Him.

<sup>(14)</sup> And when He comes He will sit upon His glorious throne and judge all the Gentiles. The righteous will have been caring for the persecuted Jews. The evil will not.

The righteous will inherit the kingdom. The evil will not.

And beyond the kingdom, the evil will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Judging by the volume of text, the exhortations and parables at the end of His discourse occupied nearly as much time as His prophecies about what would happen.

He is coming! When He comes there will be a judgment with eternal consequences, and the basis of the judgment will be one's response to the Messiah.

Therefore be ready! Believe!

*A fuller summary*

- 1) As Jesus and the disciples were leaving the temple that day, the disciples made a comment about the stones and the buildings of the temple and Jesus told them that not one stone would be left upon another.
- 2) This stirred up questions in their minds. They knew He is the Messiah who would one day set up His kingdom. But He has been rejected by the leaders of Israel. And Jesus has denounced them and pronounced a judgment of destruction to come upon Jerusalem.

They don't understand how all the pieces fit together. When and how will the kingdom be set up?

And as they went down from Jerusalem into the Kidron Valley and then up onto the Mount of Olives, they came up with three specific questions that they thought would give them the missing pieces to their puzzle.

- i. When will these things, the destruction of Jerusalem, happen? And what will be the sign that it is about to happen?
  - ii. What will be the sign of His coming?
  - iii. What will be the sign of the end of the age?
- 3) Before He can answer their questions He needs to describe this present age. He says there will be wars and rumours of wars until the end. And there will be false messiah's. These are not signs of the end of the age. They are normal characteristics of this age.

- 4) But when they see a world-wide war that will be the beginning of birth pangs.

In other words, there will be a series of events to mark the approaching end of the age, and the first of these will be a world war, accompanied by earth quakes and famines.

- 5) By the way, He says, they will not live to see these things.

They will be persecuted and they will be given what to say when they need it.

They will even be betrayed by relatives and friends and put to death.

- 6) Then He tells them about the fall of Jerusalem that would happen in AD 70. The sign that it was about to happen would be the surrounding of Jerusalem by the Roman armies. Then they must flee to the mountains.

And Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

- 7) Then He paints a picture of the tribulation.

He begins with the first half of the tribulation in which Israel will be hated and killed by all the nations because of His name. Many of them will stumble over Him because of their unbelief and disobedience. Consequently they will betray each other and hate each other.

And false prophets will mislead them. And their love will grow cold.

Nevertheless, there will be those who survive until the end. And they will all be saved!

And the good news of the kingdom will be preached to all the gentile nations.

The second half of the tribulation will begin when the Abomination of Desolation is set up in the temple.

Then those who are in Judea are to flee to the mountains, because then there will be a great tribulation, the greatest ever seen.

And at that time there will be false messiahs and false prophets. And false reports that the Messiah has come.

But do not believe them, because the coming of the Son of Man will be as visible as lightning that flashes from the east to the west.

Now He has given the background necessary for the sign of His second coming.

- 8) At the end of the tribulation the sun, the moon and the stars will stop giving their light to the earth. And the seas will be roaring. Men will be in a state of dismay and perplexity. And they will be fainting with fear.

Then the Shekinah glory will pierce the darkness, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds with power and great glory.

- 9) Then, He says, there will be a regathering of Israel, both the living and the dead, from wherever they are in heaven or on the earth.
- 10) Then He exhorts them to take hope and courage when they see the destruction of Jerusalem, because then their redemption is drawing near.
- 11) And just as the blossoming of the fig tree and all the trees tells you that it is spring and therefore summer is near, so when you see the Abomination of Desolation you will know that the return of the Messiah to set up His kingdom is near. In fact, He is right at the door!

And the Jewish generation that sees the Abomination of Desolation will survive Satan's best attempts to destroy it. They will still be there when He comes.

- 12) Now, having described the events that will take place at the end of the age and the sign of His second coming, He now tells them about the coming of the Son of Man that will have no sign.

At this coming believers will be taken from the earth into heaven to stand before Him, and unbelievers will be left to experience the events of the tribulation.

So He exhorts them to believe while there is still time before He comes.

Once He comes there will be no escaping the earth and the tribulation will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

It will be like a trap without escape.

Therefore believe now, while there is still time!

13) Then He gives them five parables, first of all to explain and illustrate what He means by being on the alert, and secondly to illustrate the last detail He wants to add to His description of the end times.

- i. The first parable illustrates what it means to be on the alert and reiterates that exhortation four times.
- ii. The second parable answers the question that arises about what needs to be done. The head of the house needs not only to be alert, but to be ready to stop the thief when he comes. So we need to be ready to meet Him when He comes.
- iii. But what does it mean to be ready? He answers that question in the third parable, in which He contrasts the faithful and sensible slave with the evil one. To be ready means to believe the master and consequently to be labouring in his business. That one will be put in charge of all his possessions, but the evil one will be punished severely and cast out with the hypocrites.
- iv. The fourth parable, the parable of the ten virgins, describes what will happen when the Kingdom is established.

Jesus, the Messiah, will return with His bride, the church.

Those who have become believers during the tribulation will enter into the Kingdom with Him, and the door will be shut.

There will be no further opportunity for people to enter the kingdom and the unbelievers will be excluded.

Again He gives the exhortation to *be on the alert*.

And just as there are two occasions when He will return, He gives two reasons for being on the alert.

Those living before the Rapture have the opportunity to participate in the Kingdom as His bride and therefore to escape the tribulation.

Those living during the tribulation have the opportunity to accompany the bride and Groom into the Kingdom.

And this opportunity will be the subject of His last parable.

- v. The message of the parable of the talents is that everyone will be given an opportunity to serve their master, and when he comes they will have to account for how they used that opportunity.

Those who were faithful will be rewarded and enter into the joy of their master. But the wicked will be punished in outer darkness.

And again the contrast is between those who believe their master and those who do not.

14) And the application of the last parable is His description of the judgment of the Gentiles.

When He comes in His glory, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the Gentiles will be gathered before Him and He will separate them according to how they treated the Jews during the tribulation.

The righteous will care for the Jews who are being persecuted, while the unrighteous will not.

The righteous will inherit the Kingdom and then enter into eternal life. The unrighteous will be excluded from the kingdom in hell and ultimately will enter into eternal punishment.

## B. The Preparation for Messiah's Death, § 145-159

It is still Tuesday the 12<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 4<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

### 1. The Prediction of His Death, § 145, Mark 14:1a; Matthew 26:1-2; Luke 22:1

Read all three accounts here.

*Passover and Unleavened Bread*

What is it that is two days away?

Matthew simply calls it *the Passover*. Mark calls it *the Passover and Unleavened Bread*, and Luke calls it *the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover*.

In the Mosaic Law the feast of Passover was one day, followed by the seven days of unleavened bread. And those were two separate festivals, though one immediately followed the other.

By first century Israel, and even among Jewish people today, they have combined the two in their thinking, and therefore you will hear people talk about the eight days of Passover.

Technically Passover was only one day followed by seven days of unleavened bread. And by New Testament times you find all eight days called Passover and Unleavened Bread, or just Passover, as it is here.

*Two days away*

He points out what they already know, that the Passover is now two days away.

And Passover will begin at sundown Thursday.

*Announcement*

Then He makes the fourth announcement of His death.

But this time He even dates it. It will happen in two days time.

Again they don't understand this until it finally happens, and when it happens it takes them by surprise as we will see.

### 2. The Conspiracy of the Rulers, § 146, Mark 14:1b-2; Matthew 26:3-5; Luke 22:2

Now read all three accounts of the next section, 146.

Here we see the conspiracy of the rulers.

*Who?*

Who is involved here?

The chief priests are Sadducees. The scribes and the elders are Pharisees. So the conspiracy involves both the Pharisees and Sadducees.

And the one in charge of the conspiracy is Caiaphas, who is the high priest with authority over the 24 chief priests. He is also a Sadducee.

### *Goal*

And what was their goal?

Matthew gives us the goal of their conspiracy in verse 4:

*they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him.*

As we shall see shortly, Judas will give them the opportunity they are looking for.

Their ultimate goal is to kill Jesus.

And in order to do that they plotted together to seize Him by stealth.

Why by stealth?

They are afraid of causing a riot among the people.

### *Not during the festival*

Now look again at Matthew verse 5. Here they put an important constraint on their conspiracy.

What is it?

*Not during the festival, otherwise there might be a riot of the people.*

This was an important part of their conspiracy. They would not carry out the conspiracy during the festival.

Why was this?

At Passover time the city is very crowded. So they want to wait until after Passover, when the pilgrims go back home, and Jerusalem returns to a smaller size. Then they would carry it out.

### *Satan's goal*

Here we have the satanic element in the conspiracy, because, while Satan wants Jesus dead, he doesn't want Him to die at the right time, at this Passover, or in the right way, by crucifixion.

And so we read of attempts to have Him killed at the wrong time, as happens right here, either before or after Passover; or in the wrong manner, by sword, or by stoning.

If Jesus had died at any other time than this Passover, or in any other way than by crucifixion, there would have been no atonement.

It was not merely the death of the Messiah which was essential for the atonement, otherwise He could have died as a two year old with the others in Bethlehem and that would have been sufficient. But that would have been insufficient! His death had to come at the proper time, this very Passover, and in the proper way, by crucifixion.

Therefore attempts are made to kill Him at the wrong time or in the wrong way.

### *Not during Passover!*

Keep this in the back of your minds, because we will be coming back to it a little later.

An important part of the conspiracy is to avoid doing it on the night when they will end up doing it. They want to avoid doing it on the Passover.

### 3. **The Pouring of Ointment, § 147, Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13; John 12:2-8**

Now read Matthew 26:6 – 7 and John 12:2 – 3.

#### *Simon the leper*

Where are they having supper?

In the home of Simon the leper.

Would a leprous man be able to do this?

No. And the fact that he is called the leper doesn't mean that he still had leprosy, otherwise he wouldn't be allowed to live in town.

So this was a former leper, and one of the lepers that Jesus would have healed.

He is in Bethany, the same town where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus live. And now they are all together in this household as guests of Simon the leper.

#### *Pouring*

What does Mary do?

She chooses to do something that would be very unusual to do.

She takes a bottle of very expensive perfume and she pours it over His head and on His feet.

#### *Costly perfume*

How do all three writers describe this perfume?

This was pure nard, a very expensive type of perfume.

It doesn't mean that they were necessarily a wealthy family, but it does mean that she was giving something up, because this was something that even the poor class of women would keep and reserve for their wedding night.

The wealthy class could use it more often, but for the non-wealthy class it was usually only on their wedding night that they would use it.

And so essentially she is giving up something that she would have used on her wedding night to anoint Jesus.

#### *How expensive?*

Just how expensive was this perfume?

Read John 12:4 – 6.

What was the value of 300 denarii?

About one full year's salary.

That's how expensive this perfume was with which she anoints His head and His feet.

### *Judas*

Now this troubled the disciples, and especially Judas.

They were saying that it was a wasteful way to use the expensive perfume. It could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

And while the others may have been motivated by concern for the poor, what was Judas's concern?

He was the group treasurer and he was guilty of embezzlement. He often withdrew for his own use the money that was put into it.

### *Mary's understanding*

Now read Matthew's account of Jesus' response in verses 10 – 13.

What did Jesus say was Mary's purpose for anointing Him with perfume?

*For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.*

What does this tell us about Mary?

This shows that she understood something that His own disciples did not understand.

Somehow she understood what He taught about His death and resurrection.

So, understanding that this Passover would be the time of His death and burial, she goes ahead and anoints Him for that purpose.

When we come to the section where the women come to the tomb looking for His body we will notice that this Mary was not among them. Others named Mary were there, but not this one.

And why would she not be among them?

Because she already understood and believed that He would die and rise again. Therefore there was no need to try to find a body.

So she doesn't participate in those Sunday morning activities.

And how did Mary gain this understanding?

Remember how we read in section 104, in Luke 10:38-42, that she *was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His word*; and when Martha complained that she wasn't helping with the meal preparations, He commended her for it saying: *Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

### *Mary honoured*

Now in Matthew verse 13 Jesus points out that this is going to be a place of honour.

And in fact, everywhere in history, wherever the gospel is preached, people will be speaking of this event as a memorial to her, just as we are doing right now.

### *Judas' decision point*

But for Judas, his decision to betray Jesus has already occurred at this point of time. (John 12:4)

#### 4. The Promise to Betray, § 148, Mark 14:10–11; Matthew 26:14–16; Luke 22:3–6

##### *Satanized*

Read Luke 22:3.

We have seen examples of people being demonised throughout the gospel accounts.

But in the case of Judas, he was not merely demonised. He is satanized. In place of a normal demon entering a person it is now Satan entering Judas.

This sets the stage for him to communicate with the Jewish leaders.

##### *Betrayal agreement*

Read Luke 22:4 – 5.

He goes to the chief priests and officers.

Who are they?

The chief priests are Sadducees. And the officers or captains are the Jewish temple police.

Gentile soldiers could be stationed in the outer court to maintain order. And so, when Paul was mobbed in the outer court, Gentile soldiers could run down and rescue Paul from the mob.

But no Gentile could be inside the inner court. Therefore there was a Jewish temple police force to maintain order in the inner court.

And they were involved in the conspiracy here.

Why was their involvement necessary?

They were needed because it would be their role to arrest Jesus.

Now why were these Jewish leaders glad that Judas offered to help them?

They needed Judas to do three things. And he will accomplish the first two, but not the third.

- 1) He was needed to show where Jesus could be arrested apart from the multitudes.

We saw in section 146 that they were trying to find a way to arrest Him by stealth away from the multitudes. And so they needed Judas to show them where they could have an opportunity to do that.

He will accomplish this.

- 2) The second reason he was needed concerned a point of Roman law.

By Roman law, a Roman cohort could not be released to make an arrest until someone first appeared before the Roman governor accusing another of a crime punishable under Roman law.

Therefore they needed Judas to appear before the Roman governor, who was then Pontius Pilate, and accuse Jesus of a crime punishable under Roman law.

And he will accomplish this purpose too, as we shall see later.

- 3) The third reason he is needed is to serve as the prosecuting witness at the civil or Roman trial.

He won't be needed for the Jewish trial. But he will be needed for the Roman or civil trial.

And as we shall see, he will fail to fulfil this third element.

### *The price*

Read Matthew 26:15.

And negotiations over how much they were going to pay him ultimately came down to thirty pieces of silver.

This fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy that the Messiah would be sold for thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah 11:4-14.

### *30 pieces of silver*

But before turning to Zechariah, let's focus on the significance of the thirty pieces of silver because this was not an accidental price.

Read Exodus 21:32.

<sup>32</sup> *"If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.*

The Mosaic Law said that if you owned an ox and your ox gored to death a neighbour's slave, you are obligated to pay your neighbour thirty pieces of silver.

That was the valued price of a dead slave.

And as Old Testament history progressed that number became symbolic of contempt.

If you wanted to show contempt for somebody you would give him thirty pieces of silver, conveying to him that he is worth as much as a dead slave is worth. So, if someone was purchasing a thing and negotiating a price, to avoid the figure of thirty they would settle for either 29 or 31.

Now, when Zechariah became a prophet God asked Zechariah to play a Messianic role, a role the Messiah would fulfil, the role of a good shepherd. This is found in Zechariah 11:4-14.

For a period of time he was to feed the flock destined for slaughter. (Zechariah 11:4-11.)

Now read what happened next in Zechariah 11:12 – 13.

<sup>12</sup> *I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

After a period of feeding this flock he was then to go before the Jewish elders and say, "We did not agree to a salary in advance, so pay me what you think my work is worth. If it is worth something to you, pay me accordingly. If it is worth nothing to you, it is ok to pay me nothing."

It would have been a lot less insulting to Zechariah to pay him nothing. But to show their contempt for the prophet they paid him thirty pieces of silver, saying to him, "How much is your work worth? It is worth the price of a dead slave."

And then God told Zechariah two things.

- 1) First of all, He told Zechariah to take the thirty pieces of silver and dump it in the temple compound area, just as Judas will do with his thirty pieces of silver.
- 2) And secondly He told Zechariah, "This was *that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.*"

What God told Zechariah was: the day will come when God Himself, the God of Israel, will be sold for the price of a dead slave.

And so when the chief priests were negotiating with Judas for the price of betrayal they did not settle for 29 or 31.

They settled for thirty pieces of silver to show their contempt, and they sold the Messianic God-man for the price of a dead slave.

#### *Purchased a sacrifice*

There is one more important thing to notice here in this context.

All of the finances of the chief priests came out of the temple treasury. So ultimately all of those thirty pieces of silver came out of the temple treasury.

One major purpose for the temple treasury was to purchase sacrifices.

Now this was not their intent that day, but this is what they did that day.

They purchased a sacrifice, the final sacrifice for sin!

#### *Judas consented*

Read Luke 22:6.

*So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.*

## **5. The Last Passover and the First Lord's Supper, § 149-159**

### *A note about Robertson's Harmony*

A.T. Robertson, who put this harmony together somewhere in the late 1800's or early 1900's, obviously didn't have any Jewish friends that he could enquire of. He didn't quite understand the order of the Passover and so got the order here wrong. Had he stayed with Luke's order he would have made a lot fewer mistakes, but he violates the order that Luke gives us. And he felt that Luke had one cup too many. In reality Luke has two cups too few. So I have rearranged his harmony so that most of it follows Luke's order and it follows the order in which the Jewish people observe the Passover to this day.

### **a. *The Preparation for the Seder, § 149, Mark 14:12-16; Matthew 26:17-19; Luke 22:7-13***

In section 149 we have the preparation for the Seder.

The Seder is the Hebrew name for the Passover meal. The word Seder means order, and the meal follows the order in a very specific step by step process.

*Passover and Unleavened Bread*

Read Luke 22:7.

Notice once again that by this time Passover and Unleavened Bread were tied together.

*Date – 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – 6 April, AD 30 – Thursday*

It is the day *on which the Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed.*

So it is now the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, AD 30.

*Preparation*

Read verse 8.

Two men, Peter and John, are charged with getting the Passover ready.

What did that involve?

In the days when the Temple stood, there were nine specific steps in getting the Passover ready. And there are other orderly steps, the Seder steps, once you come to have the meal.

- 1) First of all they had to go with the lamb to the temple compound. And the lamb would be tested to make sure it was without spot and without blemish.
- 2) Secondly, they would then kill the lamb inside the temple compound.
- 3) Thirdly, the blood would be poured out into a bowl of some kind.

And because everyone had to do this in the temple compound, it was quite crowded at this time.

They would kill the lamb and catch the blood in the outer area of the temple compound.

- 4) Then fourthly, the blood would be taken to the altar.

To do this they had three long lines of Levites going from the outer court to the inner court where the altar was.

The bowl would be passed from one priest to another until it reached the altar. And then the blood was poured out on the base of the altar.

All this was accomplished in a three hour period from about three in the afternoon until 6 in the evening.

- 5) Fifthly, they would sing certain Psalms. Psalms 113-118.
- 6) Sixthly, the lamb would be cleaned.

That means they would skin the lamb, and the entrails would be removed.

- 7) Seventh, a part of the lamb would be left for the priesthood to partake of. And the priests would bring that upon the altar.
- 8) Eighth, the rest of the lamb was taken home to be roasted by fire.
- 9) And ninth, the other Passover items would then be prepared and made ready.

That included especially the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, and the wine.

Essentially this is what Peter and John would be doing.

*Where?*

Read Luke 22:9 - 13

Now, because so many pilgrims would be coming to Jerusalem for the Passover, it was impossible to house everybody within the walls of the city.

So outside the city walls they erected huge tent cities. And most pilgrims would eat their Passover in these tents outside the wall.

So, unless you lived inside the city or made special preparations, you would not be able to have it within the city.

This shows that Jesus made special preparations.

*A man carrying water*

He tells these two men that when they go back into the city and go by the well, what they will see is a man with a pitcher of water.

Why is that unusual? Why would that stand out to them?

In the context of the Middle East, and it is still true in the Arab towns in Israel to this day, it is the women who go out for the water, not the men.

So it would be very unusual to see a man with a pitcher and drawing water.

They are to follow the man to the house that he enters.

*My time is at hand*

Now read the second part of Matthew's verse 18.

Jesus points out that this is a very significant Passover, because, He says, *My time is at hand*.

This will be the Passover fulfillment. At this Passover He will die.

Remember that, in the Jewish reckoning of time, the Passover will be from sundown until sundown – from sundown on Thursday evening to sundown on Friday evening.

*An upper room*

Now read Mark verse 15.

What will the owner of the house show them?

Jesus points out that they will be shown a large upper room.

It would be a second level room, which was typical of only the wealthy class. It would be a separate room on the second floor.

And furthermore the stairwell leading to it would be outside the house, not inside the house. So they could go in and out without going through the lower part of the house.

#### *Furnished and ready*

Now what two things does He tell them about this room?

- 1) Number one, it is already furnished.

That would include the table.

#### *Reclining*

There wouldn't be any chairs because at Passover they sat on the ground and leaned against large pillows because at the Passover meal they recline. They don't sit in chairs, they recline.



The exact origin for this reclining is not known, but its meaning is clear.

Those who were slaves in the ancient world had to eat their food either standing up or sitting, but those who were free could recline at their banquet tables.

Since the Passover celebrates their freedom from slavery in Egypt, they all recline on that night.

The symbolism is that every Jew is free, even though his present reality may be bondage.

The first thing He tells them about this room is that it is already furnished.

- 2) And secondly, it was ready.

In other words, everything else needed for the feast was already prepared.

All they need to do is deal with the lamb which had to be done at the temple compound.

But everything else was already prepared and there would be no further work they would have to do.

And so Jesus made all the arrangements to have everything ready well before this night.

And now Peter and John *prepared the Passover*.

#### *Passover's purpose*

The purpose of the Passover meal is to relate the historical facts of the exodus from Egypt and to affirm the hope of a future redemption.

### *Passover's order*

It has a very carefully defined order of ceremony with fifteen divisions in it, which we won't detail in this course.

But there are some important details we need to have in mind as we read on.

### *The Four Cups*

On this night, everyone will drink four cups of wine, and each cup has its own name.

- 1) The first cup is known as the Cup of Blessing, and it begins the ceremony.
- 2) The second cup is called the Cup of Plagues, symbolizing the ten plagues that fell upon the Egyptians.
- 3) The third cup is the Cup of Redemption, symbolizing the blood of the animal that saved the Jews from the last plague.
- 4) The fourth cup is the Cup of Praise, and it refers to the praise psalms (Ps. 115-118), which are sung at the conclusion.

They drink the first two cups before the main meal, and the third and fourth cups after the meal.

### *The Three Matzahs*

Also, on this night, everyone will eat unleavened bread or Matzah.

There are three matzahs, three unleavened loaves of bread.

And in the centre of the table is a single bag called a Matzah Tash. It is one bag, either square or round, with three separate compartments.

A loaf of unleavened bread is placed into each compartment. And while there are three loaves of unleavened bread in one bag, each loaf is separated from the other by a single sheet of cloth.

And there are three requirements for this bread to qualify for the Passover.

- 1) First, it must be unleavened in accordance with the Law of Moses.
- 2) Secondly, it must be striped to make it more brittle.
- 3) Thirdly, it must be pierced in order to impede the fermenting or leavening process.

If any one of these three things is missing, the matzah would not qualify for Passover.

### *Breaking of the Afikomen*

The central feature of the Passover makes use of these three matzahs, and is called the Afikomen Ceremony or the Breaking of the Afikomen.

In this ceremony, the middle matzah is taken out of the matzah tash and broken in two.

The smaller piece is used for the special benediction over the matzah just before the meal starts. It is returned to its place in the matzah bag.

The larger piece is wrapped in a linen cloth and hidden away to be used later, after the meal.

### *Finding of the Afikomen*

Then after the meal is over, and in conjunction with the third cup of wine, it is removed from its hiding place, unwrapped, broken into small pieces about the size of an olive, distributed to all, and eaten.

### *Afikomen*

The middle matzah that was broken, wrapped, hidden, and later unwrapped is the afikomen.

The word itself is a Greek word that literally means “to the entertainment.” It was the desert or last thing eaten at the end of a Greek meal, just before the entertainment began.

### *We do this in remembrance of that*

Now here is an interesting aspect of Judaism: In all their rituals, both Biblical ones and rabbinic ones, they always have reasons for the rituals they perform.

We do this because of that. For all the other rituals of the Passover, and there are quite a few, there is an explanation as to why they do it: we do this in remembrance of that.

*No explanation*

But for this one, strangely enough, they have no explanation.

All the rabbis have come up with so far is that the three loaves represent the Cohens which is the priesthood, the Levites, and the House of Israel.

But they don't explain why the middle one is taken out, why it is broken, why it is wrapped in a cloth, why it is hidden away, and why it is brought out again.

When a Jew becomes a believer in Jesus he finally recognizes what this signifies and why Jesus said *this is my body given for you*.

*Significance of requirements for the unleavened bread*

We mentioned earlier that there are three requirements for the bread to qualify for the Passover.

- 1) The first requirement is that the bread had to be unleavened, and leaven was the symbol of sin in the Scriptures.

Jesus had an "unleavened" body in that He was sinless (II Cor. 5:21).

<sup>21</sup> *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

If He had committed only one sin, that would have disqualified Him from being the Passover sacrifice. But Yeshua was the only Jew who ever lived and kept the Mosaic Law perfectly.

And by His perfect keeping of the Law, He did have an "unleavened" body.

- 2) Secondly, the bread had to be striped.

And the body of Jesus was striped by means of the Roman scourge (Jn. 19:1).

This was prophesied by Isaiah in Isaiah 53:5.

<sup>5</sup> *But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.*

- 3) The third requirement is that it also had to be pierced.

The body of Jesus was pierced at His Crucifixion on two occasions: first, by the nails, and secondly, by the spear of the Roman soldier (Jn. 19:34, 37).

And Zechariah 12:10 prophesied that one day all Jews will look on Him *whom they have pierced*.

<sup>10</sup> *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.*

### *Afikomen Ceremony's symbolism*

Now earlier we mentioned that three loaves of unleavened bread were placed in a special bag called the matzah tash, one bag with three compartments. The three loaves of unleavened bread represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And in the afikomen ceremony, the middle matzah is removed from the bag, broken in two, wrapped in linen cloth, hidden away, and later found again in conjunction with the third cup.

Then it is broken into smaller pieces and given to each person around the table.

Each of these actions is symbolic:

- 1) The removal of the middle matzah from the bag represents the Incarnation, when God became man in the person of Jesus.
- 2) The breaking of the middle loaf is a picture of the death of the Messiah. At this point in the ceremony He said, *this is My body broken for you*.
- 3) The wrapping in the linen cloth pictures the body of Jesus, which was removed from the cross, and wrapped in linen cloth (Luke 23:52-53).
- 4) The hiding is a picture of His burial.
- 5) The finding and unwrapping in conjunction with the third cup of wine represents the Resurrection on the third day.
- 6) The eating of it is a picture of John 6:22-59 (section 76 of the Harmony), where Jesus taught that one must eat His body and drink His blood to have eternal life, by which He means to believe that He is the Messianic King (Jn. 6:35, 47, 40, 54).

So eating the bread is symbolic of believing that He is the Messiah, who became the man Jesus, who died for our sins, who was wrapped in a linen cloth and buried, and who rose again on the third day.

And this is the significance of eating the bread at the Lord's supper.

### *Central ceremony*

There are many ceremonies during the Passover meal, but this is the central one.

And the gospel writers do not set out to describe every ceremony of the Passover. Rather, they focus on those parts that are relevant to their theme.

Now with that background let's read on.

***b. The Passover Observance, § 150, Mark 14:17; Matthew 26:20; Luke 22:14–16***

Read Luke 22:14 – 16.

Jesus is very careful to keep the Mosaic Law so He came to Jerusalem every year for Passover.

But this particular Passover is unique. Jesus says:

*I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you ...*

*This Passover.*

How is this Passover different from all others?

- i. First, He says, "*before I suffer.*"

It is unique because this is the Passover in which the feast will finally be fulfilled by His own blood.

And what Isaiah predicted in Isaiah 53:1 – 9 was fulfilled by Jesus. The Messiah is the Lamb of God.

- ii. And secondly, He points out that this will be His last Passover until the Messianic Kingdom.

And in the Kingdom He will again observe the Passover, and later, as we will see, He specifies that it will be with the apostles.

**c. *The First Cup, § 151, Luke 22:17-18***

*Harmony sequence – confused cups*

During the Passover dinner there are four cups of wine. And the first two cups come before the dinner. And here A.T. Robertson just put all the cups together, not recognising the distinctions between them. So we consider section 151 here before section 152.

*The first cup*

Read Luke 22:17 – 18.

Notice that Jesus gives thanks for the cup. The first cup in Judaism is called the cup of thanksgiving. So this is a reference to the first cup of wine.

And the way the ceremony begins is: The candles are lit by the woman of the household. If she is not present, and there are no women in this passage, a man does it.

And then comes the drinking of the first cup, and this actually begins the ceremony.

*Last Passover*

So He took this cup and He gave a special thanksgiving over it. And again He points out in verse 18 that this will be His last Passover until the establishment of the Kingdom.

*Fruit of the vine*

Also notice the phrase *the fruit of the vine*.

People who believe that they drank grape juice point out that it doesn't say "wine", it says "fruit of the vine". That phrase will be found in any Passover book, but the wine you sip in the Jewish context will always be fermented.

The term "fruit of the vine" was a term used for Passover wine because other wines, in order to cause it to ferment quickly, would have some leavening added into it.

But Passover wine had to ferment naturally, without added leavening.

And therefore, if you go to a Jewish store for example, you will see wines listed there as kosher for Passover or not kosher for Passover.

**d. *The Washing of the Feet and the First Prediction of Judas' Betrayal, § 152, John 13:1-20***

*Passover background – what Jesus already knew*

John points out four things that Jesus was aware of during and even before the time of this Passover meal. Four things that give meaning and significance to what He would do and say.

Read John 13:1 – 3

What are the things that Jesus knew both before and during this Passover?

- i. Even before this Passover Jesus in His humanity already knew that his hour had come to make the atonement.
- ii. While He was in this world He loved His own who were in the world, and He loved them to the end.
- iii. And *during Supper* He was aware that Judas had already made the decision to betray Him, and that this decision was inspired by Satan.
- iv. And He was aware *that He had come forth from God and was going back to God*.

These four facts are the foundation for all that He would say and do during this Passover.

*Washing of hands*

In the Jewish observance of the Passover, following the first cup comes the washing of the hands.

Normally the one who washes the hands is a servant, and he would go to each one with a bowl and a pitcher.

And they put their hands over the bowl and the servant would pour the water over the hands. And there is a towel wrapped around the side of the servant. They take the towel and dry their hands.

*Jesus*

But read what Jesus does in verses 4 – 5.

What does He do?

First of all Jesus takes the servant role and does the washing. And this illustrates what Paul teaches in Philippians 2:5-8, that He came as a servant.

Secondly, in place of washing the hands He washes the feet. And His reason for doing so is found in what He knew, as we shall soon see.

*Peter*

Read Peter's reaction to Jesus is doing in verses 6 – 11.

In the Greek, Peter's response is a bit more emphatic. He says:

*Is such a one as you to wash the feet of such a one as I?*

And the grammar requires a negative answer: *no you won't; you won't wash my feet!*

But then Jesus says:

*If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.*

In other words, you won't be part of my household.

So Peter says: in that case wash all of me. He enthusiastically wants to be part of Jesus' household.

But then Jesus replied:

*He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.*

#### *Contemporary context*

Now in the context of Jesus' day, why does someone who has had a bath need to wash his feet?

Most people, unless they were wealthy, didn't have their own bath house in their own home. So there was a public bathhouse they would go to.

And in the dry streets of Israel, and in the long summer months, by the time they arrived home their feet would be dirty again because of the dust and so on.

So there was always a place at the door where they would wash their feet before going into the house.

#### *Meaning*

Jesus uses this common practice from their every day lives to illustrate a spiritual reality. What is it?

Being bathed illustrates being saved and consequently being free from sin.

And just as feet become dusty on the road, so we still sin along the way.

But in spite of the dust on their feet they were still considered clean, only needing to wash their feet.

Even so, we do not lose our salvation as a result of our sins, we only need to cleanse ourselves of sin, which we do by confessing our sins according to 1 John 1:9.

#### *Application*

Then Jesus gives them the application for this lesson. Read verses 12 – 17.

What is the point that He is drawing out of this lesson?

He comes to the point explicitly in verses 15 – 16. He says He set them an example to follow.

Then He announces the meaning of the example with those words "*Truly, truly ...*".

Do you remember the significance of those words?

Jesus is the only one in the New Testament to use them at the beginning of a sentence. And the Greek word is *amen*, which is actually a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning to be firm, steady, or trustworthy.

And it could be rendered, "I who am the Amen [Truth itself] tell you as a most certain and infallible truth."<sup>iv</sup>

And thus He highlights the application He wants them to draw out of this lesson:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than His master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him."*

So this is not an ordinance, as some churches teach. Rather it is an example showing that we are to take on the role of a servant.

We are those who have been sent by our Master and we are His servants.

#### *Betrayal foretold*

Having made His application, He returns to another issue that He raised in passing when He said, "*you are clean, but not all of you.*"

Read verses 18 – 20.

Jesus points out that someone is present who will betray Him. No one is named or identified yet.

This is the first prediction of betrayal within the Passover dinner.

#### *Purpose*

And what did Jesus give as His purpose for telling them this?

So that, when it does occur, they may believe that He is the Messiah.

This is a prophecy to be fulfilled in the very short term that will verify that He is who He says He is.

#### *Receive Him*

Then He draws a contrast with Judas' rejection of Him and says:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."*

e. *Carpas: The Second Prediction of Judas' Betrayal, § 153, Mark 14:18-21; Matthew 26:21-23; Luke 22:21-23*

[ Robertson's Harmony ]

[ In his harmony, A.T. Robertson puts John 13:21 – 30 alongside Mark:14:18 – 21; Matthew 26:21 – 23; and Luke 22:21 – 23. He does this because he didn't understand the order of the Passover. John is describing a later event than the other three gospel writers, and we will look at that in its place in the order. ]

*Reclining*

Now read Mark verse 18.

He says *they were reclining at the table and eating*.

Some translations say they sat at the table, but the meaning of the word here is to recline, because at the Passover table you recline.

*Second prediction of betrayal*

As they recline at the table, what does Jesus tell them?

One of them, even one who is eating with Him, will betray Him.

This is His second prediction during this Passover that one of them would betray Him.

*Carpas*

Now notice how they respond to this and what happens next.

Read Mark verses 19 – 21.

What happens here is a ceremony called Carpas.

In the Carpas ceremony each person takes a green vegetable, normally a piece of parsley, and dips it into salt water, and then eats it.

*Symbolism*

Why do they do this?

Parsley is the preferred vegetable because it is a symbol of the hyssop which was dipped in the blood and applied to the lintel and doorposts of the house in Egypt.

And green is a symbol of spring, and spring is a symbol of youth. This signifies that they were just a young nation.

And the salt water represents the Red Sea.

In the springtime of their nationhood God saved them by means of the salt waters of the Red Sea.

*Second prophecy of betrayal*

Therefore, scattered across the table would be several salt water dishes so that there is a salt water dish within easy reach of three or four people.

When He makes the announcement that one of them is going to betray Him, of course they all want to know who it is. He does not name anyone.

This is the second time He prophesies about a betrayer, and He doesn't name anyone.

But He does give a clue. Read Matthew verse 23.

*"He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me".*

At that point of time Jesus would have taken His parsley or green vegetable and dipped it in the salt water dish.

And at that same point of time Judas took his green vegetable and dipped it into the same salt water dish.

And that act of Judas identified him as the betrayer.

But the apostles elsewhere at the table did not catch the signal.

***f. The Breaking of the Middle Matzah, § 154, Mark 14:22; Matthew 26:26; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24***

Now we come to the breaking of the middle matzah, the middle loaf.

Read Luke 22:19

At this point He took out the middle loaf, broke it in two, wrapped the larger half of it up in a linen cloth and hid it.

Then He says two things about this bread. What are they?

- i. *This is My body which is given for you.*

Is He teaching, as some say, that the bread turns into His real body?

What does He mean?

He says, this particular piece of bread in the context of the Passover is symbolic of His body.

The very purpose of the Passover is to remember the historical facts of their deliverance from Egypt.

And every part of the ceremony is symbolic. They do this to remember that. The focus is on remembrance.

He is not referring to any bread or wafer commonly used in churches today.

He is referring to the middle loaf of unleavened bread, and saying that just as each other item in the Passover is symbolic, so the ceremonies surrounding that piece of bread are picturing His body, just as we described earlier.

And this aspect of the Passover, for which they previously had no explanation, now has an explanation!

This bread, broken in this ceremony, represents His body, the body of the Messiah, who became the man Jesus, who would die for our sins, who would be wrapped in a linen cloth and buried, and who would rise again on the third day.

These events are about to happen, but as we shall see, the disciples do not yet understand.

ii. *Do this in remembrance of Me*

Secondly, He instructs them to continue the practice of breaking bread in remembrance of Him.

The Greek tense is the Present Imperative, which denotes a command or entreaty to continue to do an action or to do it repeatedly.

Therefore, continue to break bread in remembrance of Him.

So He's not teaching that the bread turns into His real body (transubstantiation), and He's not teaching that the true body is with the bread (consubstantiation).

Rather, it is a remembrance. It is a memorial of His body which was broken, wrapped in linen, buried, and rose again three days later.

*Summary of three ceremonies*

Here the three gospel writers, and Paul, all summarise three of the fifteen ceremonies that occur during Passover:

- i. Yachatz, the breaking of the middle loaf of bread,
- ii. Matza, the blessing for the unleavened bread, and
- iii. Tzafun, the finding and eating of the Afikomen.

The first two of these happen before the supper, and the third, the distribution and eating of the bread, happens immediately after the supper and immediately before the third cup.

*g. The Sop: The Third Prediction of Judas' Betrayal, § 155, Matthew 26:24-25; John 13:21-30*

Now we come to the sop in section 153. Its Hebrew name is Coreich, meaning “combining.” And it’s the last ceremony before the supper is served.

*Charoset*

On the table is a mixture called charoset.

It is a mixture of apples, nuts, honey, cinnamon, wine and lemon juice. These are all chopped up very finely, mixed together, and then left standing for about twenty four hours until it turns a deep brown colour, the colour of brick mortar.

And it’s eaten for the purpose of reminding the Jewish people of the work they had to do in Egypt as slaves – to make bricks and mortar to build storehouses for Pharaoh.

Now this is what they do in this ceremony:

- i. They take a small piece of unleavened bread (from the bottom loaf) and they dip it into the charoset.
- ii. Then they also dip it into horse radish to make the tears come as a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and the mourning for the sons who were killed by drowning.
- iii. And then they take a second small piece of bread and put it on top to form a small sandwich.

Now everybody dipped their own green vegetable into the salt water, but this sandwich is made by the one who officiates.

In this case Jesus would make it. And He would do it thirteen times, once for each of the twelve and once for Himself.

Now with that background in mind, let’s see what happens.

*Announcement*

Read John 13:21.

Now for the third time Jesus announces that one of them will betray Him.

And again they all want to know who it is.

### *Reclining*

Read verses 22 – 25.

There is something Jewish to notice here, and it helps us to picture the scene.

What was happening in verse 23?

One of the disciples (*whom Jesus loved*) *was reclining on Jesus' bosom*. And *reclining* is the correct term.

At Passover time they recline, but for certain intervals they make a further reclining towards the left. And one of the times when they recline further to the left is when they eat this particular sop.

So, while they are reclining, John asks: "*Lord, who is it?*"

### *The clue*

Read the answer in verses 26 – 27.

How does He answer them?

Again He does not name anyone, but He does give a second clue.

The first one to receive the sop is the betrayer.

And then He dipped the sop and gave it to Judas.

### *Bitterness*

Now remember: what was this piece of bread dipped into, and why?

It is dipped twice: into the brown fruit mixture, and into the horse radish.

And therefore there are two purposes in eating it.

The first purpose is to remember their slavery in Egypt.

And secondly, the purpose is to bring tears into the eyes as a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and the mourning for the sons who were killed by drowning.

And for Jesus this was indeed a bitter moment. One of His own was about to betray Him, which would have brought Him some tears as well.

### *Satan*

Then what happens after Judas eats the morsel?

He has been given at least three opportunities at this meal to turn back from his plan to betray Jesus, but he did not.

At this time, Satan again enters into Judas. And his actions are now going to be inevitable.

And so Jesus tell him, "*What you do, do quickly.*"

*Disciples don't understand*

Do the disciples understand?

Read verses 28 – 29.

Even at this point, and in spite of all the clues they were given, the disciples still don't understand.

They are assuming that Jesus sent him out to get some other things for the festival, or to make a donation to the poor.

*Judas departs*

Now Judas responds. Read verse 30.

*So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.*

At that point Judas leaves the festival. And he is not there for the rest of the feast and he is not there when they partake of the communion.

*Night*

Why did John add *and it was night*?

Of course it was night. The Passover is only observed at night, never in the daytime! It looks like an irrelevant statement.

So why does he add that detail?

One of John's themes throughout his gospel is the conflict between light and darkness.

He's not merely referring to a fact of history that it was nighttime when this happened. This was true, but it isn't the point that John is making.

The point is that Judas himself is of the night, of the kingdom of darkness. And the deed he is about to perform is a deed of the kingdom of darkness.

***h. The Third Cup, § 156, Mark 14:23-25; Matthew 26:27-29; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26***

After they have eaten the sop, the bread dipped in fruit mince and horse radish, they would have the main festival meal itself.

Immediately following the meal they would find the afikomen and eat it.

And then they would drink the third cup of wine.

*The third cup*

Read Luke 22:20 and Matthew 26:27 – 28.

How do we know this is the third cup?

Luke says He took the cup after they had eaten. And the cup taken after they had eaten would be the third cup, which the Jewish people call “the cup of redemption”.

*This cup*

So when Jesus says, “*this cup*”, it is the third cup of the Passover, the cup of redemption that He is referring to.

*Redemption*

In Judaism it is a symbol of their physical redemption. It symbolizes the blood of the animal that saved the Jews from the last plague.

But now Jesus gives it a new meaning. What does it represent now?

Now it symbolizes His blood, His *blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*.

So now it becomes symbolic of spiritual redemption.

*Remembrance*

Read 1 Corinthians 11:25 – 26.

What is the reason Jesus exhorts us to drink the cup?

He says, *do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me*.

And, just as it was with the bread, so it is with the cup. Both eating the bread and drinking the cup are ceremonies we do in remembrance of Him, specifically in remembrance of His death and resurrection.

Again, it is not transubstantiation and it is not consubstantiation. It is a remembrance of Him.

*Observance frequency*

How often should we eat the bread and drink the cup?

Neither Jesus nor Paul answers that question.

Jesus said, *as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup ...* And that indicates that it is a repeated observance.

And since He is referring to the elements of the Passover which is observed annually, the we should observe the Lord's Supper at least once a year. Some do it quarterly, others monthly, and others weekly. These are all valid options.

#### *Until He comes*

Why does Paul finish verse 26 with, *until He comes*?

That means that the ceremony will be terminated with the second coming.

In the Kingdom the communion service, which is to remember His body and His blood, will be replaced by a sacrificial system with the same purpose. This will not be the Mosaic system, which has ended forever, but it will be the one that Ezekiel describes in chapters 40 – 48 of his book.

So the Lord's Supper is to proclaim His death - until He comes.

#### *When Jesus comes*

Now He has a personal message for the eleven disciples.

Read Matthew verse 29.

Is this Jesus' last Passover?

Yes, it is His last Passover before His death and resurrection.

But it is only His last Passover, He says, "*until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.*"

#### *With you*

Notice the phrase "with you".

When the Kingdom begins and the first Passover comes, He will have a private Passover service once again with these apostles, the eleven men who are still with Him.

#### *A guarantee*

What does this statement guarantee?

At least three things:

- i. It guarantees His return,
- ii. It guarantees their resurrection, and
- iii. It guarantees their place in the Kingdom and hence their eternal life.

#### *Summary*

And now to summarize:

This cup, the third cup of wine in the Passover, which symbolizes physical redemption from Egypt for the Jews, becomes a symbol of spiritual redemption for believers today.

*i. A Lesson in Greatness, § 157, Luke 22:24-30*

*Disputing disciples*

Now the disciples still don't understand what is about to happen. They are thinking that when the days of the feast are over He will set up His Messianic Kingdom. This is what they are anticipating.

And with the third cup He has just told them that He will not drink of this fruit of the vine until He drinks it new with them in the Kingdom.

Now notice how they respond.

Read Luke 22:24 – 30.

What are they doing?

They are arguing about who among them is the greatest.

*Three lessons*

Jesus takes this opportunity to teach them three lessons.

*i. The principle of greatness*

What is He telling them in verses 25 – 26?

He draws a contrast between the Gentile world, which is the unbelieving world, and the disciples in the Kingdom.

The kings of the world show their greatness by exercising their authority over their subjects.

But the leaders in His body show greatness by means of serving.

This is the principle of greatness.

*ii. The example of greatness*

Then, in verse 27, He provides them with a specific example of greatness.

As we read earlier, He Himself took on the role of a servant at the very table where they are now reclining.

Though He is the Messiah, He is among them as one who serves.

Therefore He is their example of what greatness involves.

*iii. His promise to them*

And thirdly, in verses 29 – 30, He promises them two things which are as certain as the fact that God the Father has granted Him a kingdom. What are they?

They will eat and drink at His table in the His kingdom.

And, concerning their future role, He repeats a promise He made earlier: they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel in the Messianic Kingdom.

j. *The Prediction of Peter's Denial, § 158, Mark 14:27-31; Matthew 26:31-35; Luke 22:31-38; John 13:31-38*

During the Passover service there is always room for discussion, especially between the third and fourth cup. And that's what happens at this Passover in section 158.

Here Jesus begins a lengthy teaching session, in which He gave His final instructions to the apostles.

*Glory*

Read John 13:31 – 32.

Jesus begins by saying, *"Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him."*

Why does He begin, *"Now ..."*?

Because the departure of Judas has guaranteed His betrayal. And His betrayal in turn assures His coming death.

And by means of His death the Son will glorify the Father, but the Son will also be glorified by the Father.

And this will happen immediately.

*Imminent departure*

Read verse 33.

Two days earlier Jesus announced His coming betrayal to the disciples and dated it for them. He said (Matthew 26:2),

*"You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion."*

But they don't understand Him.

Two days have passed, and again He tells them very plainly of His coming departure. In a few hours He would leave them, and it would be impossible for them to come with Him.

How do you think they would be responding to this within themselves?

They have been with Him for three years now, all the while believing that He is the Messiah. And during those years, as they waited for Him to establish His kingdom, they had learned to trust Him completely for every need. He had been like a father to them, providing, protecting, guiding, and teaching them as the children He loved.

He loved them with His divine agape love, and they enjoyed close fellowship with Him.

Now in a few hours He would leave them!?

This would be hard to understand, and perhaps it overwhelmed them and caused them to grieve.

### *A new commandment*

Now read what Jesus tells them next in verses 34 – 35.

He leaves a new commandment with them. They are to love one another, even as He has loved them.

He will no longer be with them, but His love which they have been enjoying is to continue as they follow His example and love one another.

### *A new standard for love*

Why does He call this a new commandment?

The command to love is not new. In the Law of Moses they are commanded to love God and they are commanded to love their neighbour.

In what sense is this command new?

He changes the standard. Now the standard is not one's love for oneself, but His love for us. And that is a much higher standard than in the Mosaic Law.

Both the very nature of the disciples' love for each other and the expression of it are to be as He loved them.

And this would be their badge, the sign by which *all men will know that you are My disciples*.

### *Sheep scattered*

Next He tells them more of what is about to take place. Read Matthew verse 31.

Here Jesus quotes from the prophet Zechariah.

Read Zechariah 13:7.

*<sup>7</sup> "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,"  
Declares the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;  
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.*

And He tells them that He is about to depart, to be struck down, and on this very night they are all going to be scattered away from Him.

### *Meet in the Galilee*

And then gives them an important instruction – one which they miss. Read verse 32 of Matthew.

What is He telling them to do here?

Basically He is telling them: "Do not stay in this city. Once I am arrested leave the city and head up to the Galilee, a three days journey." And three days later He will rise again and He will meet them there.

But again, they never understand what He is trying to tell them.

The events that follow take them by surprise, and they don't leave for Galilee until much later.

### *Peter's question*

Now Jesus' announcement of His departure raised several questions in the minds of the disciples. Four of their specific questions are recorded in the discourse that follows, and the first is asked by Peter.

Read John 13: 36 – 37a.

Peter's question concerns Jesus' destination. Jesus had left Jerusalem and Judea on previous occasions, and had stayed outside the land of Israel to avoid opposition and arrest. On each of these occasions the disciples had accompanied Him.

Peter could not understand where He might go that they could not go with Him.

### *Peter will follow Him (in crucifixion)*

So Jesus reiterates that it is impossible for them to follow Him at that time. And then He adds, "*but you will follow later*".

And "*you*" is singular, meaning Peter specifically.

What is He telling Peter here?

Where is Jesus going?

He is going to crucifixion.

So He tells Peter that someday he will follow Jesus in the same manner.

And indeed, if the church records are correct, Peter was also crucified on an X type cross, upside down.

But Peter doesn't understand any of this, and wants to know why he can't follow Jesus *right now*!

### *Spiritual battle*

Jesus doesn't answer his question. Instead He shows Peter the path that lies ahead for him.

Read Luke 22:31 – 32.

What is He telling Peter here?

- i. First, that what is about to take place is the result of a tremendous spiritual conflict over Peter – a conflict between the Messiah and Satan.

And as a result of this conflict Peter will follow the wrong path, but his faith will not fail, and he will turn again to the right path.

- ii. And secondly, once he has turned back to the right path, he is to strengthen the other apostles.

The Greek word is *stērizō*, meaning "to fix, make fast, to set" and it is often translated "establish."

Peter himself will use the word when he writes in 2 Peter 1:12,

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.*

This is how he is to strengthen them, by establishing them in the truth.

And, as we shall see, Peter will be the first member of the apostolic group to see the resurrected Messiah. And at that time Jesus will remind him of this role.

#### *Peter's claim to loyalty*

But, for now, Peter does not understand.

Read his emphatic response to Jesus in Matthew 26:33 and in Luke 22:33.

What is he saying here?

Peter claims to have a loyalty to Jesus that the others don't have.

And he emphasizes his sureness of his loyalty and his willingness to die with Jesus.

#### *Denial prophesied*

But Peter does not know his own heart.

Read Jesus' prophecy concerning Peter in Mark 14:30.

Jesus also is very emphatic!

*You yourself, Peter, who claim this steadfast loyalty, will this very night, before twice a rooster has crowed, three times will deny Me.*

#### *Rooster crowing*

Now there are two ways to take this reference to a rooster crowing.

- i. It could be talking about a rooster crowing once and then crowing a second time later on.
- ii. But it could also be talking about something else.

This expression was also used to refer to the sounding of a trumpet to announce the changing of the guard at the Antonia fortress at the end of each 3 hour watch. This would happen at 9 pm, midnight and 3 am.

And most likely Jesus is referring, not to a bird crowing, but rather to the cock crowing of the night watch.

Before the second cock crowing, meaning before midnight, Peter will deny Him three times.

*Peter's assertion*

But Peter will have the last word on the subject.

Read Mark 14:31

Peter affirms that he will never deny Him. And the other apostles emphasize the same sureness. They are ready to die with Him, even this very night.

But remember, they are not expecting a death at the end of this meal, they are expecting a Kingdom to be established.

*An earlier instruction repealed*

Now Jesus moves on with His discourse.

Read Luke 22:35 – 38.

What is He doing in verse 35?

He is reminding them that when He sent out the twelve in section 70, and when He sent out the 70 in section 102, they were to carry no purse and no sandals with them. And they didn't lack anything. Everything was provided for them.

Then, with the words "*but now*", He draws a contrast between His instruction to them on those occasions and what they are to do now.

Now He is repealing that earlier instruction and they need to make their own provision for these things.

Why?

Because while He was here on earth they were experiencing Kingdom living and these things would simply be provided for them automatically.

But now, because the King has been rejected and is departing, they need to make their own preparations. They need to take a coat, to take a wallet, and to prepare what they need for their journeys.

And why would they need a sword?

This was not a sword to be used for evangelism, nor was it a sword to defend their faith, but the purpose of the sword would be personal defense.

We are not allowed to kill for the faith, but for our faith we must be willing to become martyrs.

*prophecy fulfilled*

Here Jesus quotes from Isaiah the prophet.

Read Isaiah 53:12.

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.*

This is a messianic prophecy, and He asserts that messianic prophecy will be fulfilled in Him.

He is the Messiah, and what is written about the Messiah is written about Him, and it will be fulfilled.

***k. The Hallel, § 159, Mark 14:26; Matthew. 26:30***

*The Hallel*

Read Mark's account.

In English that's the way we have to translate it because we don't have a verb equivalent to the Greek one.

The English word "hymn" is a noun.

But literally it doesn't say they sang a hymn. The word hymn (*humnéō*) is a verb in Greek. It literally says and they hymned.

And what they hymned is Psalms 113-118, with Psalm 118 being a very important Messianic Psalm.

The word hallel means praise.

And that is how the Passover ends:

They drink the fourth cup of wine, which is called the Cup of Praise,  
they sing these psalms,  
and then Passover is finished.

*Place in the Harmony*

Turn for a moment in your Harmonies to section 160, and look at the last sentence in the last verse, verse 31.

Here Jesus says, "*Get up, let us go from here.*"

The singing of hymns and drinking of the fourth cup probably occurred just before these words at the end of section 160.

They are still in the upper room throughout section 149, and then they finish the Passover and leave for Gethsemane, but the conversation continues as they go in section 161.

This conversation, by the way, is referred to as the Upper Room Discourse.

## C. The Promises and Admonitions by the King, § 160-161, John 14:1 – 16:33

### 1. In the Upper Room, § 160, John 14:1-3

At the time of this Passover, Jesus has spent three and a half years with these eleven men. And they have seen all that He has done and heard all that He has said.

Since His rejection by the Jewish leaders He has focused His attention on teaching His disciples and preparing them for the ministry they will have as a result of His rejection.

What would you say is the single most important lesson He taught them while He was with them?

...

The answer to that question will become apparent in what He is about to tell them now that there are only a few hours left before His crucifixion.

Read John 14:1-4.

*Troubled hearts*

Do you think their hearts were troubled? ... Why were their hearts troubled?

Just now Jesus has been telling them that He is about to leave them and they will not be able come with Him.

He told them He would be struck down and they would be scattered like sheep.

Then He told them to meet Him three days later in the Galilee.

He predicted Peter's denial that very night and spoke of the great spiritual battle going on over him.

And He told them that now they would need to take provisions for themselves, and even a sword for their defence.

They hear all these things and more, but they don't yet understand.

And no doubt their hearts are indeed troubled.

So He said to them, "*do not let your hearts be troubled.*"

But He didn't leave it there. How did He help them to calm their troubled hearts?

*Trust God, Trust Him*

First, He directed their attention away from the storm that troubled them to the ever faithful God, both God the Father and God the Son, whom they could trust.

Just a few moments ago He told them that everything written about the Messiah will be fulfilled, and it will be fulfilled in Him.

Now He tells them to trust God the Father and Jesus the Messiah to bring about everything that is written and everything that He has spoken and that He is now telling them.

### *Promises*

And then He gives them more content for their trust to take hold of. He promises them two things. What are they?

- i. He promises to go to His Father's house in heaven for the purpose of preparing a place for them.

This promise is not only for these disciples, but it is a promise to all believers. Everyone who becomes a believer is having a place prepared in Heaven. Once all the preparations are complete, once every single believer has his own niche in the New Jerusalem presently in Heaven, then Jesus will fulfill His next promise, and that is to return.

- ii. In verse 3 He promises to return.

And what will He do when He returns?

He will receive us to Himself for the purpose that where He is, there we may be also.

### *Rapture*

Now where was He then going?

He was going to heaven.

So, to be where He is means to be in heaven with Him.

Here is a hint of the pre-tribulation rapture.

How is this coming of Jesus for the saints different from the Second Coming?

At the Second Coming He is coming to judge the living and the dead, a judgement that will take place here on earth. And He is coming to establish His Messianic Kingdom here on earth for 1,000 years.

But according to this promise He will come for believers to take them to heaven where He is now preparing a place for them, just as the bridegroom would go to his father's house to prepare a place for his bride. And when it was ready he would return to take her to the place he had prepared.

So the second coming and the rapture are two quite distinct events.

### *Believe Him*

Just moments ago He told them that He would die in a few hours time, that He would be raised again, and that three days later He would meet them in Galilee.

Now here He adds that He will ascend into heaven, and we know that happened forty days after the resurrection. And He will be gone for a much longer period of time.

But their hearts are not to be troubled. Rather they must believe God and believe Him, the Messiah, trusting that all these events are unfolding according to the divine plan, and that He will indeed return to take them to the place He is going ahead to prepare for them in heaven.

## *The Way*

Then He tells them that they know how to get there: “*You know the way where I am going.*” But again they don’t understand, as the question of Thomas shows.

Read verses 5 – 7.

Here is the seventh “I am” statement, and we are quite familiar with it. But do we understand what He means?

There are four parts to His statement.

- i. *I am the way.* The way to where?

The way to the Father’s house where He is about to go to prepare a place for them.

What this means is explained by the next two statements.

- ii. *I am ... the truth.* What does He mean by saying that He is the Truth?

His own explanation of this is found in verse 7: “*If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.*”

How is it that knowing Him results in knowing the Father also?

To know Him is to know the Father because He is the truth about the Father.

- iii. *I am ... the life.*

He is the eternal life.

And how do we get eternal life?

He gave the answer in John 6:40 (and many other places)

<sup>40</sup> “*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.*”

We receive eternal life when we believe in Him and only by receiving eternal life can we come into the Father’s house.

- iv. *No one comes to the Father but through Me.*

There is no other way. He is the only way to the Father.

So there is only one possible way to get to heaven and to dwell with Him there.

He is the way to the Father’s house, He is the truth about the Father, and He is the life, the eternal life which we must have in order to come into the Father’s house.

And that answers Thomas’ question.

## *Father and Son are one*

Then Jesus adds, “*from now on you know Him and have seen Him.*”

Why does He begin, “*from now on ...*”?

From now on, from that point in time on, because they have known Jesus for the past three years they also know the Father and have seen Him.

Now Philip has a problem. He's been following this closely, but he doesn't understand.

Read verses 8 – 11.

What is Philip thinking?

He knows Jesus, but no doubt he feels that he doesn't know the Father. And his question shows that he didn't understand that all this time Jesus has been revealing the Father to them.

How does Jesus help him to understand?

He begins by reiterating that to see Him is to see the Father, or to know Him is to know the father. Then He explains why this is so and gives two lines of evidence to support His assertion.

Why is knowing Him the same as knowing the Father?

The reason is: He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.

And what is the evidence for this?

It is evidenced both by His words and by His works which are the words and works of the Father.

And if Philip has difficulty believing His words alone, he can believe on account of the works themselves.

*Greater works*

Now, having raised the subject of His own works, He has more to say to them about works. And He highlights the importance of what He is saying with His spotlight, *"Truly, truly, I say to you ..."*

Read verses 12 – 13.

What was the work of Jesus? What has He been doing?

In answering Thomas He has told them that He is the truth about the Father and that if they have seen Him they have seen the Father. And He has just told Philip that His works provide evidence that He and the Father are one.

As John declares in John 1:18,

<sup>18</sup> *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.*

The works of Jesus were to make the Father known.

Now He begins this statement with a condition. What is it?

*"He who believes in Me, ..."*

This points back to His opening exhortation: *"believe in God, believe also in Me"*.

If they trust God to bring about everything that is written by His prophets and to bring about everything that Jesus has revealed, then just as the Father has revealed Himself through His Son's works, so also the Father would reveal Himself through their works.

But then He adds that their works will be greater.

Now in what sense are the works of the believer greater than the works that Jesus Himself did?

It would not mean greater in quality because it would be impossible to supersede the quality of the miracles He performed.

But it means greater in quantity or greater in number. And the Father will be more widely revealed through the disciples than He was through Jesus.

This will be so He says, *"because I go to the Father."* This is only possible because He is going to the Father. Why?

Because, while He was on earth He was limited to one place just as we are. But because He has returned to the Father and He is also present in every believer, His work will be accomplished in many places at the same time.

This also reminds them that He is returning to the Father, which is where He began.

#### *Theme*

Now there is a progression of thought and a theme emerging in all these things Jesus is saying to them. Far from being a collection of isolated promises and exhortations, as is often taught, Jesus is developing a unified theme.

He began by pointing out their belief in God and in Him.

He has been telling them that He is going on ahead of them to prepare a place for them in His Father's house in heaven, and they know the way there.

The way to get there is to believe in Him. He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. And He has shown the Father to them by His words and by His works.

Now they too, and those who also believe in Him, are to carry on this same work of revealing the Father.

How can they do that?

He now begins tells them about a number of things that will enable them to do this work. Things that He will expand upon shortly.

#### *Ask in His name*

Read about the first of these in verses 13 – 14.

What is He telling them for the first time here?

Until now He has not told them to pray in His name. But after His death and resurrection they, and we, are to pray in His name.

What does it mean to pray in His name?

It means to ask on the basis of His authority, to ask for His sake, to ask because of our relationship with Him.

And because we believe in Him, we are in Him and He is in us, and we have the privilege of exercising His authority in prayer. And whatever we ask in His name He will do.

And what will be the outcome of this asking and this working?

He says, “*So that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*”

Just as the Son has glorified the Father while He was on earth, so He would continue to glorify the Father on earth through them, even though He would be in the Father’s house in heaven.

Thus He has given them the means they need to accomplish the work of revealing the Father – His very own authority.

And He will come back to this later in the discourse.

*Love*

Now read about the next thing He tells them in verse 15.

Is this a command?

No. In both the English translation and the Greek original this is an indicative statement. It presents a statement of fact.

How are love and keeping His commandments related?

We do not keep His commandments in order to love, or even to demonstrate our love!

Our keeping is the natural expression of our love.

As a result of our belief we will have eternal life, and as a result of having eternal life we will have love. And as a result of having love we will keep His commandments.

And what does it mean to keep His commandments?

Again the Greek word translated *keep* is richer in meaning than the English word. It is **τηρέω** **tēréō**; from the noun **tērós**, a warden or guard. It means to keep an eye on, to watch or observe attentively, and hence to guard, keep, obey.<sup>v</sup>

So the second thing making it possible for them to accomplish His work is the fact that their keeping His commandments will arise of itself out of their love for Him.

Again He will return to this later in the discourse.

Now read about the third thing in verses 16 – 17.

There are a number of points to notice in what Jesus says here.

- i. First notice that the Spirit is another Helper. Who was their first Helper?

Jesus.

And the Greek word, *another*, here means another of the same kind or another of equal quality.

So the Spirit is another Helper who, like Jesus, is also God.

- ii. Second, do you know what the Greek word for *Helper* means?

It is the word *Paraclete*, which literally means *one who is called alongside to help*.

The Spirit, who like Jesus is God, is called alongside to help them accomplish their work.

- iii. Thirdly He says, “*that He may be with you forever.*” Literally this says *unto or throughout the age*.

What does this imply?

He is not with them until they next sin! He is with them forever!

It also stands in contrast to Jesus’ imminent departure to the Father. He is going to the Father, But the Spirit will be with them forever.

- iv. Fourthly, notice the end of verse 17, “*... He abides with you and will be in you.*”

Here is the difference between the new and the old. He says the Spirit is with them, but soon He will be in them.

The Spirit was always with believers, but never in believers with just a few exceptions, like the prophets. In the Old Testament the Spirit indwelt only some believers, but not all. Furthermore the indwelling was not necessarily permanent.

So David’s prayer in his penitential prayer, Psalm 51, is “take not your Holy Spirit from me.” That was a valid Old Testament prayer, but not a valid New Testament prayer. Because here He says that once the Spirit indwells us, He indwells us forever.

Now what saves is not the indwelling, what saves is the work of regeneration, and once we believe, the Spirit regenerates our dead human spirit and we become alive to God.

And with the Old Testament saint, once he believed the Holy Spirit was with him. But now, as we believe, He is in us.

- v. Lastly, the world cannot see Him or know Him because they have denied the Truth.

Now that He is leaving them, they are to carry on His work of making the Father known. Their works will be greater in number because He goes to be with the Father. And to make this possible whatever they ask in His name will be done for them, their love for Him will express itself in their keeping His commandments, and the Holy Spirit will be called alongside to help them forever. And He will be in them.

*You will see Me*

Then He returns to the subject of His departure, which He does frequently throughout the discourse.

Read verses 18 – 21.

He told them earlier that He is about to be crucified and that He is going to the Father in heaven.

What does He add in verse 18?

He will not leave them as orphans, but He will come to them.

How will this be possible?

Because, although He dies on the cross, He will be resurrected. And when He is resurrected He will come to them and they will see Him. He mentions this very point a total of six times during this discourse (18, 19, 28; 16:16, 19, 22). He will come to them and they will see Him when He is resurrected.

*You will live*

What does He tell them next?

*“because I live, you will live also.”*

What does this mean?

His resurrection guarantees their resurrection. And because He lives even after His death, they too will live even after they die. As He said to Martha before He raised Lazarus,

*“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.”*

*What He adds*

Now verses 20 – 21 sound like what He has already told them. Is He just repeating Himself, or has He added something new?

- i. He already told them that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him.

Now He adds that they will be in Him and He in them.

- ii. He already told them that the one who loves Him will keep His commandments.

Now He adds that the one who loves Him:

- a. Will be loved by the Father,
- b. Will be loved by Him,
- c. And He will disclose Himself to him.

*Father and Son abide in the believer*

Now Judas has a question.

Read verses 22 – 24.

How does Jesus answer Judas' question, "*what then has happened that you are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world*"?

There are two groups of people: those who love Jesus, and those who do not.

Jesus will be able to disclose Himself to the one who loves Him because He and the Father "*will come to him and make Our abode with him.*" He and the Father will be abiding in the one who loves Him.

He told them earlier that the Spirit will be in them, so now we have learned that all three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Spirit) abide in the believer.

This is not so for the one who does not love Him.

Where did this idea come from?

It did not originate with Jesus. It is the word of the Father who sent Him.

*The Helper's role – to teach them and remind them*

Now He gives them one of the roles of the Holy Spirit. Read verses 25 – 28.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit will teach them all things and bring to remembrance everything He taught them.

And what is the significance of that for us?

It answers the question about how they can remember decades later what He actually taught.

Keep in mind that John writes his gospel in the early nineties. That's about sixty years after Jesus was here. How did he remember all those detailed messages? Because the Holy Spirit brought to his remembrance all that they had been taught.

*Peace*

What kind of peace does Jesus give them?

Not the kind of peace that the world talks of, but a peace of heart that stands in contrast to a troubled and fearful heart.

And that reminds us of where He began in verse 1: "*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.*" So this peace of heart stands on the firm foundation of trusting God the Father and trusting God the Son that exactly what they have spoken will come to pass.

What kind of peace does the world give?

When the world talks of peace it talks of the absence of conflict. But the peace that Jesus gives does not depend upon the absence of conflict.

Jesus will have more to say about peace at the end of His discourse.

*He will come to them*

Again He reminds them that He will come to them after the resurrection. And He also reminds them of His ascension to the Father.

And rather than giving rise to troubled and fearful hearts, this news should have inspired rejoicing in their hearts.

*Purpose*

Five times throughout this discourse Jesus tells them why He is speaking these things to them.

Read His first statement of purpose in verses 29 – 31.

Why is Jesus telling them all these things?

So that when they happen, they may believe. When they see these things happen, it will strengthen their belief that He is the Messiah.

And again, the fulfillment of the near term prophecies will verify Him as a prophet so they will be able to trust that the more distant prophecies will also come to pass.

*The ruler of the world*

In verse 30 He describes the spiritual realities behind what is about to take place. What are they?

- i. *The ruler of the world is coming.*

Why does Jesus say, “*he has nothing in Me?*”

He is without sin and therefore Satan has no authority over Jesus, and so he has no ability to bring about what is soon to take place.

Why then will Jesus die?

Satan has not authority or power to cause Jesus’ death, but ...

- ii. *So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father has commanded Me.*

He will die voluntarily because the Father has commanded Him to do it, and He always does *exactly as the Father has commanded Him*.

And what is His purpose for obeying the Father?

So that the world may know that He loves the Father.

*Departure*

At this point as we already noted, they sang hymns, drank the fourth cup, the cup of praise, and went out across the Kidron Valley and up to the Garden on the Mount of Olives, but the discourse continued as they went.

## 2. On the Way to Gethsemane, § 161, John 15:1-27 16:1-33

Now Jesus gathers together some of what He has just told them and wraps it in the illustration of the vine and its branches to increase their understanding of what He is teaching them.

Read John 15:1 – 11.

Has this passage ever raised questions for you? Perhaps it still does. Hopefully this study will shed some light on these questions for you.

Now lets begin with verses 1 – 3. Read them again.

Verse 2 needs some revision in the light of both the original language and the vine dressing practices of the first century. It begins:

*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.*

*Airo*

The word translated *He takes away* is αἶρω (*airō*). It can mean to take up and carry away, or to take away. And in the light of our vine dressing practices that may make sense.

But it also means to lift up or raise. And that would be a better translation in view of first century vine dressing practices.

The kind of vines they had in the first century Israel, and that are still used by the Arab population within the Land, grow parallel to the ground. And as long as they are sitting on the ground they won't produce fruit. So they lift up the vine and put a rock underneath it, and once the vine is lifted up it can produce fruit.

So if a believer is not bearing fruit, the Father will lift him up so he will be able to bear fruit.

*Kathairo*

What does He do to the branch that is bearing fruit?

The Greek word is καθαίρω (*kathairō*), which means to cleanse from filth or to purify.

And even here in Australia I have known a vine grower to spend many long days cleaning the leaves of his vines after a storm has covered them with dust and mud so that he will have a good crop of grapes.

So if a believer is bearing fruit, the Father will cleanse him from filth so that he will be able to bear more fruit.

*Katharos*

Then He says they are already clean. And the word is καθαρός (*katharós*) meaning pure, clean, without stain or spot.

And the means of their cleansing is the word which Jesus has spoken to them.

### *The Father's role*

So, as Jesus describes it in these three verses, what is the role of His Father?

The Father is the vinedresser who cares for the branches of the vine.

He lifts up those branches that do not bear fruit so that they will be able to bear fruit.

He cleans those branches that do bear fruit so that they will be able to bear more fruit.

And the eleven, He says are already clean because of the word which He has spoken to them.

So clearly, the purpose of the branches is to bear fruit and the Father does everything possible to enable them to bear fruit.

### *Abide*

Next He turns to their responsibility, and it is the focus for the rest of His these verses.

Read verses 4 – 5.

What is the key concept and their primary responsibility?

It is to abide in Him.

His primary work while He has been with them has been to reveal the Father. And now that He is departing this will be their primary work. But unless they abide in Him it will not happen. Just as the only fruitful branches are those that abide in the vine, so the only fruitful disciples will be those who abide in Him.

The next two verses both begin with the word *if*, and they define the only two possibilities.

Read verses 6 – 8.

What are the only two possibilities and their outcomes?

### *If anyone does not abide in Me ...*

The first possibility is that one will not abide in Him.

And the outcome for that one is fruitlessness. He will be thrown away, and he will dry up and wither.

What is the burning in the fire that will result?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

<sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup> For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup> each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Notice that what is burning is not the man, but his works or his fruit.

In the context of John 15 Jesus is not discussing salvation. He is discussing the fruit bearing of believers. And believers are assured of eternal life.

The fruitless believer is fruitless because he does not abide in Jesus. And any work that he produces will be burned up in the fire. Thus he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved.

*If you abide in Me ...*

The second possibility stands in contrast to this. And there are two parts to it. What are they?

Abiding in Him ,and

His words abiding in us.

And what is the outcome of this abiding?

*Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.*

The ability to ask and have it done for us depends on the abiding, us in Him and His words in us.

And what will be the result of this asking?

Our abiding in Him and His words abiding in us will enable us to ask and receive what we ask. And by this means we will bear much fruit and so prove to be His disciples.

And the end result is glory to God. This is His design working out to His glory.

*Abide in His love*

And Jesus Himself is our example. Read verses 9 – 10.

How do we abide in His love?

By keeping His commandments.

He is our example because He was abiding in His Father's love by keeping His Father's commandments.

*His purpose - Joy*

Then for the second time He tells them why He is saying these things to them.

Read verse 11.

What is the source of His joy?

Abiding in the Father's love, keeping His commandments, and bearing fruit.

*Fruit*

What was His fruit?

Turn back to John 14:9.

<sup>9</sup> *Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

His work has been to reveal the Father, and His fruit is those who have seen the Father because they have seen Him. And this fruit is the source of His joy.

And He has spoken these things to them so that this same joy will be in them, and that their joy may be full.

*Love one another*

Now with this background in place, He gives them His commandment.

Read verses 12 – 17.

He is their example. Just as He loved them, they are to love one another.

How has He loved them?

Yes, He is about to die for them and for all the world. But how has He loved them while He was with them?

He told them back in verse 9:

*“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

So how has He love them? *“Just as the Father has loved Me.”*

In other words, in loving them He was following the example of the Father who loved Him.

Now His instruction to them is to abide or remain in His love, and, following His example, to love one another.

*Friends*

And now He calls them friends. What distinguishes a friend from a slave?

The difference between servanthood and friendship is that a servant simply obeys what his master says. He is not told what the master’s plans are in advance or in detail. He knows the master’s plans only insofar as the master has chosen to reveal them and only insofar as the servant needs to participate in those plans. A servant, Jesus said, *does not know what his master is doing.*

Notice, in verse 15, that he *“no longer calls them slaves.”*

Until now, Jesus had been teaching the disciples piece by piece. Only now will they begin to receive the overall, comprehensive truth. Now they can know what the plan of God is. Now they can know about things to come.

Because of this greater knowledge of His plans, His intentions, and the program of God, Jesus now is able to call them friends and say to them, *all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

Nevertheless, even as His friends, the apostles wrote that they were servants of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.

And believers who are His friends because they know what He is doing are able to choose to be His servants.

### *Chosen*

Then here in verse 16 He gives these eleven men their commission. Read it again.

What are the details of their commission?

- i. They are chosen and appointed by Him.
- ii. They are appointed to be going and bearing fruit, fruit that remains.

And the word *remains*, by the way, is the same Greek word translated *abide* earlier.

This is the purpose of their commission.

- iii. They were chosen so that whatever they ask of the Father in His name He may give to them. They are able to ask with His authority.

And this is their empowerment to carry out their commission.

### *The world's reaction*

Now as they abide in Him and begin to fulfil this commission to bear fruit, what kind of reaction can they expect from the world?

Read verses 18 – 19.

Why will the world hate them?

Because believers are no longer part of the world system.

It is one thing to be in the world. It is quite another thing to be of the world. Every believer is no longer of the world because he has been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

And that will be one reason the unbelieving world is going to hate believers.

### *The Jews' reaction*

There are other reasons. Read verses 20 – 25.

Who is Jesus referring to with the third person plural, *they*?

He came and spoke to them (verse 22).

He did works among them that no one else did (verse 24).

And they did what they did *to fulfil the word that is written in their Law* (verse 25).

He is referring to the Jewish people as a nation and to their leaders in particular.

And they are guilty of sin because He came and spoke to them and performed His works among them and they chose to reject Him without excuse.

In verses 20 and 21 He gives two more reasons for the persecution of believers.

What is the reason given in verse 20?

Because they persecuted the Messiah, they will persecute His followers also. Jesus will be out of their reach so it will be easier for them to persecute the believers.

And what is the reason found in verse 21?

Their persecutors do not know the Father, the One who sent Him. Had they known the Father they also would have known the Son and not persecuted Him.

But because they did not know the Father, they did not recognise the Son whom He sent. Therefore they will hate those who do know the Father and who believe in the Son.

#### *Persecution*

So they will be persecuted by the world and by the Jews in particular and the reason is one three-fold reason:

- i. The disciples are not of the world,
- ii. The world has hated Jesus, and now He is out of their reach it will hate His followers,
- iii. And those who belong to the world do not know the Father. Consequently they hate those who do know the Father and believe in His Son

#### *The Helper's role – to testify about Him*

Earlier (John 14:16), having told them that their work would be the same as His work, that is to reveal the Father, Jesus told them that the Spirit of Truth would come to be in them as the Paraclete, the One called alongside to help. And He is another helper of the same kind as Himself.

And He told them one of the ways the Helper would help them. What was it (John 14:26)?

<sup>26</sup> *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”*

Now He gives them another role of the Helper.

Read verses 26 – 27.

What is the role of the Spirit of truth?

To testify about Jesus.

And what is their role?

The same, to testify about Jesus.

How are the testimony of the Spirit of truth and the testimony of the believer related?

The believers give the verbal testimony to the gospel. They preach the gospel and make known the content of the gospel.

The Spirit authenticates their testimony with His internal testimony convincing the unbeliever of the truth of what the believers are saying.

*His purpose – to keep them from stumbling*

Now for the third time He tells them His purpose for saying these things to them.

Read verses 16:1-4.

What is His purpose?

His purpose is to keep them from stumbling.

Why might they be stumbling?

Because they will face persecution, even extending to being outcast from the synagogue and killed.

So when these things happen, they will remember what He told them, and their trust in Him will be firm and they will not stumble.

He did not tell them at the beginning because He was with them, and being with them He was protecting them.

*His departure is to their advantage*

But now He is leaving them to return to the Father.

Read verses 5 – 11.

Sorrow has filled their heart because He is going. But it is to their advantage that He goes away.

What is the advantage?

The Helper will only come to them if He goes to the Father.

*The Helper's role – to convict the world*

Now for the third time He explains the role of the Helper.

What is His role?

The Holy Spirit is going to convict the world concerning three things.

- i. First of all concerning sin, their sin of unbelief, because they failed to believe in the Messiah.
- ii. Secondly they will be convicted concerning righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus the Messiah as will be evidenced by His ascension to the Father.
- iii. And thirdly, the Spirit will convict the world concerning judgement, the final judgement. The prince of this world has been judged and condemned. And if the prince of this world has been judged, how much more those who follow him.

What does He mean by the word “convict”?

It means to prove them to be in the wrong in view of adequate evidence of their wrong doing, and thus to shame them.

What is their wrong doing?

It is their sin of unbelief. They do not believe He is the Messiah.

And what is the adequate evidence of their sin?

Firstly, Jesus ascended to be with the Father. This proves His righteousness, which in turn proves that He is the Messiah.

And secondly, the prince of this world has been judged and condemned, a fact that is established by the resurrection of Jesus.

His ascension and His resurrection are the adequate evidence that their unbelief is wrong.

#### *The Helper's role for the world*

So to summarise the role of the Helper toward the world,

- i. He will testify to them about Jesus as the believers also testify about Him.
- ii. And He will convict them that their unbelief is wrong in view of Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

#### *The Helper's role – to disclose to you what is to come*

Now there are still many more things He has to say to them.

Read verses 12 – 15.

Jesus has many more things to say to them, but they were unable to bear them at that time due to their limited ability to comprehend. And His time with them is rapidly coming to an end.

But He has a plan to teach them these extra things. What is it?

He already told them that when He goes He will send them the Spirit of truth, who is another Helper of the same kind as Himself.

Now, for the fourth and final time, He explains the role of the Spirit to them.

What is His role?

*“He will guide you into all the truth, ... and He will disclose to you what is to come.”*

In John 14:26 He told them that The Holy Spirit will teach them all things and bring to remembrance everything He taught them.

And here He adds that He will disclose to them what is to come.

So the role of the Spirit for these disciples was threefold:

- i. He would teach them all things, all the truth.
- ii. He would remind them of everything He taught them.
- iii. And He would show them what is to come.

Thus they would remember all that He already taught them, and they would also learn the many more things that they were unable to bear at that time.

And this explains how we have the inspired New Testament record.

The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to write the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation, where the Holy Spirit showed John the things that are to come.

*The initiative and the source*

Notice what else Jesus tells them here about the ministry of the Spirit.

What is the source of the Spirit's teaching?

He speaks whatever He hears. And who is He listening to?

He is listening to Jesus, and He will take whatever Jesus gives Him and disclose it to them. And the initiative will come from Jesus. So both the initiative for the teaching and the content of the teaching come from Jesus.

And where did Jesus get these things?

From the Father.

So the Father is the source of what the Spirit discloses to them. The Father gave these things to the Son

so that He would give them to the Spirit

so that the Spirit would disclose them to the apostles

so that the apostles could write them down

for us to read and understand, again with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And so we have the New Testament.

Before we move on, there is one more thing to notice here about the ministry of the Spirit. What is the focus and purpose of His ministry?

Jesus says, "*He will glorify Me.*"

The Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself but to Jesus, and He takes the teaching of Jesus, which comes from the Father, and discloses it to them.

*You will see Me*

Now He begins to wrap up His discourse.

Read verses 16 – 22.

What is He telling them?

In a little while He will die and they will no longer see Him. But again after a little while they will see Him again because of His resurrection.

His death will cause them to grieve. But just as a woman's pain in labour is replaced by joy that a child has been born, so too, their grief will be followed by joy when they see Him after His resurrection.

Their heart will rejoice, and no one will take their joy away from them.

*In that day ...*

Read verses 23 – 28.

In which day?

The day when their hearts are rejoicing with a joy that no one can take away because they have seen the resurrected Messiah.

*Authority to ask in Jesus name*

And what will make their joy full in those days?

Whatever they ask the Father in Jesus' name, He will give to them.

*Plain teaching*

And why does He say that in that day they will not question Him about anything?

As He explains in verse 25, ever since His rejection He has been speaking in figurative language, but the hour is coming, and it will come after His resurrection, when He will no longer speak to them in figurative language, but instead will speak plainly of the Father.

Ever since His rejection by the leaders of Israel He has been teaching them in parables and figurative language and then interpreting what He said to His disciples in private.

But now that His public ministry has come to an end He won't be teaching that way any longer.

And from that point on He did not use any more parables.

*Purpose*

Now read how He finishes His discourse in verses 29 – 33.

In response to their declaration of belief in Him, what does He tell them?

The time has come for them to be scattered from Him, each to his own home.

*Peace*

Then He concludes His discourse by telling them His purpose for giving it to them.

What was His purpose?

*"So that in Me you may have peace."*

And this peace stands in contrast to the tribulation they will have in the world.

Early in the discourse (John 14:27) He said,

<sup>27</sup> *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."*

How did He give them His peace?

By speaking to them the things He said during this discourse.

What has He spoken that will bring them peace in the face of persecution and tribulation?

They have come to a fork in the road where their paths must diverge. He must go to the Father's house to prepare a place for them, and they must remain on earth until He returns for them.

He told them about what will happen for Him along His path, and He told them about what will happen for them along their path.

He told them what their work would be and that they would be able to do it because they would have His authority, His love, and the help of the Spirit of truth.

The peace He is speaking about will come from their knowledge of the truth about God's plans for the future, their role in those plans, and their security in His love and provisions for them.

And not even the tribulation of the world will cause God's plans to fail. Jesus has overcome the world.

## D. The High Priestly Prayer, § 162, John 17:1-26

Now, having finished His discourse, Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven and prays to His Father.

And He prays for Himself, for His apostles, and for all believes.

### 1. Concerning Himself, John 17:1-8

Read His prayer for Himself in verses 1 – 8 of John 17.

What does He ask for Himself?

He asks that the Father would glorify Him with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was.

His glory was veiled during the incarnation. It was temporarily unveiled on the mount of transfiguration, but it was veiled again when they came down from the mountain.

And now He prays for a final unveiling of His glory and gives two reasons for His request. What are they?

- i. That the Son may glorify the Father.
- ii. He has accomplished the work which the Father has given Him to do.

What was this work?

His work was to reveal the Father to these men whom the Father gave to Him out of the world. And the success of His work is evidenced by their recent declaration that they believe He was sent by the Father.

### 2. Concerning the Apostles, John 17:9-19

Now He prays for the apostles and He has three specific requests for them.

#### a. Preservation, John 17:9-14

Read the first request in verses 9 – 14.

What does He ask for them?

He says, in the last half of verse 11,

*Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.*

What this means becomes clear as we look at His reasons for this request. What reasons does He give?

- i. In verse 9 He says that they are the Father's and they are His.
- ii. He has been glorified in them.
- iii. He is no longer in the world, but is coming to the Father, but they are in the world.
- iv. While He was in the world He was keeping them in the Father's name and guarding them so that none of them perished except the son of perdition.

Although these men are in it world, they belong to the Father and they are in Him. Jesus has been keeping them and guarding them so that they will remain in Him.

Now He is returning to the Father, He asks the Father to keep an eye on them, to watch and guard them, to keep them in Him.

And the outcome will be that they are one even as the Father and the Son or one, they in Him and He in them.

**b. Protection, John 17:15-16**

Read His second request for them in verses 15 – 16.

What is His request for them?

Protection from Satan.

Why do they need protection from Satan?

Because they are in the world which is ruled by Satan, but they are not of the world.

**c. Sanctification, John 17:17-19**

Read His third request for them in verses 17 – 19.

What does the verb, to sanctify, mean?

It means to purify and set apart from a common to a sacred use.

Spoken of persons, it means to consecrate as being set apart by God and sent by Him for the performance of His will.

At the feast of dedication (section 112, John 10:36), when answering the charge of blasphemy, Jesus says:

*<sup>36</sup> do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?*

He was sanctified and sent into the world by the Father. And now He is sending them into the world.

So He asks the Father to set them apart in the truth, which is the Word of God, even as He sanctified Himself.

The detailed significance of this will be found in the epistles and is beyond the scope of this particular study. It includes their abiding in the Word and becoming more and more conformed to the image of the Son of God.

### 3. Concerning All Believers, John 17:20-24

Now, having prayed for Himself, and having prayed for the apostles, He turns His attention to all those who will believe in Him through their word.

#### a. Unity, John 17:20-23

Read verses 20 – 23.

So now He is praying for all believers, both the apostles and those who will believe through their word.

What does He ask for them?

He asks that they all may be one.

And the explanation He gives for what He means by this is, *“even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us.”*

And what is the reason for this request?

He says, *“so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

His purpose is to make the Father known so that the world may believe.

#### b. Glorification, John 17:24

Read His final request in verses 24.

What does He request for them?

At the beginning of His discourse He told them He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house, and that He would return to take them there with Him.

Now He is asking the Father to bring this about.

### 4. Concerning His continued work, John 17:25-26

Read how He finishes His prayer in verses 25 – 26.

At the beginning of His discourse He was pointing out to them that His work among them was to make the Father known.

The world has not known the Father, but He has known the Father, and He has made the Father known to His apostles.

Now He promises to continue making the Father known, *“so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

... Father

## *Father*

Before we leave His prayer, notice how He addresses God.

Six times in this prayer He refers to God as Father.

- i. In verse 1. *Father, the hour has come.*
- ii. In verse 5. *Now, Father.*
- iii. In verse 11. *Holy Father.*
- iv. In verse 21. *Even as You, Father.*
- v. In verse 24. *Father.*
- vi. In verse 25. *O righteous Father.*

This is very significant as we shall see when we come to the crucifixion.

So keep in mind that six times He calls Him Father.

## E. The Agony of Gethsemane, § 163, Mark 14:32-42; Matthew 26:30, 36-46; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1

Read John 18:1 and Mark 14:32a.

### *Gethsemane*

They have crossed the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives and there they entered the Garden of Gethsemane.

The word gethsemane means “oil press”. It is derived from two Hebrew words: gat, which means "a place for pressing oil (or wine)" and shemanim, which means "oils."

The Mount of Olives is where Olive trees were grown to produce oil for use in the temple compound.

### *Preparation*

Now, as we read the next section, look out for two things in particular. Notice what He does with His disciples, and notice all the descriptions of His agony.

Read Mark’s account in 14:32b – 36, and the last part of Luke’s account, Luke 22:43 – 44, where he adds some details that Mark doesn’t include. Read Mark 14:32b – 36 and Luke 22:43 – 44.

What does Jesus do with His disciples in preparation for His prayer?

As He enters the garden He leaves eight of His disciples by the gateway, telling them, “*Sit here while I go over there and pray.*” Then He took Peter, James, and John further up and left them behind as a second watch.

### *Jesus’ agony*

Now Jesus experiences a tremendous struggle and before we go on to look at what He is struggling over, lets look at how it affected Him.

What are the words used to describe His agony on this occasion?

There are six different words and phrases used here to describe the agony of His struggle.

- (1) The first description is in Mark 14:33. The NASB says, “*He began to be very distressed ...*”. The ASV says, “*He began to be greatly amazed.*”

The Greek word, ἐκθαμβέω (*ekthambéō*), means to utterly astonish, or to greatly amaze.<sup>vi</sup>

- (2) The second description is also in Mark 14:33. The NASB says simply, “*and troubled.*” The ASV says, “*and sore troubled.*”

The Greek word, ἀδημονέω (*adēmonéō*), means to faint, to be depressed and almost overwhelmed with sorrow or burden of mind.<sup>vii</sup>

It means to be pressed upon, emphasizing the extreme pressure that Jesus was under at this point of time.

(3) In verse 34 His soul was *deeply grieved* (NASB), or *exceeding sorrowful* (ASV).

The Greek word, περίλυπος (*perilupos*), means surrounded with grief, severely grieved, very sorrowful.<sup>viii</sup>

(4) And He was *deeply grieved to the point of death*.

The point is that His sorrow was so great, the pressure so severe, the trouble so heavy, that there was a real danger of the total collapse of His physical frame.

(5) Luke adds two other points. In Luke 22:44 He was in *agony*.

And the word “*agony*” means conflict, emphasizing the pain and labor of the conflict. It is used to refer to the trembling excitement and anxiety produced by fear or tension before a wrestling match or a fight<sup>ix</sup>. Just what the conflict was about we will discuss in a moment.

(6) Luke also adds the sixth description of His agony. *His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground*.

The medical term for this is *hematidrosis*. It means that you are in such agony that the blood begins to seep through your vessels and comes out as bloody sweat.

This will be the reason that an angel came down at this time to strengthen Him.

Now the question is: what was He agonizing over?

*His rejection by Israel*

Certainly He was *grieved and distressed* over Israel’s rejection of His Messianic claims.

This is brought out in the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 49:1-13.

The Messiah is speaking in Isaiah 49:4,

<sup>4</sup> *But I said, “I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God.”*

He is distressed over Israel’s failure to accept Him.

But in this manner the Father has chosen for the light to go out to the Gentiles, and because of Israel’s rejection He will become the light to the Gentiles. And mostly Gentiles will believe, but once the fullness of the Gentiles has come in the body is complete, and all Israel will believe.

That is the point of Isaiah 49:1-13. And in that context we see the Messiah’s distress over Israel’s failure to accept His Messianic claims.

*The prayer*

But this is not the focus of the gospel accounts here. Look at His prayer in Mark’s account, 14:36.

*He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”*

This is a summary of His first prayer.

Read Matthew verses 40 – 44.

How long did His first prayer take?

About an hour.

What did He find when He returned to His disciples?

He found them sleeping. So He tells them they need to keep on watching lest they *come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

And this explains why they end up scattering, and why Peter will end up denying Him - because they were not on guard.

Three times He went away and prayed the same thing.

*“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”*

*Meaning of “this cup”*

Now question is: what does He mean by *this cup*?

There have been three suggestions over the years.

- (1) One common suggestion is that the cup represents His coming physical death, and that He is asking is not to have to die physically.

What would result if He were asking to avoid dying physically?

Several things.

- i. Lets begin with the purpose of the incarnation.

What was His whole purpose in coming in bodily form?

Read Hebrews 10:5-9.

5        *Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,  
“Sacrifice and offering You have not desired,  
But a body You have prepared for Me;*

6        *In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure.*

7        *“Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come  
(In the scroll of the book it is written of Me)  
To do Your will, O God.’ ”*

8        *After saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices  
for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them” (which are offered  
according to the Law),*

9        *then He said, “BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL.” He takes away the first in order  
to establish the second.*

Why does He say, *“Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for Me”?*

The animal sacrifices only provided a temporary covering for sin and therefore needed to be repeated regularly.

A better sacrifice was required, but God as God cannot die.

So what did He do?

He prepared a body for the Messiah for that purpose.

What, therefore, was the purpose for which He came?

His purpose was to come in the body which the Father had prepared for Him in order to replace the sacrifices for sin which needed to be repeated continually by His once and for all sacrifice.

His purpose in coming was to die for sin once and for all.

So, if He didn't die physically He would not have achieved the very purpose for the incarnation.

- ii. Another reason He could not be asking to avoid physical death can be seen in passages such as Matthew 26:2. Turn back to section 146 and read it.

<sup>2</sup> *“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.”*

And many times He predicted that He would die. (John 10:11 – 18 is another example.)

And if He does not now die that would render Him a false prophet.

- iii. Read also Philippians 2:8.

<sup>8</sup> *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

What is the issue here?

Part of His obedience was His obedience to die.

If He does not die that would make Him disobedient.

- iv. And another thing we saw in section 135, John 12:27-33.

<sup>27</sup> *“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> ‘Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’*

<sup>29</sup> *So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, ‘An angel has spoken to Him.’ <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. <sup>31</sup> ‘Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> ‘And I, if I am lifted up*

*from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”<sup>33</sup> But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.*

Again this was His purpose in coming, and He also said here that He would not ask the Father to save Him from this hour. He would not ask the Father to save Him from dying physically.

If He is now asking the Father that He not die physically it would mean that He was not truthful in section 135, and therefore sinned.

And so interpreting the cup as being physical death doesn't fit the evidence. It would contradict the very purpose for His incarnation, and it would render Him a false prophet, disobedient, and a liar.

Also, Mark described His agony using a word that means He was greatly amazed or utterly astonished. His death and the manner of His death were well known to Him from His youth, when His Father taught Him morning by morning (Isaiah 50:4 – 7).

- (2) A second interpretation of the cup is that it doesn't represent physical death per se, but premature death, or dying before He got to the cross.

But there was simply no danger of it happening.

As it comes to the time of His death it is not Satan who is in control, it is not the Jewish leaders who are in control, and it is not the Romans who are in control. He is in full control of His death.

When we come to the section describing His actual death (Luke 22:46) we will see that Luke uses a Greek word meaning “to dismiss”. He dismissed His spirit from His body. He will choose the moment of His death.

In an earlier section (101), in John 10:19, He declared:

*“No one has taken [My life] away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”*

And as we will see in the next couple of sections, when the soldiers come to arrest Him, all He has to say is “I am”, and they all fall down to the ground. He is in control and they won't even arrest Him unless He allows it.

There is simply no danger of Him dying prematurely. He will choose the moment of His death.

- (3) So what does He mean by *this cup*?

What was it that caused such agony, and which He could legitimately ask His Father to allow Him to avoid?

The best answer is that the cup signifies the wrath of God resulting in spiritual death, which is separation from God the Father.

*Prophecy*

Would this be consistent with what we read in the prophets of the Old Testament?

While it is definitely prophesied in the Old Testament that He would die physically, nowhere in the Old Testament was it ever prophesied that He would die spiritually.

There is no evidence that He would die spiritually in the prophecies about the Messiah.

#### *Atonement*

What about the atonement. What did He have to do to make atonement for us?

Read Leviticus 17:11.

<sup>11</sup> *'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'*

Atonement comes by the shedding of innocent blood.

For the atonement it was not His spiritual death that was essential, but His physical death.

#### *Death*

Now since His physical death was prophesied and it was essential for the atonement, He could not legitimately ask not to die physically.

But His spiritual death was not essential for the atonement. Nor was it prophesied. And He could, therefore, legitimately ask not to die spiritually.

#### *Agony?*

Can we appreciate the extent of His agony? We were all born spiritually dead. And only when we are born again do we become spiritually alive. And until then we were spiritually dead.

But from the moment of His incarnation Jesus was spiritually alive.

#### *Human spirit*

Now Jesus has both a divine and a human spirit. Which one are we talking about in this context?

We are dealing with His human spirit. The divine Spirit couldn't die anyway.

In His human spirit He was in constant fellowship with God the Father. It was never interrupted.

#### *Separation*

But now, as we will see when we get to the crucifixion scene, when the sin of the world is placed upon Him, God the Father turns away from Him.

And that was something that caused Him this tremendous agony. And He prayed that He would not have to partake of this cup.

But it was the will of God the Father for Him to partake of the wrath of God, and in the second three hours on the cross, as we will soon see, He does partake of the wrath of God.

And for three hours He will be suffering the wrath of God and be separated from God the Father.

### *Purpose*

Now, if it was not prophesied that this would happen, and it was not essential for the atonement, why was it important that He die spiritually?

Read Hebrews 2:16–18.

*<sup>16</sup> For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

Why was it necessary for Him to die spiritually?

It was important for Him *to be made like His brethren in all things*, including spiritual death, so that He is able to come to our aid as our merciful and faithful high priest.

Read also Hebrews 4:14–16.

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

How is it possible for our high priest to sympathize with our weakness?

*He has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

What are we able to do as a result?

Because we have a high priest who has been made like us in all things, and who is therefore able to sympathize with our weaknesses, we are able to *draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

So His spiritual death is an essential aspect of His role as our High Priest.

### *This cup*

And “*this cup*”, which He asks His Father to remove from Him, is the cup of God’s wrath against sin which results in spiritual separation from God.

### *Prayer principles*

Now His experience at Gethsemane teaches two principles that are counter to what you often hear on Christian radio and TV networks.

### *Positive confession*

Often you will hear that when you pray, do so with a positive confession. Just name it and claim it, it is yours. And don't throw in the little phrase, "if it is your will" because that's a negative confession.

But the best model of prayer life we have is the life of Jesus. How did He pray?

First of all He made His desires known to God, *let this cup pass from Me*. Then He said, *not My will but your will be done*.

That is the proper way to pray. We should make our request known to God, but then leave to His will how He will answer that prayer.

### *Enough faith*

Another misconception is that if you ask for something and you don't get it, it is because you didn't have enough faith.

Did Jesus get His request? In this case, no!

Was it because of a lack of faith? If that is what it was, it makes Him a sinner because the Bible also teaches that what is not of faith is sin.

The Bible also teaches that sometimes God says no due to of lack of faith. That is found in James chapter 1.

But sometimes God says no because He knows better what His goal is for our life further down the road. We don't know His plans for the future, but He does. And sometimes a "no" answer is better for our maturity and our spiritual growth.

### *The hour has come*

Now read Mark verses 41 – 42.

And now He comes back to the disciples and finds them sleeping again. And He tells them:

*It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.*

[See also mbs147, page 14, and mp3 #5 for more another discussion of this prayer.]

## IX THE REJECTION OF THE KING: THE TRIAL AND THE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH, § 164-180

### A. The Arrest, § 164, Mark 14:43-52; Matthew 26:47-56; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12

In section 164 we come to the arrest.

#### *Broken rules*

We have been studying the Life of Jesus thematically. And we've been noticing how the events recorded in the gospels all contribute to a continuous theme.

Recall the period of His life leading up to the rejection of His Messiahship by the leaders of Israel.

What was one of the fundamental reasons they rejected Him?

While He kept the Mosaic Law to the smallest letter and stroke of a letter, He refused to accept Pharisaic authority and rejected their oral laws known as the Mishnah.

This was the key reason for His rejection. Because He would not submit to their oral law they would not recognise Him to be their Messiah, and so they rejected Him.

Now in the sections we are about to read we will see these leaders themselves breaking 22 of their own rules and regulations governing how an arrest and trial should be conducted.

Turn to Appendix 10 of the Harmony where these 22 rules are listed.

1. There was to be no arrest by religious authorities that was effected by a bribe (Exodus 23:8), and as we already noticed this arrest was affected by a bribe of thirty pieces of silver.
2. There were to be no steps of criminal proceedings after sunset.

The purpose here was to avoid conspiracy, and using night time to carry the conspiracy out. Once the sun has officially set they could not proceed with criminal proceedings, and the sun officially sets, by Jewish law, once you can see three stars. Once three stars are visible the sun has set.

3. Judges or Sanhedrin members were not allowed to participate in the arrest. That was to keep them neutral. If they participate in the arrest they have taken sides.
4. There were to be no trials before the morning sacrifice. All of the daily morning rituals have to be out of the way before a trial could be conducted.
5. There were to be no secret trials, only public. Secret trials were forbidden, again, to avoid conspiracy.
6. Sanhedrin trials could only be conducted in the Hall of Judgment of the Temple Compound.

Because all trials were to be public, the public had to know where to go to observe a trial. And that's why, if it was a Sanhedrin trial, it could only be held in this place.

7. The proper procedure was to be first the defence and then the accusation.

That is the opposite of our western system. All the reasons why the person could not be guilty had to be presented first. His character witnesses had to be first, before the charge was presented by the two witnesses.

The judges who argue for innocence were to speak before the ones who argue for guilt.

8. All may argue in favour of acquittal, but all may not argue in favour of conviction.

It was alright to stack the deck in the accused's favour, so all the judges could argue in favour of acquittal. But they could not all argue in favour of guilt.

The accused had to have at least one defender.

9. There were to be two or three witnesses and their testimony had to agree in every detail, Deuteronomy 19:15.

10. There was to be no allowance for the accused to testify against himself.

This was to avoid two possible situations.

- i. Firstly: the person might be suicidal, confessing to a crime he did not commit.
- ii. Or secondly: he might be protecting someone else and confessing to a crime he did not commit.

Therefore the two witnesses had to be apart from the accused and he could not testify against himself in a court of law.

11. The High Priest was forbidden to tear his garments. This rule is found in Leviticus 21:10.

Now in the Jewish society the rending of the garments is a sign of the emotions.

When a family member dies, other family members tear their clothing and walk around in torn clothing for seven days. And if a member of the family marries a non-Jew, other members of the family will tear their clothing. When a member becomes a believer in Yeshua the Messiah, other members will tear their clothing.

Because the trial had to be determined based upon facts presented by the witnesses, not based upon emotions, the high priest could not tear his garments at a Jewish trial.

12. Charges could not originate with the judges; they could only investigate charges brought to them. Again. This was to keep them neutral. If they originate the charge, they have taken sides.

13. The accusation of blasphemy was only valid if the name of God itself was pronounced.

Guilt could only be established if the person pronounced the actual name of God. The Hebrew name of God comprises four Hebrew letters that would correspond to the Latin letters YHWH. Unless he pronounced this name of God he could not technically be accused of blasphemy.

14. A person could not be condemned on the basis of his own words alone. Again, there had to be two separate witnesses.

15. The verdict could not be announced at night, only in the daytime.

This was to avoid a rush to judgement. It may have been a very long day, listening to witnesses, questioning the accused, getting tired and touchy and edgy.

So to make sure they don't rush to judgement, even if they know what the verdict is going to be, if those three stars are visible, it would be postponed until the next day.

16. In cases of capital punishment, the trial and guilty verdict could not occur at the same time but must be separated by at least 24 hours. This is to allow more time for more information to come in that would favour the accused.

17. Voting for the death penalty had to be done by individual count beginning with the youngest so the young would not be influenced by the elders.

18. A unanimous decision for guilt shows innocence since it is impossible for 23-71 men to agree without plotting.

This is Arnolds favourite one of these laws. The figure 71 is the full membership of the Sanhedrin. Not all 71 had to be present for a trial to be conducted, but there had to be a minimum of 23. In a Jewish society it was inconceivable that 23 men could agree unless there was a plot involved. Based upon the observation mentioned in the past, that Jews happen to like to argue with each other, and again, if there are two Jews there will be three different opinions. This rule illustrates that particular situation.

19. The sentence could only be pronounced three days after the guilty verdict.

While the trial and the verdict had to be separated by 24 hours, three more days would have to pass before the sentence was pronounced - for the same reason: more time for more information to come in to favour the accused.

20. Judges were to be humane and kind.

21. A person condemned to death was not to be scourged or beaten beforehand.

22. No trials are allowed on the eve of the Sabbath or on a feast day.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, more laws of the Sanhedrin, but these ones were taken from Jewish writings because they were broken either during the arrest or during the trial that follows.

And as we read on in the text we will see where each of them is broken.

*Rule 1 broken*

The first is found in the next verse.

Read John 18:2.

Here is an arrest affected by a bribe as we saw earlier.

### *Conspiracy*

When Judas came to the leaders they were pleased to have his help in their conspiracy. Do you remember why?

He was useful to them for three reasons.

- i. To show them where they could arrest Jesus away from the crowds.
- ii. To make an accusation against Jesus to the Roman governor so that he would release a Roman cohort to arrest Jesus.
- iii. To testify at the Roman trial.

### *Judas' first purpose – arrest apart from the crowds*

And here we find Judas fulfilling the first of these purposes.

Here he is showing them where Jesus could be arrested apart from the multitudes.

How does Judas know where to find Jesus?

Because he had been a disciple of Jesus for some time, he knew the habits of Jesus. And he knew that one of His habits was that when He came to Jerusalem He would go to the Garden of Gethsemane for a time of prayer.

Although this is the only time the gospels mention this, John tells us that *Jesus often met there with His disciples*.

At least three times a year Jesus came to Jerusalem, possibly more often. He would come at the times of the feasts to fulfil the Law of Moses. And the Garden of Gethsemane became the place of His prayer.

Therefore Judas could show them where He could be arrested apart from the multitudes.

This was his first purpose.

Now to see how he fulfilled his second purpose, read John 18:3.

### *Rule 2 broken*

How do we know that it is still night time?

John records that they came carrying lanterns and torches.

So it is still night time, and they break the second rule on our list – no steps of criminal proceedings are to occur after sunset.

### *Judas' second purpose – Roman cohort*

What is significant about the fact that Judas has *received the Roman cohort*?

A Roman cohort could not be released to make an arrest until someone first appeared before the Roman governor accusing someone of a crime punishable by Roman law.

So Judas has fulfilled his second purpose in the conspiracy.

But under what circumstances did he do it?

### *A forced move*

An important condition of the conspiracy was that no action would be taken until after the festival in order to avoid a riot. And so carrying out the arrest on this night was to be out of the question.

So why did they do it on this night?

When Jesus twice identified Judas as the betrayer He forced their hand. It became obvious to Judas that Jesus knew about the conspiracy. And so, when he left the Passover meal he went to the chief priests who paid him.

Obviously they were afraid that they would lose the opportunity to arrest Him because He might simply escape them as He had done before.

So they hastily took Judas to Pontius Pilate, who normally would be stationed in Caesarea, two days away. But he always came up to Jerusalem to help maintain order during the festivals, which was convenient.

They brought Judas to Pontius Pilate and accused Jesus of a crime punishable by Roman law. And that is how he received a cohort of Roman soldiers.

This helps to explain two things.

1. First, it helps to explain why, in the initial stages of the Jewish trial, things are very confused and disorganised.

They don't have their act together. They have to go out to find false witnesses. And it takes them a while to finally get their trial organised.

2. Secondly, it helps to explain, although it is the wee hours of the morning, why Pilate is dressed ready to conduct the trial.

He was anticipating a trial because he had released a Roman cohort to make an arrest.

### *The arresting party*

Now before we read on, let's get an idea of the size of the group that came to arrest Jesus.

Mark and Luke call it a *crowd* and Matthew says it was a *large crowd*. John gives us some more detail.

Just how big was this crowd which came to arrest one individual?

1. First of all there is the Roman cohort. How big was a Roman cohort?

The Roman cohort was anywhere from 400 up to 600 soldiers. But they are not alone.

2. The second group John mentions is *officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees*.

These are the Jewish temple police. They are mentioned again in Luke 22:52.

Look ahead to Luke 22:52 and read it.

3. Who else does Luke mention here?

He also mentions the chief priests and the elders. These are two categories of Sanhedrin members. And they participate in the arrest.

*Rule 3*

So here is the violation of the third rule: Judges or Sanhedrin members were not allowed to participate in the arrest. And they do.

4. And there is also a significant single individual in the party.

Read John 18:10 to see who it is.

We'll consider this incident when we get to it. For now just notice who Malchus is.

He is the servant of the high priest.

What is the significance of his presence in the party?

The high priest would probably have been there himself, but these were the crucial hours between the first night of the Passover and the first day of the Passover.

During those crucial hours the high priest could not leave the temple compound lest he come into contact with something to make himself unclean. And if he became unclean he could not offer up the special Passover sacrifice to be offered up on the first day of Passover.

Therefore he could not leave the compound, but he sent out his servant to make sure things went correctly.

So, as Matthew points out, there is a *large crowd* with Judas: 400 to 600 Roman soldiers and their commanders, a number of temple police, chief priests, elders, and the servant of the high priest.

*I am*

And as this large body of men comes to arrest one individual, Jesus takes the initiative.

Read John 18:4 – 9.

Jesus is fully aware of *all the things that were coming upon Him*, and He takes the initiative by going forth to meet them and asking them, "*whom do you seek?*"

Why did He ask them this question a second time?

There are two different ways to understand the phrase, *I am*, as it is written here.

- i. It could be the same *I am* that Jehovah used when He revealed Himself to Moses as "*I am that I am*".

The first time He said, "*I am*", it was a display of His deity. And as a consequence they all fell down backward to the ground.

This shows who is in control. He will not be arrested until He allows Himself to be arrested.

When people encountered the Lord in a positive sense in the Scripture they always fell forward. Falling backwards is not a blessing, but a sign of judgement.

- ii. The second way to understand these words is simply *“I am he”, “I am that Jesus you are looking for”*.

So after showing them who is in control He repeats the question, *“Whom do you seek?”* And when they answer, *“Jesus the Nazarene”*, He uses the simple, *“I am he”, “I am the one you are looking for”*.

And He adds (with the Greek word order), *“if therefore Me you seek, let these go”*, meaning to let these men go since I am the one you are looking for.

So Jesus takes the initiative with two purposes in mind: to demonstrate that He is in control, and to protect His disciples.

#### *The sign*

By now Jesus has already identified Himself twice to the soldiers who came to arrest Him. But that is not enough for Judas.

Read Matthew 26:48 – 50.

Judas and the captain of the cohort had agreed on a sign or signal.

His kiss will be the sign showing whom they should arrest. Therefore they are not to arrest anyone until they see who he kisses.

And although there is no need for him to proceed because Jesus has already identified Himself, he insisted on earning his keep.

#### *Warning for Judas*

Read Luke’s account, verses 47b – 48.

What happens as Judas approached Jesus?

Even before the kiss is applied Jesus warns him against proceeding. Once again He gives Judas an opportunity to turn back to Him.

#### *Kiss*

But still Judas persists, and as Mark and Matthew record He said *“Rabbi!” and kissed Him*.

And the Greek word, καταφιλέω *kataphiléō*, means to kiss eagerly, affectionately, or repeatedly<sup>x</sup>. So he kissed Him much, not one simple kiss, but many kisses.

Now the kissing of a rabbi was the means of submission to the rabbi and for that reason it was considered sacred among the Jewish people. And when a man became a disciple of a particular Rabbi he would kiss the Rabbi.

And although Judas uses the term Rabbi here, it is not a kiss of honour or of homage, it is a kiss of betrayal.

He was profaning something that was sacred among Jewish people of that time.

### *Peter*

At that point Peter decided to take action. Read John 18:10.

The word, *sword*, here refers to a long ceremonial knife, the kind of knife used to kill the Passover lamb. And it is likely to be the one which he and John used when they slaughtered the lamb for their Passover meal.

Now visualise the scene in the garden at this moment.

There are between four hundred and six hundred Roman soldiers, plus some Jewish temple police, all carrying their swords.

And Peter pulls out his one long, lone knife. And he thinks he can pull off a Jewish Rambo.

He very quickly proves that by profession he was not a soldier but a fisherman. He takes one swing at someone's head, misses, and cuts off the man's right ear.

But notice His good Jewish wisdom. He did not attack a Roman soldier. He did not attack a Jewish police officer. He attacked the servant of the high priest who may or may not have been armed. And he cuts off the man's right ear.

### *Malkus' ear*

Now read Luke verse 51.

Notice that all four gospel writers record the fact that Peter pulled out his sword and cut off the man's right ear. But only Doctor Luke chooses to record that the ear was healed.

For Matthew, Mark, and John, the most exciting thing is that in front of all these soldiers and police officers Peter cut off the man's right ear. As far as putting the ear back on the head, they have seen greater things than that.

But for Doctor Luke it was significant enough to mention.

And the healing no doubt saved Peter's life.

### *A lesson for Peter*

Then Jesus teaches Peter a very significant lesson.

Read it in Matthew 26:52 – 54.

What does Jesus mean by saying, *all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword?*

Is it true that everyone who every took up the sword was killed by a sword?

For example, has every soldier who used a sword died from the wounds of a sword?

I doubt it.

What then does He mean?

### *Context and structure*

To understand His meaning we need to look at the statement in its context.

Notice first of all the structure of what He says to Peter.

Having told him to put away his sword, He then explains why the use of the sword is inappropriate. And the explanation has three parts. But they are not disjointed parts.

Notice the connecting words He uses.

He begins with the word, *for*. So we expect what follows to explain why the sword is inappropriate.

Then verse 53 begins with the word, *or*. What is the function of that word?

It stands between two alternatives. And the Greek word, ἢ ἔ, introduces a question expressing a choice between two mutually exclusive possibilities.

Verse 54 begins, *how then*. And what follows considers the implications of verse 53.

So we have a contrast between two mutually exclusive possibilities followed by some implications of the second possibility.

### *Meaning*

Now, let's see if understanding the second of these mutually exclusive possibilities will shed light on the first.

What does He say in verse 53?

The father has more than 12 legions of angels ready for immediate deployment at the request of His Son.

And each legion is from three to six thousand angels. So He did not need Peter's one long knife!

So then, what is the contrast He is making?

The contrast is between the use of physical force and the use of spiritual force.

This actually happens to be a spiritual conflict, and therefore it must be fought by spiritual means.

And He is telling Peter to put away his sword because it is powerless in a spiritual conflict. In effect He is saying,

“Peter, why are you using a sword? Don't you realise that this is a spiritual conflict?”

### *Prophecy fulfilled*

But He doesn't leave Peter there wondering, “If it's a spiritual conflict, and there are 12 legions of angels ready for you, why aren't you calling upon them?”

He answers this question too. If He uses the angels, how would prophecy be fulfilled?

And why is it relevant that prophecy be fulfilled?

If ever prophecy is not fulfilled then God would become a liar!

### *Peter's lesson*

So this is His lesson to Peter:

Peter, this is actually a spiritual battle and swords are ineffective in spiritual battles.

I have enough spiritual resources at my disposal to win the battle you see before you.

But God has already determined and prophesied what must take place. And it will be so.

### *A lesson for the crowds*

Jesus then speaks to the crowds in similar terms.

Read Matthew 26:55 – 56.

What is He saying to the crowds?

Essentially He is emphasising that He is the one in control. Every day He was teaching among them and they did not seize Him. It was not for lack of trying, but they could not seize Him before His time.

But now they will be able to take Him in order to fulfil the Scriptures of the prophets.

And read Luke verse 53 to see another point that He makes here.

They are acting in the power of darkness. And the spiritual conflict is a conflict between the power of darkness and the kingdom of light.

### *The disciples fled*

Read the last part of Matthew verse 56 and John 18:12.

The disciples decide to do no more to defend themselves. They left Him and fled.

### *Jesus arrested and bound*

Here Jesus is arrested and bound. And this is only possible because He chooses to submit to them. As He demonstrated when He identified Himself to them, He is the one in control of the situation.

### *Mark - eyewitness*

Mark then adds an interesting detail the others don't record.

Read Mark 14:51 – 52.

Then Mark adds a small incident about someone in the crowd having to flee away naked. Is this just comic relief?

The purpose for these verses is not to lay down a biblical basis for streaking!

What is the purpose of this story?

In ancient biographies, if the author was an eye witness to some of the events, he would often include himself in the story where he was an eye witness. For example, in John's gospel he refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, not implying that He didn't love the others as well. That's the way John wrote himself into the story when he was an eye witness.

In the book of Acts, whenever Luke switches from the third person into the first person that's where Luke is an eye witness.

So based upon the way biographies were written, the one mentioned here would be Mark himself. He happened to be there and was an eye witness to the event that had just occurred.

And this is how Mark declares that he was an eye witness to these events.

## B. The Religious Trial, § 165-170

*Two trials*

Now, as the night wears on, we will find six different trial proceedings which some describe as six different trials.

But actually there will be two separate trials, each of which proceeds in three separate segments.

First there will be a religious trial, which is the Jewish trial, and then there will be the civil trial which is the Roman and Gentile trial.

And both of these trials have three separate segments giving a total of six segments.

But there are only two trials, a Jewish one and a Gentile one.

### 1. The Trial Before Annas, § 165, John 18:12-14, 19-23

Now read John 18:12 – 14.

Having arrested and bound Jesus, where do they take Him?

The first place they take Him is to Annas.

*Rule 4 broken*

And bringing Him before Annas for trial violates the fourth rule in our list: There were to be no trials before the morning sacrifice.

This one occurs before the morning sacrifice.

*Annas*

Who was Annas?

Annas served as high priest from the year 7 to the year 14 AD. After that he was deposed by the then Roman governor Vilaris Gratus.

But, although he was deposed, he was still able to maintain control of the high priesthood because he was followed in succession by four of his own sons, then by his son in law, and towards the end of his life by his grandson.

He was a Sadducee.

He controlled the business ventures of the temple compound like the changing of the money and the selling of sacrifices. And when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and drove out the animals from the temple at the first and the last Passovers of His public ministry, it was the business venture of Annas He was overthrowing.

And so Annas had his own private grudge against Jesus.

*Questioning*

Now Annas questioned Jesus.

Read verse 19 – 23, noticing both the nature of the questions and the response of Jesus.

What was the subject of Annas' questions?

He questioned Jesus about two things. First of all about His disciples to incriminate them. And secondly, about His teachings to incriminate Him.

#### *Jesus' response*

Does Jesus answer his questions?

No. And why not?

Because under Jewish civil law dealing with trials He is not responsible to answer the question. They are responsible to produce the two or three witnesses.

So He points out to them, since everything He taught He taught publicly, if He said anything amiss or blasphemous, they should have no trouble producing the two witnesses they need to condemn Him.

#### *He is beaten*

It was His right to make this response, but for this response He is beaten. This is the first of several beatings He will receive on this night.

#### *Confusion*

As we begin to see here, and as we will continue to see throughout these proceedings, they are confused and disorganised.

Why would they be disorganised?

The reason they are confused and disorganised is that they did not anticipate having to conduct the religious trial on this night.

The original conspiracy included waiting until after the Passover. But now Jesus has forced their hand, and they have acted before they are ready.

And so their purpose for the Jewish trial is to establish a religious charge against Him. And the issue will be blasphemy.

#### *Rule 5 broken*

Now Jesus is not only pointing out to them that they are responsible to bring witnesses against Him and that they should have no difficulty in finding them.

There is another implication in His response to them.

Why does He emphasise how publicly He taught with the words, "*and I spoke nothing in secret*"?

Because this stands in contrast to the trial. He said nothing in secret, but this trial is being conducted in secret.

Therefore they are breaking rule number 5 on the list.

*Outcome of this stage of the trial*

And what was the outcome of the trial before Annas?

The end product of the first stage of the Jewish trial is that they were unable to produce a specific charge against Him.

**2. The Trial before Caiaphas, § 166, Mark 14:53, 55-65; Matthew 26:57, 59-68; Luke 22:54a; John 18:24**

*Caiaphas*

How does Annas respond to this impasse?

Read John 18:24.

Who was Caiaphas?

Caiaphas is the son-in-law of Annas. He served as high priest from the year 25 until the year 36 AD. And this trial takes place in the mid-point of his high priesthood, in AD 30.

*Rule 6*

Read Luke 22:54a.

Where was Caiaphas when they brought Jesus to him?

At his home.

And this will break rule number 6 on the list: Sanhedrin trials could only be conducted in the Hall of Judgment of the Temple Compound.

*The Sanhedrin*

Now read Mark 14:53.

Who else was there?

All the chief priests together with the elders and the scribes were there with the high priest.

The Sanhedrin was comprised of 71 members carefully divided along party lines.

- 24 seats went to the chief priests, and all 24 chief priests were Sadducees.
- 24 seats went to the elders, and the 24 elders were Pharisees.
- 22 more seats went to the scribes, and all 22 scribes were Pharisees.
- The last seat went to the high priest, who was a Sadducee.

And so the majority vote was by the Pharisees, but the proceedings were conducted by a Sadducee.

It was not necessary to have all 71 members there, but they had to have a minimum of 23. If you had only the minimum, 11 votes were sufficient to acquit. Thirteen votes would be necessary to convict. Conviction had to be by a majority of two, not only one.

We are not told how many of the 71 members were there. Mark tells us that all the chief priests were there.

We know that not all 71 members were there because later in the gospels we notice that Nicodemus was not there and Joseph of Arimathea was not there. So the most would be 69, and there may have been fewer.

So in this section we come to the second stage of the Jewish trial, the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

#### *Rule 7*

And how does this trial begin?

Read Mark 14:55-59.

They begin by trying to obtain false testimony against Him.

Therefore they were breaking rule number 7 on the list: they were to begin with the defence and then the accusation.

#### *Confusion*

And notice their disarray.

*The chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus.*

Why don't they have their witnesses ready?

Because they were not intending to have this trial this on this night, but after the feast.

#### *Rule 8*

Notice also that it is *the whole Council* that is acting here, all trying to put Him to death.

This breaks rule number 8 on the list: All may argue in favour of acquittal, but all may not argue in favour of conviction.

#### *Witnesses disqualified*

They bring one false witness after another, trying to find two who say the same thing, but, although they had many false witnesses, they were all disqualified because their testimonies were inconsistent.

Finally they find two men who seemed to say the same thing. And they stood up in the court to give their testimony.

But as Mark point out in verse 59, *Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.*

We can see the discrepancy in their statements by comparing Mark and Matthew.

Read verse 61 of Matthew's account.

He quotes one of them as saying, *"This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple'".*

How does that differ from Mark verse 58?

Mark quotes the witness as saying *"I will destroy this temple"*.

So did He say I will do so, or did He say I am able to do so?

One is a statement of ability. The other is a statement of actual intent.

It was this small discrepancy that disqualified the last two witnesses that they have.

#### *Rule 9*

Failure to release Him at this point in the proceedings will violate rule number 9 on the list: There were to be two or three witnesses and their testimony had to agree in every detail.

#### *Rule 10*

All of this exasperates Caiaphas.

Read what he does next in Mark 26:60 - 61.

By asking Jesus to respond now, when they did not have two witnesses presenting the official charge, he will break rule number 10: There was to be no allowance for the accused to testify against himself.

And in keeping with Jewish civil rights, verse 61 says He kept silent, He didn't have to respond at this stage.

#### *Two things Caiaphas knows*

And that frustrates Caiaphas even further.

Read the next section in Matthew's account, verses 63b – 64.

What Caiaphas asks Him at this point reveals two things that he knows. What are they?

- i. He clearly understood who Jesus claimed to be. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah.
- ii. And secondly, he knew who the Messiah was supposed to be. The Messiah was supposed to be the Son of God.

#### *Under oath*

Here he puts Jesus under oath, *"I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."*

Now, by Jewish civil law, if you are placed under oath you must respond. And so He does.

#### *Someday they will know*

Read Mark 14:62.

He answers the question with: *"I am"*, meaning "yes, I am the Messiah, the Son of God".

Then what does He add?

- i. They will see Him seated at the right hand of God the Father.
- ii. They will see Him come in the clouds of heaven.

Why did He add this to His answer?

They do not believe Him at this time, but there will come a day when they will know the truth of what He claims because of these two things!

- i. They will see Him seated at the right hand of God the Father.
- ii. They will see Him come in the clouds of heaven. And this they will see from hell itself.

#### *Rule 11*

Now several things happen in rather quick succession.

Read Matthew verse 65.

By tearing his robes he breaks rule number 11 in our list, which is a rule taken from the Law of Moses in Leviticus 21:10.

#### *Rule 12*

What is the charge against Him?

*He has blasphemed.*

And who made the charge?

The high priest, who is the judge in this case.

So the charge originates with the judge, breaking rule number 12: Charges could not originate with the judges; they could only investigate charges brought to them.

#### *Rule 13*

Furthermore, because the charge is blasphemy, it breaks rule number 13: The accusation of blasphemy was only valid if the name of God itself was pronounced, which He did not do at this trial.

#### *Rule 14*

What does he add immediately after making the charge?

He goes on to add, *What further need do we have of witnesses?*

And he doesn't have any witnesses anyway because they were all disqualified.

So he is asking for a condemnation strictly on the basis of what Jesus just said.

Therefore he violates rule number 14: A person could not be condemned on the basis of his own words alone.

#### *Rule 15*

Read how the council responds in verse 66 of Mathew's account.

Here they break five rules all at once!

They go ahead and pronounce Him guilty, breaking rule number 15: The verdict could not be announced at night, only in the daytime.

*Rule 16*

Furthermore, because this is a capital offence, they break rule 16: In cases of capital punishment, the trial and guilty verdict could not occur at the same time but must be separated by at least 24 hours.

*Rule 17*

Furthermore, it was done by acclamation, which breaks rule number 17: Voting for the death penalty had to be done by individual count beginning with the youngest so the young would not be influenced by the elders.

*Rule 18*

Mark adds a small detail that Matthew omits.

Read the last part of verse 64 in Mark's account.

*And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.*

What is the significance of the word, *all*?

It was a unanimous decision.

So by Jewish law Jesus should have been released. Failure to release Him would violate rule number 18: A unanimous decision for guilt shows innocence since it is impossible for 23-71 men to agree without plotting.

*Rule 19*

They also pronounce the sentence, adding that He is worthy of death, which would break rule number 19: The sentence could only be pronounced three days after the guilty verdict.

*Rules 20 & 21*

Now read Mark verse 65.

*Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophesy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.*

Here they break rule number 20: Judges were to be humane and kind.

And also rule number 21: A person condemned to death was not to be scourged or beaten beforehand.

*Second mistreatment*

During this night Jesus is physically mistreated several times.

The first time occurred at the trial before Annas when He was struck by an officer.

Now here, at the trial before the Sanhedrin, He is mistreated for the second time.

And here He suffers three great indignities under Jewish law.

- i. Some of them hit Him with the fist.

And hitting someone with the fist was punishable by a fine of four denarii. One denarius was equivalent to one days wages, so four denarii was four days wages.

- ii. Even more insulting is to be hit with the palm of the hand. And they slap Him.

That was punishable by a fine of 200 denarii, or 200 days wages.

- iii. And the third thing He suffers is that some of them spit into His face.

That was even more insulting and was punishable by a fine of 400 denarii, or 400 days wages.

And while He suffers these three high indignities under Jewish law, one thing is certain: no one was fined for their actions on this night.

#### *Rule 22*

The last thing to notice in this section is that this trial happens to fall between the first night of Passover and the first day of Passover, and it therefore violated rule number 22: No trials are allowed on the eve of the Sabbath or on a feast day.

And already they have broken all 22 rules on our list.

### **3. The Denial by Peter, § 167, Mark 14:54, 66-72; Matthew 26:58, 69-75; Luke 22:54b-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27**

Meanwhile, as this trial is taking place in the house of the high priest, outside, in the court of the high priest events are unfolding that lead to Peter's denial of Jesus.

#### *Peter enters the court*

Read Luke verse 54b and John verses 15 – 16.

When Jesus was first arrested the apostles were scattered, but now two of them begin to follow the crowd to where Jesus was taken, but from a distance.

How was Peter able to enter the court of the high priest?

John's family and the family of the high priest were somehow related. So John says: *Now that disciple was known to the high priest.*

And because of his familiarity, the servants of the high priest knew John, and they let him into the compound.

In verse 16, Peter was standing outside and John used his influence to get him into the compound, inadvertently setting the stage for Peter's three-fold denial as was prophesied by Jesus during the last Passover supper.

#### *The first denial.*

Read John 18:17 – 24.

Who recognised Peter?

Soon after he entered the courtyard the servant girl who kept the door accused Peter of being one of the disciples.

And he denies knowing Jesus for the first time.

It is a simple denial, nothing more than a mere denial of knowing Jesus, or of being His disciple.

In Mark's account here, at the end of verse 68, later manuscripts add, *and a rooster crowed*. This is the first rooster-crowing, and if it refers to the changing of the watch, it would now be 9 pm. [Or possibly midnight.]

*The second denial.*

Read Matthew 26:71 – 72.

Now another servant-girl recognises that Peter has been with Jesus, and for the second time he denies knowing Him.

What is different about Peter's second denial?

This time it is not a simple denial, but a denial with an oath, probably using the name of God.

*The third denial.*

Read Matthew 26:73 – 74, Luke 22:59 – 60, and John 18:26.

According to Luke about an hour passes. And once again he is identified as being among the disciples of Jesus.

Who recognises Peter this time?

Some of the bystanders and a man whom John identifies as a relative of Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off.

How did the bystanders recognise that Peter had been with Jesus?

They recognised that, like Jesus, he was also a Galilean. His speech revealed that he was from Galilee. The Galilean and Judean dialects were quite distinct and to the Judean ear a Galilean was obvious.

Now Peter's third denial is even stronger than his second denial. What does he add this time?

In addition to swearing an oath as before, he now begins to curse. And the Greek verb requires an object. He is calling down divine curses, either upon himself, or upon Jesus.

So there is a progression in his denials. He went from a simple denial of knowing Jesus, to using an oath in which he probably used the name of God, and now he actually uses a curse as well as an oath.

*The rooster crows*

Read the rest of Luke's account here, Luke 22:60b – 62.

Now immediately, even as he was still speaking, the cock crows, and according to Mark's account it crows for the second time. That would make it midnight. [Or possibly 3 am.]

Then what happened?

At that time Jesus turned and the eyes of Jesus and Peter actually met.

And Peter suddenly remembered the prophecy of Jesus that before the second cock crowing he will deny him three times.

In that moment, its as though a veil is removed from Peter's eyes, a veil he didn't even know was there, and for the first time he sees himself.

He remembers what Jesus had said to him. He remembers his enthusiastic and proud confidence.

And he went out of the compound weeping bitterly.

This is also the outworking of the spiritual battle that Jesus explained to him earlier.

#### **4. The Mockery and Beating, § 168, Luke 22:63-65**

[Now we go back to section 166 because here again Robertson broke Luke's order.]

Read Luke 22:64 – 65.

This is the third time He suffers physical mistreatment on this night.

And it is the first of eight mockeries.

He will suffer four mockeries before the cross, and He will suffer four mockeries on the cross.

This is the first of the four mockeries before the cross.

#### **5. The Condemnation by the Sanhedrin, § 169, Mark 15:1a; Matthew 27:1; Luke 22:66-71**

Read all three passages here, Mark 15:1a; Matthew 27:1; and Luke 22:66a.

*Date – 15th of Nisan – 7 April, AD 30 – Friday*

As the sun rises it is now Friday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 7<sup>th</sup> AD 30.

*Sanhedrin conference*

And who is assembling together?

Again it is the whole council of the Sanhedrin.

And what is their purpose?

Their purpose is to *confer together against Jesus to put Him to death.*

This is the third stage of the religious trial, His condemnation to death by the Sanhedrin.

Why did they wait until morning?

Perhaps by this time someone may have come to his senses enough to realise that all of the preceding segments of the trial have been totally illegal.

So now they attempt to give a measure of legality to a procedure that has become totally illegal.

#### *Questions for Jesus*

And they have two questions for Jesus. Read Luke 22:66b – 71.

- i. What is their first question?

*“If You are the Christ, tell us.”* If you are the Messiah, tell us.

How does He answer them?

It is useless to tell them because they have already determined not to believe.

And some day they will know the truth of His claims when they see Him seated at the right hand of God the Father.

- ii. And what is their second question?

*“Are You the Son of God, then?”*

How does He answer?

*“Yes, I am.”*

The ASV translates it more literally: *“Ye say that I am”*. In Greek it is a very emphatic way of saying, “You yourselves said it! And yes indeed, that’s exactly who I am”.

In modern English we have a similar way of doing this: somebody makes a statement; and we respond, “You said it!” When we say it with that tone of voice we are not saying that’s only your opinion. We are affirming the truth of what the person just said.

And that is the emphasis here: “You said it! And yes indeed that’s exactly who I am!”

#### *Condemnation to death*

And now the third and last stage of the Jewish trial comes to an end.

They have achieved their purpose, and they officially condemn Him to death.

### **6. The Death of Judas, § 170, Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19**

#### *Judas’ third role in the conspiracy*

While the Sanhedrin could condemn somebody to death, they could not, at this point of history, actually carry out the death sentence, because the Roman Senate had taken away from the Jewish Sanhedrin the right of capital punishment.

So if Jesus was to die He will have to die based upon a point of Roman law and not on a point of Jewish law.

And that creates another problem for them: While blasphemy was punishable by death under Jewish law, it was not punishable by death under Roman law.

Therefore they have to change the issue for the civil trial.

Judas was not needed for the religious trial, but he will be needed for the civil trial to fulfil his third function: to serve as the prosecution witness.

But what happens between the Jewish and Roman trial?

Judas dies!

*Remorse*

Read Matthew's description of how it happens in 27:3 – 5.

The question is often asked, was Judas saved?

Where the NASB says, "*he felt remorse*", the ASV says he *repented himself*, which leads some to think that perhaps he was saved at that point.

But was he?

There are two different Greek words which are translated as repentance in English.

And one of them is *metanoia* which means repentance, or a change of mind.

For the Jews salvation requires a change of mind about Jesus – a change of mind from believing that He is demon possessed to believing that He is the Messianic king. Such a change of mind is a radical change of world-view.

And *metanoia* is the word which is normally used when salvation is in view.

But that is not the word Matthew uses here.

The word here is *metamelomai*, which means to be filled with remorse or regret.

So the NASB has the better translation, and Judas was filled with remorse or regret. He did not change his mind about Jesus, and there was no repentance leading to salvation.

And the answer to the question is: No, he was not saved, and as prophesied, he goes to perdition.

*Apparent discrepancies*

Now the next paragraph is bound to raise some questions in your mind.

Read Matthew 27:6 – 8 and Acts 1:18 – 19.

What are the questions here?

Critics of the New Testament use these passages to argue against its inspiration.

And there are two issues:

- i. How did Judas die? By hanging, or by falling headlong?
- ii. And, who purchased the field? Judas, or the chief priests?

### *How did Judas die?*

Let's begin with the first question: how did Judas die?

Matthew says *he went away and hanged himself*.

But Luke says, *falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out*.

So how did he die?

When faced with this question, some postulate that he hanged himself, but the rope broke so he fell down and burst open.

But that is not very satisfying since he would not be falling headlong, and most likely he would not fall far enough to burst open.

### *Some Jewish background*

The picture will become clearer when we understand some Jewish background that was once well known.

First of all here, remember that in the Jewish reckoning of time the day begins at sunset and therefore first night of something comes before the first day of that thing. The first night of Passover comes before the first day of Passover.

And on the first night of Passover Jewish families eat the Passover meal. And so Jesus observed His last Passover meal on the first night of Passover with the apostles.

Then on the first day of Passover, at 9 o'clock in the morning there is a special Passover sacrifice. And from that sacrifice only 25 men partake in the afternoon: the high priest and the 24 chief priests.

Now why is all this helpful?

Because this is the context in which Judas dies.

And, by Jewish law, a dead body within the walls of Jerusalem would make the city unclean and they would not be able to proceed with the Passover sacrifice.

But the law also had a way to deal with such an issue so that the sacrifice could go ahead.

They were required to take the dead body and throw it over the wall of Jerusalem, the wall that faced the valley of Hinnom.

And once the body was thrown over the wall, they could proceed with the sacrifice. Later, the burial team can go out and bury the body.

### *Putting all this together*

Now, putting all this together...

When Judas was filled with regret and remorse, he tried to return the funds to the chief priests, who refused to take it. So he dumped it in the temple compound and *went away and hanged himself*.

He died by hanging.

And in order to keep the city clean to perform the sacrifice at 9 am, his body was thrown over the wall into the valley of Hinnom. *And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle ...*

And in the light of the Jewish law of that day both Matthew and Mark have correctly reported what happened. There is no contradiction in their statements.

*Who purchased the field?*

The second question raised by this passage is: Who purchased the field?

Matthew says it was the chief priests.

<sup>6</sup>*The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."* <sup>7</sup>*And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers.*

But Luke says it was Judas.

*Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness.*

So who bought the field: the chief priests, or Judas?

*Some Jewish background*

Once again the picture becomes clearer when we understand a little Jewish law.

And Matthew points to it in his text.

<sup>6</sup>*The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood."*

By Jewish law, money wrongfully gained could not be put into the temple treasury.

And, if they could not put the money into the temple treasury, what were they expected to do with it?

Again by Jewish law, those who knew the money was wrongfully gained had to return the money to the donor.

But what were they to do if the donor dies before the money could be returned to him?

They still could not put it in the temple treasury, but in that case they had to use the money to purchase something for the public good.

*Answer:*

And that's exactly what they do. They purchase something for public good. They purchase a field to bury strangers in.

However the purchase had to be in the name of the donor even though the donor was dead, and therefore the actual legal documents for the sale would have the name of Judas in them.

So technically, by Jewish law, Judas purchased the field and the chief priests are viewed strictly as his purchasing agents.

So again, from the perspective of the Jewish law, both statements are true accounts of what took place.

### *Prophecy fulfilled*

Now Matthew adds that prophecy is being fulfilled.

Read verses 9 – 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; <sup>10</sup> AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME."*

Matthew attributes his quote to Jeremiah the prophet. And the critics like to say this is a mistake because he quotes, not Jeremiah, but Zechariah.

### *An unsatisfactory explanation*

Sometimes, when they were dealing with different scrolls, they would use the name of the first book in the scroll as the name for the whole scroll. So by mentioning the first prophet in the scroll of the prophets they would refer to all of the prophets.

Therefore, by mentioning Jeremiah, some might argue that Matthew was referring to the whole scroll of the prophets, including Zechariah.

However, Jeremiah is not the first prophet in the scroll of the prophets. The first book of that scroll is Isaiah.

So, if he had said Isaiah, it would have been a good way to respond. But he doesn't say Isaiah. He says Jeremiah.

### *A good question*

And the question remains: Why? Why does Matthew refer to Jeremiah here?

The pursuit of an answer will lead to an understanding of something often missed.

### *Only in Matthew's account*

Now, before we go and look at what the prophets wrote, notice how many of the gospel writers include an account of Judas' death. Only Matthew!

Why would that be?

Each gospel author writes for a different audience, and each has a theme relevant to his audience.

Who is Matthew's audience?

He is writing primarily to Jewish believers, and his theme is: Jesus the Messiah the King of the Jews.

He quotes the Old Testament (the Tanakh) over sixty times and makes extensive use of Messianic prophecies to show that Jesus really was the promised Messianic King.

But if Jesus is the Messiah then the question naturally arises in the minds of his audience: where is the Messianic Kingdom, and where is the world peace He will bring?

Therefore Matthew also writes to show why the Messiah didn't set up His Kingdom.

The Kingdom was not established because the leaders of Israel rejected the Messiah.

And so Matthew writes about the consequences of this rejection, including the impending judgment and destruction of Jerusalem that would come in 70 AD. (Matt. 22:7; 23:36-38).

### *What Matthew points out*

Now, in verses 6 – 8, what three things does he tell us about the purchase made by the chief priests?

He tells us:

- 1) The price they paid: thirty pieces of silver.
- 2) What they bought: the Potter's field.
- 3) What that field was called as a result: the Field of Blood.

### *Zechariah's prophecy*

Now turn to Zechariah and read Zechariah 11:12-13.

*<sup>12</sup> I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.*

Why does Matthew quote this passage?

The chief priests have literally fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy, where the Lord said of the thirty pieces of silver, " ... *that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.*"

They valued Him at the price of contempt, the price of a dead slave, thirty pieces of silver. (Exodus 21:32)

*Jeremiah's prophecy*

Now Matthew tells us that Jeremiah's prophecy is being fulfilled.

What does Jeremiah have to say about this field which was now called the Field of Blood?

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 19.

Read Jeremiah 19:1-2.

<sup>1</sup> *Thus says the Lord, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. <sup>2</sup> "Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you,*

Jeremiah is told to do four things:

- i. He was to *Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar.*
- ii. He was to take with him two groups of the leaders of Israel. *The elders of the people* are the civil leaders and *the senior priests* are the religious leaders.
- iii. *Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate.* This is one of the southern gates of Jerusalem, overlooking the Hinnom Valley just before it joins the Kidron Valley.
- iv. And there he was to proclaim the words that the Lord would tell him.

What he was to proclaim follows in verses 3 – 9.

Read verse 3.

<sup>3</sup> *and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle.*

This is the declaration of God's intent, which is to bring calamity upon Jerusalem.

And the reason follows. Read verses 4 – 5.

<sup>4</sup> *"Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent <sup>5</sup> and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind;*

Therefore God declares the judgement that will take place, a judgement on Topheth and a judgement on Jerusalem.

Read verses 6 – 9.

<sup>6</sup> therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter. <sup>7</sup> “I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. <sup>8</sup> “I will also make this city a desolation and an object of hissing; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters. <sup>9</sup> “I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another’s flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them.” ’

Jeremiah is standing just outside of Jerusalem, in the valley of Hinnom, in a field called Topheth, which has become the place for burning their sons and daughters as sacrifices to Baal. Therefore God will make the city an astonishing desolation.

Then we see what Jeremiah was to do with the earthenware jar.

Read verses 10 – 13.

<sup>10</sup> “Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you <sup>11</sup> and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place for burial [Or better: until there is no more room for burial]. <sup>12</sup> “This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants,” declares the Lord, “so as to make this city like Topheth. <sup>13</sup> “The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods.” ’ ’

This is the judgement against Jerusalem. It will become like the broken jar, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth until there is no more room for burial.

*The field*



The field *Topheth*, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, is where the Israelites built high places to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire.

It is located in the Valley of Hinnom just before it meets the Kidron Valley at the southern end of Jerusalem.

And it became the potter’s field where the potter dug up clay to make his vessels.

It is this same field which the chief priests purchased, and which became known as the Field of Blood.

## *Gehenna*

In Hebrew by the way, the name of the Hinnom valley is Ge Hinnom.

In Greek that becomes Gehenna. And, because the Hinnom valley was the place for the physical burning of humans as they were offered up to certain idols and gods, Gehenna became the name of the place for the burning of humans in the eternal lake of fire.

## *Matthew's Point*

Now what was Matthew's point in referring to this prophecy?

He notes, in verse 8, that the field was given a new name, an Aramaic name, Hakeldama, meaning the Field of Blood.

Jeremiah prophesied *behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter.*

There is a point of similarity here, or an application of Jeremiah's prophecy, in the renaming of this field. [The renaming of the field is not a fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, but point of similarity between the prophecy and the current events.]

And the point that Matthew is making here is that when they purchased this field in Topheth, they bought the very field which Jeremiah had cursed, and so they purchased the curse of Jeremiah as well as the field.

They are the generation that will see the devastation of Jerusalem that God decreed through Jeremiah. And with that devastation they will bury in that field until there is no more room for burying.

This did not happen when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in the year 586 BC.

But in the year 70 AD, when the judgment came for the unpardonable sin, they buried, and buried, and buried in Topheth until there was no more room for burying.

This is the consequence for them of their rejection of the Messiah!

And this is why Matthew mentions Jeremiah.

## *They no longer have the Prosecuting Witness!*

The result of this event, which occurs between the two trials, is that they no longer have their prosecuting witness.

Therefore the confusion that was evident in the religious trial will also be evident in the civil trial.

## C. The Civil Trial, § 171-174

Now, because the Sanhedrin did not have the power to carry out the death penalty, they needed to have Jesus convicted in a Roman court.

And there are two Roman laws that will play a role in this trial.

- i. All proceedings have to be public. And this trial is very public, much to Pilate's regret.
- ii. The trial had to begin with a prosecuting witness presenting a charge punishable under Roman law.

This is one of the reasons why Judas was important to the conspiracy. He was to be the prosecuting witness who would present the charge against Jesus. But they no longer have their prosecuting witness, and we'll see the consequences of this in a moment.

### 1. The First Trial before Pilate, § 171, Mark 15:1b-5; Matthew 27:2, 11-14; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38

Read Luke 23:1.

*Pilate*

Who was Pilate?

Pilate was a Roman citizen born in Spain. He served as procurator from the year 26 to the year 36 AD. He was the longest ruling procurator in Judea's history.

This trial takes place at the midpoint of his term as procurator in the year 30 AD.

In contemporary Jewish writing he is noted for his cruelty, but he was normally a correct Roman following strict Roman procedure.

On this occasion, although it was still early in the morning, not long after dawn, he was anticipating a trial because the previous evening he had released a Roman cohort for Judas to make the arrest.

*Jesus taken to the Praetorium*

Now read John 18:28.

Wasn't the Passover eaten the previous evening?

Because this verse implies that the Passover had not yet been eaten, some suggest that Jesus ate His Passover meal a day early.

But how could He do that? He kept the Law of Moses perfectly, down to the smallest jot and tittle. And the Mosaic Law specified on which day of the month the Passover meal must be eaten, and Jesus would not violate that law.

Had He violated that Law, He would have sinned and therefore disqualified Himself from being our spotless Lamb.

So what is John referring to here?

### *Passover*

The origin of the name, Passover, is the fact that the angel of death passed over the Jewish homes during the tenth plague on Egypt.

But how many different things can be referred to by using the name, Passover?

It is used in four different ways.

- i. First, it is applied to the Feast of Passover by itself, which is a single day.
- ii. Secondly, because the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread begin on the day after the Feast of Passover, the term Passover is also used to include both the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a total of eight days.
- iii. Thirdly, the meal eaten by all Jews on the first night of Passover is called the Passover.
- iv. Fourthly, the name, Passover, is applied to the lamb that was sacrificed on the first day of Passover in the Temple Compound. This Passover lamb was sacrificed at the third hour of the day (9 am) and was later eaten by the high priest and the 24 chief priests.

If any of the chief priests became unclean he would not be able to partake of the Passover feast.

Therefore, as John records, they did not enter the Praetorium.

### *The trial begins*

Now see how the trial begins.

Read John 18:29 – 32.

In keeping with the second Roman law, Pilate begins with the question: *“What accusation do you bring against this Man?”*

And Judas was supposed to step forward to make the accusation, but he is dead.

So how do they respond?

*“If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.”*

And what are they trying to do?

They don't have a prosecuting witness anymore, so they try to pressure Pilate into merely passing a death sentence with no trial, no verdict, and no sentencing.

But how does Pilate respond to this pressure?

At this point Pilate, the correct Roman, will have none of it. They can judge Him according to their own law.

If there is no accusation there will be no trial. If there is no trial there will be no condemnation. If there is no condemnation there will be no sentencing either.

And they complain, *“We are not permitted to put anyone to death,”* meaning it is no longer lawful under Roman law.

### *Jesus' prophecy*

And notice John's editorial comment in verse 32,

*To fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*

Jesus said more than once that He will die by crucifixion.

But how does their statement, "*we are not permitted to put anyone to death*" fulfill the words of Jesus?

Crucifixion was not a Jewish method of execution. It was the Roman method. The Jewish method of execution was stoning to death.

If Jesus had died under Jewish law He would have been stoned to death.

But if He was stoned to death He would be rendered a false prophet, because He prophesied that He would die by crucifixion, not by stoning.

And there is a fact of history recorded in the Talmud that reveals the providence of God.

When did the Roman Senate take away from the Jewish Sanhedrin the right of capital punishment?

The Talmud states exactly what year it was. It says it happened forty years before the temple was destroyed.

The temple was destroyed in the year AD 70. And going back 40 years gives the year 30, the very year of this trial.

So, if this trial had taken place only six months earlier He would have been stoned to death and rendered a false prophet.

In the providence of God, at the proper time, God moved the Roman Senate to take away the right of capital punishment from the Sanhedrin, with the result that now if Jesus dies He will have to die under Roman law, not under Jewish law.

So He will die by crucifixion, just as He foretold.

### *The charge*

Now when the leaders realized that Pilate will not proceed until he has a specific accusation, they finally produce one.

Read Luke 23:2.

What is their charge against Jesus?

They accused Him of sedition or treason of three counts.

- 1) Perverting the nation, stirring up revolt.
- 2) Forbidding the giving tribute to Caesar, an act of rebellion.
- 3) Claiming to be a king. And if He claims to be a king He claims to be a competitor to Caesar.

### *Questioning of the accused*

Now that Pilate has a specific charge he can continue with the Roman trial.

Read John 18:33.

What normally follows the accusation is the questioning of the accused. So Pilate asks Jesus, *“Are You the King of the Jews?”*

Is he asking whether Jesus is the Messiah?

No, from a Roman perspective the point of his question is: Are you really claiming to be a competitor to Caesar?

### *Clarification requested*

In a typical Jewish response, Jesus responds with a question of His own.

Read John 18:34 – 35.

What is the purpose of Jesus’ question?

Pilate’s question, *“Are you the King of the Jews”*, has a different answer depending on whether it is asked from a Jewish or a Roman perspective.

So Jesus is seeking clarification from Pilate. Is he asking from the perspective of a Roman, or from the perspective of a Jew?

### *Clarification given*

How does Pilate answer?

*“I am not a Jew, am I? ... What have You done”*

He says, “I am not a Jew that I should be asking from a Jewish perspective. That’s not where I am coming from, You have been turned over to me by the Jewish chief priests with specific accusations. Now address the charges. Are you claiming to be a competitor to Caesar?”

### *His Kingdom*

Once that issue is clear Jesus can answer.

Read John 18:36 – 37a.

The simple answer to Pilate’s question is that He is not a competitor to Caesar.

And He gives two reasons.

- 1) What is the first reason?

Jesus says, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”*

And this has become a favorite proof text for those who are amillennial, those who don’t believe in a future Messianic kingdom.

They claim that when He said, *“My kingdom is not of this world,”* it shows that His kingdom will not be in this world.

But is that what Jesus means?

There is a difference between saying *in the world* and saying *of the world*.

And Jesus Himself made that same distinction in John 16 & 17. Concerning both Himself and believers He says we are in the world but we not of the world.

What does it mean to be of the world?

Now to be *of the world* is to be of this world's nature. And the believer is no longer of this world's nature. As long as he is living he is in the world but no longer of it.

The same thing applies here. His kingdom is not of this world's nature.

And when He returns, He is not coming back merely to depose Caesar and sit upon Caesar's throne. He is coming with His own throne, the throne of David. And with His own kingdom, the Messianic kingdom.

His kingdom will someday be in the world, but it will never be of the world, it will never be of this world's nature.

- 2) And the second reason He is not a competitor to Caesar is easy to miss in the translation into English.

The end of verse 36 might be better translated:

*But now, at the present time, the kingdom which is mine is not from this place.*

As a result of the rejection of the king, as a result of the unpardonable sin, which we saw in sections 61 - 64, His kingdom will not be set up at this stage of Jerusalem's history.

So clearly, in answer to Pilate's question, Jesus is a king. But His kingdom is not of this world and will never be of this world. And also His kingdom is not, at the present time, in this world ruled from this place (Jerusalem).

#### *Inference*

Then Pilate draws an inference from what Jesus has just told him: "*So You are a king?*"

#### *What is truth?*

He has understood correctly what Jesus has told him.

Read John 18:37b – 38.

Having already said that His kingdom is not of the world, here Jesus adds that He came into the world "*to testify to the truth.*"

And this stands in contrast to what Pilate is hearing in this trial!

And everyone who is of the truth hears His voice.

But how does this exchange end? ... With a sarcastic question, "*What is truth?*"

And what is so sad for Pilate is this: At this moment he was looking at the One who is the Truth and he failed to recognize Him.

### *Innocence declared*

Read Luke 23:4.

Here is the first of several declarations of innocence. So far as Pilate is concerned Jesus is no threat to Rome.

### *Jesus does not respond*

Read Matthew 27:12; Luke 23:5; and Mark 15:4- 5.

Why was Pilate amazed?

Following this first declaration of innocence, they began to accuse Him of many other things. And Jesus responds by saying nothing.

And even when Pilate asks Jesus to respond He made no further answer.

## **2. The Trial before Herod, § 172, Luke 23:6-12**

### *A Galilean*

Now Pilate finds a way out of his predicament.

Read Luke 23:6 – 7.

Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?

As these accusations are being dealt out, someone happens to mention that Jesus originated from the Galilee.

And, while both Samaria and Judea were under his jurisdiction, Galilee was not under Pilate's jurisdiction. It was under the authority of Herod Antipas, who had also come to Jerusalem to help maintain order during the festival.

So he chooses to send Jesus over to Herod Antipas.

### *Herod Antipas*

Read Luke 23:8 – 12.

Who was Herod?

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, the one who tried to kill Jesus when He was two years old in Bethlehem.

This Antipas is the one who, about a year or so earlier, had beheaded John the Baptist.

Only after hearing about the miracles of Jesus did he even send for him once, and Jesus simply said, "Go and tell that fox, 'No.'"

### *Herod's questions*

But now he has his opportunity, and he wants Jesus to perform those miracles for him. He wants to be entertained by these miracles.

But Jesus responds by not answering any question and doing no signs.

### *Mockery*

So Antipas subjects Him to the second mockery He suffers on this night.

And then sent Him back to Pilate dressed in a gorgeous robe.

### *Herod and Pilate became friends*

Verse 12 says, *Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.*

Why were they enemies?

The enmity between them was created because of an event that occurred when Pilate became procurator. He brought legions up to Jerusalem and on the outer walls of the temple compound he hung the Roman shields.

And the problem for Jews is that these shields had images of gods and goddesses that the Romans worshiped. And that offended Jewish sensitivities concerning idolatry.

A riot broke out and many of his Roman soldiers were killed on that occasion. But he still refused to take the shields down.

Antipas knew that, as long as the shields were up there, they would be a constant boiling point for rebellion. So he asked Pilate to take the shields down and Pilate still refused.

And so Antipas wrote a letter to the Roman Senate. And the Roman Senate then ordered Pilate to take down the shields. So now he had no choice.

As a result enmity arose between the two because each felt that the other was not recognizing his authority.

But now that Pilate sent a Galilean to the one in charge of Galilee, and there is recognition of mutual or shared authority, they become friends at Jesus' expense.

### *What became of Herod Antipas?*

And what became of Herod Antipas?

Nine years later, in the year AD 39, his wife Herodias, who had instigated the beheading of John the Baptist, talked him into travelling to Rome to request the title of king, the same title that the Senate had given to Herod the Great. She desperately wanted to be called queen.

But the Roman Caesar that day was a man named Gaius Caligular. He was an insane mad man.

He spent the treasury rather freely, mostly on pleasures. And when he ran out of money he would simply accuse a wealthy land owner or Senator of some crime against the state, have the whole family executed and then replenish the funds again.

He was so insane he made his own horse a member of the Roman Senate. And that horse always voted his way. It finally got so bad that the Pretorian Guard that was there to protect him ended up being the ones to assassinate him.

And so when Antipas and Herodias came asking for the title of king, he simply deposed them into Leon which is now France, and the two died in abject poverty, and paid for their role in the beheading of John and the cursing and the mocking of Jesus.

### 3. The Second Trial before Pilate, § 173, Mark 15:6-15; Matthew 27:15-26; Luke 23:13-25; John 18:39-40; 19:1-16

#### a. *First attempt to release Him*

*Declaration of innocence*

Now Pilate will make several attempts to have Jesus released.

Read about the first in Luke 23:13 – 16.

What is Pilate's verdict?

Here we see two more declarations of innocence.

Herod, by sending Jesus back to Pilate declared Him to be innocent.

And now Pilate issues the third declaration of innocence. He found "no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you made against Him ... nothing deserving of death has been done by Him."

And with this declaration he attempts to release Jesus.

But that won't appease the mob outside.

#### b. *Second attempt to release Him*

Read John 18:39a.

Why does Pilate raise the prospect of releasing someone at the Passover?

He has declared Jesus to be innocent, and he hopes to release Him.

So now he falls back on a custom he has developed between the Jews and the Romans. On the feast day, as a goodwill gesture, he would release a political prisoner. And as Matthew and Mark note, it would be a prisoner of the Jew's choosing.

*Barabbas*

Now Barabbas comes into the story.

Read Mark 15:7; Matthew 27:16; and Luke 23:19.

Who was Barabbas?

And look ahead to John 18:40 to notice how John describes Barabbas.

*"Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.*

The word robber in English implies someone who went around stealing things, but that would not be punishable by death.

Barabbas was more than a robber in that sense.

He was a robber in the same sense that Josephus used the term in his works on the Jewish antiquities and the Jewish war of AD 70. It is a term that is used of Jewish bands that were actually rebels who would be characterised by robbing to supply their rebellion.

This can be seen in Mark verse 7:

*The man named Barabbas had been imprisoned with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the insurrection.*

So Mark, as well as Luke in verse 19, makes it quite clear that Barabbas was more than someone who was stealing things.

He was a rebel robber. And he was facing his own death penalty in prison.

*The title, Barabbas*

What can we learn from the name of Barabbas?

Actually, Barabbas is not a name. It is a title. It is a Hellenized name from two Aramaic words: Bar Abba. Bar means “son of”, and Abba was the name of this person’s father.

But also in Aramaic Abba means “the father”. He was the son of Abba. He was the son of the father.

The gospels probably do not give us his actual name to avoid confusing the reader. But one of the sources where we can find his actual name tells us that it was the same name as Jesus in Hebrew: Yeshua.

He was Yeshua Bar Abba, Yeshua the son of the father. He had the title, but not the reality.

And he was actually guilty of the very crime the other Yeshua was accused of. The other Yeshua is the true Son of the true Father.

John points out several ironies in his gospel, and this is one of those ironies.

*Attempt to release Jesus*

And now Pilate is attempting to release Jesus.

Read Mark 15:8 – 10 and Matthew 27:17 – 18.

What would Pilate be thinking and hoping here?

They handed Jesus of Nazareth over to him out of envy, and by now they might be ready to cry out for Him to be released.

So he asks them to make a choice.

But at this very point the proceedings are interrupted.

Read Mathew 27:19.

He receives a message from his wife warning him not to get involved with this because of a dream she had.

Her name was Claudia, and in church tradition she became a believer.

Read Matthew 27:20 – 22.

What happens during the interruption?

The interruption is long enough for the chief priests and the elders to persuade the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to ask for Jesus to be put to death.

And so Pilate's second attempt to have Jesus released fails.

The first attempt came with the third declaration of innocence. The second attempt is giving them this choice, which also fails to have Jesus released.

**c. *Third attempt to release Him***

So he tries a third time to release him.

Read Luke 23:22 and John 19:1.

He tries a compromise of scourging.

*Scourging*

The gospels provide no details about the scourge because when the gospels were written everybody knew what a scourge entailed. But two thousand years later we don't always appreciate how much He suffered before He got to the cross.

There are two kinds of scourging: the Jewish scourge and the Roman scourge.

*Jewish scourge*

The Jewish scourge was called forty save one. Why forty save one?

In the Mosaic Law nobody could be lashed more than forty lashes. And the question came up: suppose the lasher miscounts and gives the victim 41 lashes and breaks the law.

So building a fence around the Torah as we talked about earlier in the series, they decreed that the lashing should stop at thirty nine just to play it safe. Hence forty save one.

The Jewish scourge had a wooden or leather handle with short leather strands. The only part of the body affected was the victim's back.

And while it was very painful, it was never deadly. No one ever died of a Jewish scourge.

And Paul says he suffered a Jewish scourge five times and survived all five scourgings.

*Roman scourge*

But Jesus does not suffer the Jewish scourge, He suffers the Roman scourge which is far more severe.

There was no limitation on how many lashes could be given.

The Roman scourge had a handle of wood or leather, but the straps were very long, wrapping around the whole body. The whole body was affected: front, back, sides and face.

At the end of each strap was a piece of sharp metal or glass or lamb bone. So after only a few lashes the skin was torn away, the muscle exposed. And after some more lashes pieces of muscle would go flying.

And many never survived the Roman scourge.

*Prophecy fulfilled*

And furthermore, because it went around His face, His face would have been rather disfigured. One of the misconceptions we have comes from crucifixion paintings that show the face of Jesus intact except for the crown of thorns. Actually the face was a very pulpy mass. And the records we have indicate that sometimes even family members could not recognise the victim any more.

And this fulfils the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 52:14, *His visage was so marred*, or so disfigured, He no longer resembled a man.

*Mistreatment and mockery*

As if the scourge was not enough, now they mock Him and mistreat Him further.

Read John 19:2 – 6.

This is His fourth time He is physically mistreated. (Apart from the scourging.)

And it is also the third mockery.

The thorns in Israel are long and come to a razor sharp point. If you brush against one lightly it will still cause you to bleed.

*Behold, the Man!*

Why did Pilate bring Jesus out to the Jews *wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe* and then say to them, "*Behold, the Man!*"?

He hopes that the punishment and mocking He has received will be enough to satisfy the envy of the crowd which he believes caused them to hand Jesus over to him.

But the response of the crowd is still to cry out for crucifixion.

**d. *Fourth attempt to release Him***

*Fourth declaration of innocence*

Pilate then makes his fourth attempt to release Jesus.

Read John 19:6b.

How does he attempt to release Jesus?

He issues the forth declaration of His innocence and simply refuses to pronounce a Roman sentence against Him.

From the perspective of that day, by Roman law, Pilate will have the final decision about whether or not Jesus will die. If he does not pass the sentence Jesus could not die.

And so he refuses to pass Roman sentence at this stage.

### *Jewish response*

Read how the Jews respond in John 19:7.

How did they respond?

The charge of sedition didn't bear fruit, so they drop it for now and go back to the issue that's been troubling them all along: the issue of Him claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

### *Pilate's fear*

Read how Pilate reacts to this in John 19:8 – 11.

Why was Pilate already afraid?

In the first stage of the trial he learned that Jesus was a king of a kingdom that is not of this world and is not to be established at this time.

And a short while ago he received a warning from his wife who *suffered greatly in a dream because of Him*.

Now when he heard that Jesus claims to be the Son of God, *he was even more afraid*.

### *Another interview*

So what does he do?

He tries to have another interview with Jesus.

Why would Jesus not answer his question?

By now he has received sufficient light to respond correctly. But he responded to it with a sarcastic, "*what is truth?*", so now no further light will be given to him.

How does Pilate respond to Jesus' silence?

Pilate presses Him to answer because he has the authority to release Him or to crucify Him.

Then Jesus reminds him that all governmental authority is only delegated from above. He only has delegated authority and not final authority.

And furthermore, the ones who turned Jesus over to him will be guilty of the greater sin. There are differences in sin.

### ***e. Fifth attempt to release Him***

Read John 19:12.

Now for the fifth time Pilate attempts to release Jesus. But what happens?

It fails when they cry out,

*"If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."*

*f. Sixth attempt to release Him*

Now notice Pilate's response to that accusation.

Read John 19:13 – 14.

*Judgement seat*

What is the significance of Pilate sitting of the judgement seat?

From the judgment seat a verdict must be issued. And if the verdict is guilty, a sentence must be issued.

So Pilate has come to the point of making a decision.

*Intimidation*

Now Pilate would not normally care what they were calling out.

So the question here is: Why would he be intimidated by this particular outcry?

There were, at that time, events going on in Rome that caused Pilate to be in quite a difficult situation.

Pilate had a friend named Sejanus. Sejanus was the captain of the Praetorian Guard, which was an influential position.

And when he became captain of the Praetorian Guard Sejanus got Pilate the position of procurator of Judaea and Samaria.

But later Sejanus decided he would prefer to be emperor. So he organized a conspiracy against the emperor of that day, Tiberias. But the conspiracy was uncovered before it could be carried out, and Sejanus and his co-conspirators were executed.

Now at the time of this trial the Senate was investigating everybody who had anything to do with Sejanus to see if they were part of the conspiracy.

And so Pilate himself was under investigation.

The last thing he needed was for word to get back to Rome that he had released a man claiming to be a king and therefore a competitor to Caesar.

And that explains why that outcry from the Jews is sufficient to put him on the judgment seat to make his decision.

*Final attempt to release Jesus*

But even from the judgment seat he makes his sixth and last attempt to have Jesus released. He brings him out and declares, "*Behold, your King!*"

*The preparation of the Passover, the hour was about the sixth*

At this point John interrupts his narrative to observe that

*It was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour.*

And this raises some questions.

- i. How can it be *the day of preparation for the Passover* at this time?

We have already notice *the day of preparation for the Passover* passing (in section 149). That was the previous day when Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover lamb in the temple for their Passover meal that evening.

And that evening was the first night of Passover, which comes before the first day of Passover.

And then we saw the Sanhedrin condemning Jesus early in the morning of the first day of Passover.

How can it be the day of preparation again?

- ii. And, whichever day it is, how can it be the sixth hour of the day?

Later, when we read of the crucifixion, we will read that it was the third hour when Jesus is crucified, and that there was darkness from the sixth hour to the ninth hour, and then he died at the ninth hour.

How can it be the sixth hour of the day when Pilate sits on the judgement seat?

Actually, if we examine the Greek text here we find that the translators have added their interpretation to the translation.

The words "*the day of*" are absent. And a more correct translation would be:

*Now, it was the preparation of the Passover. As to the hour, it was about the sixth.*<sup>1</sup>

And remember that when they led Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate, the chief priests *themselves did not enter into the Praetorium*.

Do you remember why they wouldn't go in?

They didn't want to become unclean because they wanted to eat the Passover later that day.

And what was the word, Passover, referring to in that context?

It referred to the Passover lamb itself, the lamb that was to be killed at the third hour in the temple, and later eaten by the high priest and the 24 chief priests.

Now the word again refers to the same Passover lamb.

At the very time when Jesus was being sentenced by Pilate, the Passover lamb was being prepared in the temple, and as to the hour of that preparation, it was about the sixth.

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<sup>1</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1961). *The New Testament: an expanded translation* (Jn 19:8–15). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

And John's point, of course, is that Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is also being prepared for the once for all sacrifice which is about to occur.

***g. Sentence pronounced***

*No king but Caesar*

In his final attempt to release Jesus, Pilate has brought Jesus out and declared, "*Behold, your King!*"

Read how they respond in John 19:15.

How do they respond?

*"We have no king but Caesar."*

They disown Jesus as their king, and own Caesar as their king.

And Pilate will make no further attempts to have Jesus released.

*Pilate washes his hands*

Read Matthew 27:24 – 25.

Instead of releasing Jesus, what does Pilate do?

He calls for a pitcher of water and washes his hands, assuming that merely washing his hands exempts him from any guilt. It does not!

The final decision whether Jesus lived or died was his, and only his, to make. He knew what the right decision should have been. But he made the wrong decision because of what they were saying.

And merely washing his hands didn't absolve him of his guilt. It was up to him to make the final decision from the human perspective.

And the early church did not absolve him of guilt. For example, when Peter preaches his message in Acts chapter 3, he names several men guilty of the death of Jesus. And Pontius Pilate is among those he names. Another example comes from the earliest church creed, called the Apostles' Creed. One of its sentences says he suffered under Pontius Pilate.

And God did not exempt him either. In the year 36 he was finally deposed, and banished to Gaul in the area of Vienna Austria today.

He was sent away by Caligula and later he committed suicide and paid for his role in this trial.

*Fifth declaration of innocence*

Also, his action of washing his hands is a fifth declaration of innocence.

And of the five declarations of innocence, this is the most significant one because it was made from the judgment seat.

*His blood shall be on us and on our children!*

How did the Jews respond (in verse 25 of Matthew)?

They respond, *“His blood shall be on us and on our children!”*

Notice that only Matthew mentions this response.

Matthew is the one who traces the consequences of the unpardonable sin.

Also notice that the curse of the blood is limited to them and their children. It goes no further. There is no mention of the third and fourth generation.

And in the year AD 70 it finally fell upon them and their children.

*Sentence issued*

Now read Luke verses 24 – 25, and John verse 16.

He issues the death sentence against Jesus. And he releases Barabbas.

And this is a symbolic substitution. The innocent one will die in the place of the guilty one.

Then he turns Jesus over to be crucified.

#### **4. The Mockery, § 174, Mark 15:16-19; Matthew 27:27-30**

Read Matthew 27:27 – 30.

Here is the fourth mockery and the last mistreatment before He goes on the cross.

## D. The Procession to Calvary, § 175, Mark 15:20-23; Matthew 27:31-34; Luke 23:26-33; John 19:17

Between the procession to Calvary and the sealing of the tomb there are 32 distinct stages. And we will look at each stage in chronological order, making comments as we proceeded. Some will have less comment than others.

And the first five stages happen in this section, The Procession to Calvary.

### 1) He carries His own cross

Read John 19:17.

He carries His own cross out of the Pretorium. This was standard Roman procedure. The victim would carry his own cross to the site of the crucifixion.

### 2) Simon of Cyrene carries His cross

Read Mark 15:21.

Now, if the normal procedure was for the victim to carry his cross to the scene of the crucifixion, why did the Roman soldiers press Simon into service to bear Jesus' cross?

Normally a person was not scourged beforehand. But as part of Pilate's attempted compromise he had Jesus scourged. So His body is greatly weakened and He could only carry the cross so far. At least He carried the cross beam, and not the whole cross.

So when Jesus was unable to carry it, they force a man named Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross the rest of the way.

#### *Simon of Cyrene*

Now, before we move on, where is Cyrene?

Cyrene is located in North Africa.

Why would a man from Cyrene be in Jerusalem at this time?

Simon was a Jew from North Africa who came to observe the Passover at Jerusalem.

Again, the city could not contain all the pilgrims who came for the Passover, so most pilgrims ate their Passover outside the city in the "tent cities erected" for them. And the next morning they were going into the city to observe the special Passover sacrifice. And as they were going in, Jesus and the Roman soldiers were going out. And apparently that's what Simon was doing when he found himself forced to carry the cross the rest of the way.

#### *The father of Alexander and Rufus*

Notice that Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the fact that Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross the rest of the way.

But only Mark makes the point that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Why would that be?

It means that it was significant to the audience to whom he was writing, and not significant to the audiences that Matthew and Luke were writing to.

Why would this detail be significant to Mark's audience?

Keep in mind that Mark wrote his gospel for the Romans.

The apostle Paul also wrote a letter to the Romans. And when he comes to the end of his letter he sends greeting to specific people.

Read one of those greetings in Romans 16:13.

Paul mentions the same family, Rufus and his mother.

#### *Simon's family*

What is significant about this?

Paul greets Rufus and his mother as believers in Rome.

So it shows that this event led to the salvation of Simon and his family, his wife who is mentioned by Paul, and his two sons who are named here.

#### *Simon's belief*

Now what caused Simon to respond favourably we are not told.

There are records of other crucifixions, and the way Jesus responds to His own crucifixion is radically different. Other victims would yell and scream, call out all kinds of curses to their tormentors. And sometimes the screaming and the yelling and the cursing got so bad the soldiers would cut out the tongue of the victim just to shut him up.

But Jesus didn't cry out, He doesn't curse, He even prayed for those crucifying Him.

And as Simon observed the scene he came to the conclusion that Jesus had to be the Messiah and he became a believer.

#### *The church in Rome*

Who planted the church in Rome?

From Romans chapter 1 we learn that the church at Rome was not planted by one of the apostles.

It was planted by Jewish believers who migrated to Rome. And that would have included the family of Simon of Cyrene.

So this small event had long term consequences, all the way to Rome.

### 3) The Lament over Jerusalem

Now read about the third stage of Jesus' procession in Luke 23:27-31.

Notice that only Luke records this event. Why would he include it?

One of Luke's three special interests in his gospel is the role of women.

Why does he call them "*daughters of Jerusalem*"?

These are not the women who came up from the Galilee with Him. These are local women.

#### *Custom*

What is happening here is also a Jewish custom that when a Jewish man is being taken off for execution by Gentile authorities, as is the case here, professional wailers, lamenters, would go out with a loud lamentation that you can still hear at certain kinds of Jewish funerals.

#### *Lament*

And as the wailing goes on, He suddenly stops the procession and says, "*stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children*" in keeping with the curse they took upon themselves at the trial.

Why does He say that?

While the judgement of the year 70 AD will be severe for the country as a whole, it will be especially severe for those in Jerusalem.

#### *An Idiom*

And in verse 31 He says, "*If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?*"

What is that about?

This was a Jewish idiom meaning: If I have suffered this much when I am innocent, how much more are you who are guilty going to suffer!

The background to that idiom is Ezekiel 20:47.

<sup>47</sup> *and say to the forest of the Negev, 'Hear the word of the Lord: thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; the blazing flame will not be quenched and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it.*

### 4) The arrival at Golgotha

Read about the fourth stage in Mark 15:22.

#### *Golgotha*

What is the meaning of the name *Golgotha*?

Golgotha is an Aramaic term that means the place of the skull. And all four gospels make that point rather simply, the place of the skull.

*Looks like a skull?*

Notice that not one of them says that it looked like a skull.

If you have seen the slides that people bring back from Israel, they will show you a low lying cliff with two holes in it that give the impression of a skull. This has become the Protestant site of the crucifixion since about the 1880's. But often what they don't tell people is that those holes were dug out in the 1800's when it was a quarry for Jerusalem.

To repeat: The word, Golgotha, doesn't mean that it looks like a skull, only that it was the place of the skull, or the place of crucifixions.

*Boot Hill*

There is a similar thing in America in Dodge City, Kansas. You've probably heard of it, although you may not know where it is located. There is a place called "Boot Hill".

Why is it called Boot Hill?

It is not called "Boot Hill" because it is shaped like a gigantic boot. It is called "Boot Hill" because of what happened there. American fighters were buried with their boots on.

*Meaning*

And that's how it is intended to be here. It doesn't mean it looks like a skull. It means it's the place of a skull, the place of execution.

*Probable site*

And between the Protestant and Catholic sites for the location of the crucifixion, the Catholic site is the more correct site, not based upon Catholic tradition, but based upon Jewish traditions, Messianic history, and archaeology.

On page 226 of his Harmony Robertson has a footnote saying: "The place cannot have been where the so called 'Church of the Holy Sepulchre' stands, far within the walls." He wrote this in the late 1800s or early 1900's before archaeologists actually discovered the walls. The present day walls were built by the Turks in 1500. Where the church stands today was outside the wall in the first century.

## 5) [The refusal to drink a mixture](#)

Now read Mark 15:23 and Matthew 27:34, the fifth stage.

Jesus refuses to drink a mixture offered to Him.

Why did they offer it to Him?

It was a mixture of wine, myrrh and gall. And it was a mixture given to a victim just before the nailing because it would help to deaden the pain.

Why did Jesus refuse it?

It also makes you very light headed. And because He must have full control of His senses for the spiritual conflict He will fight on the cross, He refused to partake of this mixture.

It also means that He will suffer the pain so much more severely than the others being crucified with Him.

## E. The Crucifixion, § 176-178

We come to sections 176-178, which record the crucifixion. It is still Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 7 AD 30.

### 1. The First Three Hours: The Wrath of Men, § 176, Mark 15:24-32, 40-41; Matthew 27:35-44, 55-56; Luke 23:33-43; John 19:18-27

As we will see, in the first three hours on the cross He will suffer the wrath of man.

#### 6) The Crucifixion

Read Mark 15:24a, 25 and John 19:18.

*9 am*

Mark records that *It was the third hour when they crucified Him*. This corresponds to our present day 9 am.

Why was it significant to record that it was 9 am when they crucified Him?

Keep in mind that this is 9 o'clock in the morning on the first day of Passover.

Visualize two Mounts: the Temple Mount, and the Mount of Golgotha. On the Temple Mount a literal lamb was now being offered up as the Passover sacrifice. And now on this other Mount the Passover Lamb of God was being offered up.

*Crucifixion*

Now as it was with the scourging, so it is with the crucifixion. No details are given because when the gospels were written people all knew what a crucifixion entailed. But now two thousand years later many don't quite understand the fullness of it. There are also some misconceptions we have because of the way the crucifixion has been painted in the preceding centuries. So we need to focus on this for just a few minutes.

*The cross*

The Romans used four different types of crosses.

- i. The first type was the telephone pole type, though not anywhere near as smooth.
- ii. The second type is a capital X format. And in church tradition Peter was crucified on this type of cross upside down.
- iii. The third type was the capital T format.
- iv. And the fourth type was the more traditional small T format.

How do we know which of these was used for Jesus' crucifixion?

We don't have enough information within the gospels to know with 100% certainty which kind was actually used. We can reach a high level of probability, but there remains a measure of doubt about which kind of cross was used.

Generally speaking the first two were not used outside of Italy. If we could say they were never used outside of Italy then we could just rule them out, but there are some exceptions and therefore they cannot be entirely ruled out.

If our choice was only between the third and fourth type of cross, then we would know which one was used. How?

Part of the procedure is to nail on the cross a document or piece of wood that will spell out the reason why the person was being crucified. In the capital T format they put it below the feet, but in the small T format they put it over the head.

We will see in a moment that they put it over the head of Jesus. And so if our only choice was between the third and the fourth then the fourth would be the correct choice and not the third.

However they also put it over the head in the telephone pole type and that cannot be entirely ruled out.

So there is a five to ten percent chance it was the first type and a ninety to ninety five percent chance it was the last type.

The only difference it would make in the rest of the discussion is that the hands would be crisscrossed and not stretched out.

### *Nails*

The cross was laid on the ground and the person was laid on top of the cross. Two nails were used in the first type of cross, and three nails were used in the last type.

One of the misconceptions we have from the crucifixion paintings is that the nails were going through the palm of the hand. But the bone structure in the hand would not be strong enough to hold up the weight of a full grown human body. And the actual place where the nails were put is in the wrist because the bone structure there would hold up the weight of a full grown human body.

The feet were placed one on top of the other and angled in such a way that that the nail went through the feet and through the back of the heel and into the wood. And where the feet would touch the cross they would also put in a small ledge. And I will explain the reason for the ledge a bit later.

### *All my bones are out of joint*

Turn to Psalm 22 and read verses 11 – 18.

*<sup>11</sup> Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help. <sup>12</sup> Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. <sup>13</sup> They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion. <sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. <sup>15</sup> My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And You lay me in the dust of death. <sup>16</sup> For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. <sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; <sup>18</sup> They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.*

Once all the nails were inserted the cross was picked up and then dropped into a hole dug for it. And because of the way the body was stretched out, in the drop the bones would be pulled out of joint, fulfilling a statement in Psalm 22:14.

*... And all my bones are out of joint ...*

It was then merely a matter of waiting, and while they were not given any food while they were on the cross they were given whatever liquid they wanted. And so it would sometimes take days before someone died this way.

#### 7) The first statement from the cross

Now we come to the first of seven statements from the cross.

Read Luke 23:34a.

*“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”*

He prays for the forgiveness of those who are crucifying Him, but notice that the prayer is limited to those who do it in ignorance.

Who would that exclude?

That would not include people like Annas, Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, or Herod Antipas, and others who knew what they were doing.

And who would be included in His prayer for forgiveness?

It would include the other Jewish leaders that may have done it in ignorance and more specifically the Roman soldiers involved in crucifying Him.

#### 8) The dividing of the garments

Read John’s account of how they divided up His garments in John 19:23 – 24.

Part of the procedure in the Roman system is that the soldiers involved in the crucifixion would have the rights to the clothes of the victim as spoil.

Another misconception we have from crucifixion paintings is that we see Jesus wearing a loin cloth. Actually they were crucified naked. In the Jewish context that would add to the shame of it all.

The average Jewish male of first century Israel wore five pieces of clothing.

- 1) The upper garment, also called the outer garment.
- 2) The inner garment or under garment or tunic.
- 3) Some kind of a head covering.
- 4) Shoes or sandals.
- 5) The outer robe or the outer coat, which by itself was the largest single piece of cloth.

At each crucifixion site four soldiers would be involved, so each one walks away with a piece of clothing. One had the upper garment, one the under garment, one the head covering, and one the shoes.

#### *The outer garment*

Because the outer garment was the largest single piece of cloth they would normally tear it into four parts and every soldier walked away with a piece of cloth.

But the kind of coat He wore was the kind normally worn by the wealthy class. And because of its uniqueness they decided not to tear it apart, but to gamble for it and cast lots for it. And one soldier walked away with the whole robe, fulfilling prophecy also in Psalm 22:18.

*They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.*

We know from earlier in the gospels that Jesus lived on the poverty level. So how would He get this kind of a coat?

We do not know for certain, but we have one hint that we saw back in Luke 8:1-3. His ministry was financed by several wealthy women. It could be that one of these wealthy women gave Him this coat.

## 9) The erection of the superscription

### *Pilate's Inscription*

Now Pilate writes an inscription to put on the cross.

Read Matthew 27:36 – 37 and in John 19:19.

Notice that Matthew tells us that it was placed above His head. That's how we know that if we had to choose between the third and the fourth types of cross, then the fourth was the correct choice.

Matthew also gives us the purpose of the inscription. What was its purpose?

Normally it would state the charge or accusation against the one being crucified.

But does this inscription read like a charge or accusation?

No. The way Pilate chooses to word it, it seems like a simple declaration of fact or a title: "*JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" It's simply a declaration of who Jesus is.

### *Jewish response*

Now read John 19:20 – 22.

Where was Jesus crucified?

At the city where everyone who came into the city and everyone who went out of the city would see Him.

And Pilate even writes the inscription in three different languages: in Hebrew for the Jews; in Latin for the Romans; and in Greek for everybody else.

He's declaring to the world who Jesus is!

Why do the Jewish leaders complain about this to Pilate?

They understand the way it reads. It reads like a title and not an accusation. And so they ask Pilate to change the wording.

But he refused to do it. Why?

This was his small piece of revenge against those who pressured him to do something he did not want to do.

## 10) The co-crucifixion of two other men

The tenth stage is the co-crucifixion of two other men with Jesus.

Read Matthew verse 27 and Mark verses 15 - 16.

*At that time two robbers were crucified with Him.*

The Greek word for *robber* here is the same one John used earlier to describe Barabbas. It is not used to describe the thief who uses stealth or cover of darkness to commit robbery. Rather, it describes a rebel or insurrectionist who uses violence to achieve his ends, which includes robbery.

So these are two men who participated in the rebellion of Barabbas. Barabbas was released in the Passover exchange. But these two were not so fortunate.

They were co-crucified with Him, one on His right side, one on His left side, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12. He was numbered among the transgressors.

## 11) The fifth mockery – by passers by

Read Mathew 27:39 – 40.

This is the fifth mockery.

There were four mockeries before this time.

- i. At the trial by Caiaphas. Section 168.
- ii. By Herod and his soldiers. Section 172.
- iii. By the soldiers during the trial before Pilate. Section 173
- iv. Again by the soldiers at the end of the trial before Pilate. Section 174.

Now there are also four mockeries while He is on the cross.

Who is doing the mocking now?

This mockery is committed by those who simply happened to be passing by.

The sight of the crucifixion is right near one of the gates now open for Passover morning. Traffic goes in and out.

They can see who hangs there. They can read the title or accusation. And they turn it into mockery.

## 12) The sixth mockery – by Jewish leaders

Read Matthew 27:41 – 43.

This is the sixth mockery.

Who is mocking Him here?

Matthew mentions the chief priests, who were Sadducees, and the scribes, who were Pharisees, and the elders, also Pharisees.

So both Sadducees and Pharisees mock Him while He is on the cross.

Now read Psalm 22:7 – 8, and compare what it says there with the words these leaders used to mock Him.

<sup>7</sup> *All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*  
<sup>8</sup> *“Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”*

Thus they fulfill the prophecy of this Psalm.

## 13) The seventh mockery – by Roman soldiers

Read Luke 23:36 – 37.

Now the Roman soldiers actively carrying out the crucifixion join in the mockery.

So both Jews and Gentiles become guilty of mocking Him while He is on the cross.

## 14) The eighth mockery – by the co-crucified robbers

In the fourteenth stage we see the robbers crucified with Him also mocking Him.

Read Matthew 27:44 and Luke 23:39.

This is the eighth mockery.

Notice that initially both of them participate in mocking Him.

And we'll come back to the one who stopped mocking Him in a moment.

*Common elements in all four mockeries*

So stages 11 to 14 were four mockeries by four different groups of people.

Now, did you notice the two common elements in all four of these mockeries?

- 1) In their mocking all four groups use specific messianic claims that Jesus made during His public ministry.

He made several different kinds of claims, all messianic.

And now each group takes one or more of those claims and reduces it to mockery.

Look back over these mockeries to notice the messianic claims they used to mock Him.

- i. What messianic claims did those who were passing by use?

*You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself!*

*If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

- ii. The Jewish leaders:

*He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.*

*He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him.*

*He said, 'I am the Son of God'.*

- iii. The Roman soldiers:

*If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.*

- iv. The two co-crucified:

*Are you not the Christ [the Messiah]? Save yourself and us!*

- 2) Secondly, all four groups challenge Him to prove His Messiahship by coming down from the cross – to prove His claims by coming down from the cross!

But, if Jesus had accepted their challenge it would have proved Him to be a false Messiah!

What do we have here?

This is Satan's last attempt to keep Jesus from dying on the cross at this point. So again, while he wants Him dead, he doesn't want Him to die at this time in this way.

And by means of these four mockeries, appealing to the pride of life, he wants to get Him to come down from the cross.

To use His messianic power to come down from the cross would have proved Him to be a false Messiah. This is the way the Messiah was supposed to die, in keeping with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.

His refusal to come down from the cross actually becomes evidence of His Messiahship, not a negation of it.

### 15) Conversion of the man co-crucified with Him

The fifteenth stage the conversion of one of the two robbers co-crucified with Him.

Read Luke 23:39 – 42.

Initially both men participated in mocking Him. But as one had time to think and to reflect, he came to the same conclusion that Simon of Cyrene did.

Look again at what he says to his fellow rebel and to Jesus.

He reached four conclusions. Can you see them?

One about himself and three about Jesus.

- 1) He realised that he was a sinner, an important conclusion because we never recognise your need for a saviour until we see ourselves as God sees us.
- 2) He concluded that Jesus Himself was sinless in spite of the accusations he is hearing and the mockeries he is hearing. He came to realise that Jesus Himself was sinless.
- 3) He concluded that Jesus could save him.

And that's rather amazing, because he could see that Jesus was dying the same kind of death that he himself was dying. He came to conclude, in spite of this, that Jesus could save him.

- 4) He recognised that this One will come again in His kingdom.

Again this is an amazing conclusion. He could see that Jesus was dying, but knew He would come again with His kingdom.

And therefore he requests to be remembered when He comes back with His kingdom.

### 16) The second statement from the cross

And that brings about the second statement Jesus makes from the cross.

Read Luke 23:43.

*"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

And what is the point Jesus is making with this statement?

The man won't have to wait until the kingdom to be remembered. He will be remembered this very same day.

On this day both will die.

And once both die and go into Abraham's bosom that will verify the truth of His claims which the other four groups are mocking.

## 17) The third statement from the cross

Jesus' third statement from the cross is the seventeenth stage in the events leading from His trial to His burial.

First read about who was there. Read Mark 15:40 – 41; Matthew 27:55 – 56; and John 19:25.

How many women are mentioned here?

At this point several women come to the foot of the cross, four women in particular.

- 1) There is Mary Magdalene who will play a significant role with the resurrection.
- 2) There is a second Mary; the mother of James and Joseph. In John 19:25 she is referred to as the wife of Clopas. Cleopas will play a role in the resurrection account.

This Mary was the wife of Clopas and the mother of James and Joseph. In Mark 15:40 and Matthew 27:56, she was the mother of two of Jesus' disciples.

There is a tradition that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, the step father of Jesus. And we have no facts on this. If that is that case then James and Joseph would have been cousins of Jesus. But only if that tradition is correct.

- 3) The third woman is Salome, mentioned in Mark 15:40.

Salome is the Hellenised form for the Hebrew Shulamit.

And in Matthew 27:56 she is the mother of the sons of Zebedee, John and James. And in John 19:25 she is the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

That means she was the aunt of Jesus and her two sons were cousins of Jesus.

- 4) And the fourth woman who plays a role here is Mary, His mother.

In Hebrew these were all Miriam which was a very common name in the first century Israel.

Now read what Jesus said in John 19:26 – 27.

*He \*said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"<sup>27</sup> Then He \*said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!"*

When He says *behold, your son*, He is not referring to Himself. He is referring to John, just as, when He says to John, *behold, your mother*, He is not referring to John's mother, but to the mother of Jesus.

He is still fulfilling the Mosaic Law perfectly. The first born son was to take care of the welfare of a widowed mother. He is going to be leaving the earth, so He won't be able to continue doing it from a physical perspective.

He does have four half-brothers who are not believers, and so He does not choose to deliver His mother's welfare into the hands of an unbeliever, but gives it over to John.

So He says to her, *woman, behold your son*, meaning John. She must look to John for her physical welfare. And when He tells John, *behold, your mother*, He gives John that responsibility, which he accepts. And verse 27 ends: *From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*

And that marks the end of the first three hours on the cross in which He has suffered the wrath of man.

## 2. **The Second Three Hours: The Wrath of God, § 177, Mark 15:33-37; Matthew 27:45-50; Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-30**

In section 177 we come to the second three hours on the cross where He will suffer the wrath of God.

The second three hours on the cross were from 12 noon until 3 in the afternoon.

### 18) *Darkness covered the whole land*

Read Luke 44 – 45a.

Luke's account in verse 44 & 45 mentions the fact that darkness envelopes the whole land, a thick darkness that lasts for 3 hours, the same three hours which normally are the brightest time of the day in the land of Israel. It also extends to the surrounding territories apparently.

#### *Other records*

If this darkness was as extensive as they claim you would expect there would be some other records of it. And archaeologists have discovered three other records of what happens here.

Two come from Egypt, south of Israel. And one comes from what is now Turkey north of Israel.

- i. The first one from Egypt is by a Greek scientist named Dionysius.

He reported seeing the darkness in the city of Heliopolis in Egypt. That's a touch of irony because Heliopolis in Greek means the city of the sun. But the sun has been blocked out in the brightest time of the day.

- ii. The second source also comes from a Greek scientist in Egypt. His name is Diogenes.

I'll quote what he wrote. Now keep in mind he was a pagan, and yet he had some measure of spiritual insight.

“There was a solar darkness of such like that either the deity himself suffered at that moment or sympathised with one who did.”

He had no way of knowing this, but both statements are true. Deity, God the Son, suffered at that moment. Deity sympathised with one who did. God the Father, and God the Spirit sympathised with the One who did.

- iii. The third writer is a Roman writer named Phlegon.

He lived in Asia Minor. Asia Minor is now Turkey. And he writes this:

“There was a great and remarkable eclipse of the sun above any that ever happened before. At the sixth hour the day was turned into the darkness of the night so the stars were seen in heaven. There was a great earthquake at Bithynia which overthrew many of the houses in Nicaea.”

He mentions not only a darkness, a very thick darkness, he also mentions an earthquake.

And as we shall see, at the moment death occurs an earthquake also occurs.

### *Significance*

Now more important for us is the theological significance of this darkness. (Matthew 26:39, 42; Leviticus 16 & 17; 17:11; Hebrews 4:14 – 16.)

As we covered earlier, in the Garden of Gethsemane experience, Jesus asked His Father:

*“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”*

What was the cup He didn’t want to drink?

It represents His spiritual death.

And that cup which He did not want to drink, but which He would drink if it was the Father’s will, He was now drinking.

The darkness marks the point of His spiritual death. For three hours He is separated from the Father. And for three hours He suffers the wrath of God.

### 19) The fourth statement from the cross - *Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani*

Read Matthew 27:46.

Is this a cry of despair? Or does Jesus not understand what is happening?

This is actually a quotation of Psalm 22:1.

And in Jewish practice when you quote the first verse of a segment you are referring to the whole segment.

The point is He is applying the whole Psalm to Himself.

Read Psalm 22:1-21.

Taken out of context Jesus’ statement might seem like a cry of despair.

But in the context of Psalm 22 (and especially Psalm 22:1-21), it is a cry for help.

The first 18 verses describe His situation. Then in verses 19 – 21 is His request for help.

It is a cry for help that comes at the end of three hours of suffering the wrath of God for our sins.

### *Eli, Eli – My God, My God*

Now this is the only time Jesus addresses God as *Eli, Eli - My God, My God*.

One hundred and seventy (170) times in the gospels He calls Him *Father*. And twenty one (21) times He calls Him *My Father*.

The only time He addresses Him as *My God, My God* is right here.

Why does He not address Him as Father?

Because at this moment He does not have a paternal relationship to God. It is now a judicial relationship. So it is not *Abbi Abbi, My Father My Father*, but *Eli Eli, My God My God*.

And it is a cry which is answered. He both dies spiritually, and is resurrected spiritually before He even dies physically.

## 20) The response of those standing by

Read about the response of those standing by in Matthew 27:47 – 49.

Why did they think He was calling for Elijah?

They misinterpret what He says because in Hebrew *Eli* does mean *My God*, but it is also the short form for the name *Elijah*. And to the Hebrew ear *Eli* could mean ‘My God’ or it could mean *Elijah*.

And they are assuming He is calling for *Elijah* to come and rescue Him.

Some in the crowd, assuming He might be becoming delirious, bring Him some vinegar.

But the others said, “*Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.*”

## 21) Fifth statement from the cross – I thirst

Read John 19:28.

This is the fifth statement from the cross: “*I am thirsty.*”

In Luke 16:22-24, when He told the story of the rich man and Lazarus, when the rich man suffered the pangs of the wrath of God in hell his response was, ‘I thirst’. Now Jesus has suffered the wrath of God and He responds in a very similar way, ‘*I thirst*’.

What is the clause, *to fulfill the scripture*, referring to?

It is possible to take the clause *to fulfill the scripture* as referring to either:

- i. What precedes (“everything had been completed in order to make the scripture come true”);
- ii. Or what follows (*in order to make the scripture come true, he said*).

Most translations see Jesus’ words (*I am thirsty*) as the fulfillment of scripture. If John is thinking of a specific Old Testament text, the most likely reference is to Psalm 69:21: *when I was thirsty, they offered me vinegar.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John* (p. 591). New York: United Bible Societies.

## 22) *He partakes of the vinegar*

Read John 19:29.

Was giving Him sour wine and act of cruelty or an act of kindness?

The Greek word refers to a diluted, vinegary wine. Since it was cheaper than regular wine, it was a favorite drink of laborers, soldiers, and other persons in moderate circumstances.

The translations “sour wine,” “bitter wine,” and “vinegar” suggest that offering this drink to Jesus was an act of cruelty, whereas in fact it had the humanitarian purpose of relieving his thirst.<sup>3</sup>

Why did Jesus accept this drink when He refused the drink that was offered to Him earlier?

This was not the mixed drink that He was offered earlier and refused. This would help moisten His lips, His tongue, and His mouth so the last two statements from the cross can be said clearly and distinctly.

## 23) *The sixth statement from the cross – It is finished*

Read John 19:30a.

This is the sixth statement from the cross, “*it is finished*”.

What was finished?

Those three words come from one Greek word, *tetelestai*. It does mean ‘it is finished’, but in a unique way.

A few years ago archaeologists were digging and uncovered the office of an ancient CPA (chartered accountant). What they found was a stack of bills. And across each bill was one word, *tetelestai*. It means ‘it is finished’ in the sense of being ‘paid in full’.

What is now *paid in full*?

All of the blood of the animal sacrifices was now paid in full. The animal sacrifices were nothing but instalment payments.

Now the shedding of His own blood makes the full and final payment for what sin required.

The account of our sin has been *paid in full*.

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<sup>3</sup> Newman, B. M., & Nida, E. A. (1993). *A handbook on the Gospel of John* (p. 591). New York: United Bible Societies.

## 24) The seventh statement from the cross - *Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT*

Read Luke 23:46a.

Here is the seventh statement from the cross.

*And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." (Psalm 31:5)*

Notice two very significant things here.

- i. First, how does He address God now?

Once again He addresses God as 'Father', indicating the restoration of the paternal relationship with God. And this shows us that He has been resurrected spiritually.

The significance of this is that He both dies spiritually, and He is resurrected spiritually before He dies physically.

- ii. Secondly, what does it mean to commit something into another's hands?

And the word translated *commit* here means to dismiss, to deliver and to entrust.

He dismisses His spirit from His body and entrusts it into the hands of His Father.

What is the significance of this?

It means that He chooses the moment of His death, and hands over His human spirit to the safe keeping of God the Father.

So we notice here the voluntary nature of His death.

## 25) His physical death

Now read John 19:30b.

What happened here?

Here He does what He has just said He was doing. This is His actual physical death.

And what was the cause of His physical death?

John says that *He bowed His head and gave up His spirit*.

Normally when someone dies, they die and then their head falls. But He puts his head down and He dismisses His spirit from His body.

And the cause of His physical death was that He voluntarily dismissed His human spirit and entrusted it into the hands of His Father.

### *Theological significance*

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the essential content of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

What are the three things we must believe in order to have salvation?

*<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,*

And the first thing is that He died for our sins. The death of Christ has made the atonement for our sins.

The New Testament develops in great detail the theological implications resulting from His death, and it is obviously beyond the scope of the present study to consider that topic in detail.

But here is a survey of them.

1. His death is a satisfaction.

Satisfaction means a full, legal equivalent of wrong done.

The point is that the Law has been satisfied for what it demanded concerning the wrong done.

His death answered all the demands of God's Law and justice against the sinner (Romans 3:3-4; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 5:2).

2. His death resulted in redemption.

It means that His death paid the price of the penalty of sin.

There are seven Greek words that all come out as redemption in English. Redemption emphasizes that believers have been purchased out of the slave market of sin and set free.

The redemption of the believer occurs in five different areas:

i. First, we have been redeemed from the penalty of the Law, this applies to Jewish Believers as Gentiles were not under the Law (Galatians 3:13).

ii. Second, we have been redeemed from the keeping of the Law itself.

Jewish believers are now free from having to obey the Mosaic Law. We are now under a new law, the law of the Messiah. (Romans 6:14, 7:4; Galatians 4:4-5).

iii. We are redeemed from the power of sin. That includes both Jews and Gentiles.

We are not obligated to obey the sin nature any more. (Romans 5:18-19, 6:6, 14; Galatians 1:3-4; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18).

- iv. We have been redeemed from the power of Satan. Satan no longer has any legal authority over us. A believer is no longer obligated to obey Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15).
- v. Believers are guaranteed future, final redemption from all evil, which will occur with the resurrection of the body (Spoken of by Jesus in Luke 21:28);  
Future redemption includes the body in Romans 8:23;  
Future redemption is for God's glory in Ephesians 1:14;  
It is sealed in Ephesians 4:30.  
And our redemption is eternal in Hebrews 9:12.

3. His death resulted in propitiation.

It means that God is satisfied with what the death of Messiah accomplished: it appeased the wrath of God against sin. (1 John 2:2).

In it's very basic meaning, to propitiate means "to appease the wrath of God against sin."

It does not mean that His death merely satisfied a vengeful God, but it satisfied a God who is just, and righteous, and holy. And the wrath of God against sin was put out.

4. His death was a reconciliation.

By way of definition, it means to change the relationship of one person to another, to change from enmity to friendship.

The point is this: The position of the world was changed by His death so that all men are now able to be saved. His death rendered the whole world saveable, yet salvation is applied to those who believe (Romans 5:10; Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

5. It was a ransom.

It means that the blood of Messiah was the price that had to be paid for the penalty of sin.

The blood and death of the Messiah is a ransom paid to the holy Law of God (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6).

6. It was the proof of god's love for sinners.

The evidence for this is that He died for the world in its sinful state, not in it's redeemed state (John 3:16; 4:9; Romans 5:1, 8). He did not die for us when we were His friends. He died for us while we were still His enemies.

7. It was the judgment of our sin nature.

It rendered inoperative the reigning power of the sin nature's authority and power to reign over the believer. So when we sin today we merely submit to the sin nature, though we don't have to. We all end up doing it, but we don't have to.

The sin nature is not removed when one believes. We still have it, but it is judged and condemned (Romans 6:1-10).

8. It marks the end of the Law of Moses and a rule of life.

His death marked the end of the Law of Moses. Believers are no longer under the Law of Moses, but under a new law, the Law of Messiah (Romans 7:5-6; 10:4, Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:11-19; 8:13, Ephesians 2:11-3:6; Galatians 3:17-19).

9. It is the basis for the continuing cleansing of our sins.

We still sin and we are continuously being cleansed on the basis of Christ's death. It is the basis for the removal of all of our sins following salvation. It provides a family forgiveness based upon His blood. (1 John 1:7-9).

10. It is the basis for the removal of pre-cross sins.

He not only died for the sins to be committed after His death, but also for all the sins of the world committed before His death. And so He died for the sins of the Old Testament saints.

Animal blood was not sufficient to take away sins, animal blood was able to cover sin but not remove the sin (Hebrews 10:1-4).

Only His death could accomplish the removal of pre-cross sins (Acts 17:30, Romans 3:25, Hebrews 9:15; 10:4).

11. The judgment of Satan and his hosts.

It is the basis for the judgment of Satan and every fallen angel or demon, at the Great White Throne Judgment after the Messianic Kingdom. The basis is the blood of Christ. (John 12:31; 16:11; Colossians 2:14-15).

12. It is the basis for deferring righteous divine judgment.

God has deferred judgement until the end of time based upon the death of the Messiah

God has every right to judge man immediately, but judgment is being delayed and deferred because of His death (Romans 2:4-5; 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9, 15).

13. His blood resulted in the purification of things in the heaven.

The blood of Jesus was used to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary, which has been defiled by Satan's fall (Romans 8:21-23; Hebrews 9:11-12, 21-24)

14. It is the ground for peace:

It is the ground for peace between God and man (Romans 5:1).

It is the ground for peace between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:11-16; Colossians 3:11).

It is the ground for peace in the universe (Colossians 1:20).

15. The basis for the national salvation of Israel in the future.

Some day all Israel will believe on Him (Deuteronomy 30:3; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 11:25-29).

16. It is the basis for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

Revelation 5:8-14 makes the point that the Millennial Kingdom could not be established apart from the death of Messiah.

### 3. The Accompanying Signs, § 178, Mark 15:38-39; Matthew 27:51-54; Luke 23:45b, 47-49

#### 26) The Accompanying Signs

The moment He dies several things happen in rather quick succession.

Read Matthew 27:51 – 53.

##### 1. The rending of the veil.

A tear that began at the top and worked its way to the bottom.

If a man came in to try to do this he would take the bottom and try to tear it from bottom to top. But Mark and Matthew both point out that the tear began at the top and worked its way down to the bottom.

Keep in mind what the veil was. It was 60 (or 18.3 metres) feet long, 20 feet (or 6 metres) wide. It is about 4 inches (or 10 cm) thick.

##### *Significance*

What was the significance of the torn veil?

The significance of this is given to us in the Book of Hebrews.

It means that now access to God is made available to all.

As long as the Mosaic Law was in operation only one man could enter into God's presence. And that was the Jewish high priest. And even for him, only one day in the whole year.

Only one man out of one family out of one clan out of one tribe out of one nation out of one race could have access to God's presence – and that was the Jewish high priest. And even for him, only one day a year did he have atonement.

But now that the veil has been torn, signifying the ending of the Mosaic Law, access is made available to all who believe.

##### *Other records*

Now the question arises: Are there other records of this event?

Outside the gospels in Jewish writings there is no mention of this particular event. Because only a few men had the authority to go inside the temple, only a few would ever notice that it was torn.

And it could be kept fairly quiet.

##### *Jewish legends*

But, in Jewish writings shortly after this period there are a number of legends. And all those legends have two common elements.

First, they all concern the temple in some respect.

Secondly, they are all dated in the same way: This or that happened forty years before the temple was destroyed. And again, since the temple was destroyed in the year AD 70, 40 years before that is the year AD 30, the year of His death.

There are many such legends, but I will just give you a sample of four.

- i. The first is mentioned by Josephus.

The seven branched lampstand stood in the first room of the temple. Its middle lamp kept going out inexplicably. For some reason it just kept going out after the year AD 30.

- ii. The second legend is mentioned by both Josephus and the Talmud.

The heavy temple doors that took several men to swing open flung open of their own accord in the year AD 30.

According to the Talmud the key rabbi of that day said this was a sign that the temple was destined to be destroyed.

- iii. A third legend is that the lintel of the doorway cracked and fell that year.

- iv. Arnold's favourite legend is called the legend of Azazel.

Azazel is a word that means removal, but became the technical name for the scapegoat.

On the Day of Atonement two goats were presented before the high priest. One goat was chosen to live and one goat was chosen to die.

The goat chosen to die would be killed by the altar, and the blood taken to the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant.

When the priest came out from this duty, he laid his hands on the head of the live goat. The laying on of hands was the Old Testament symbol of identification. And now the goat was identified with the people of Israel, and the high priest confessed the sins of Israel. The goat was driven out of the camp, out into the wilderness.

This ceremony conveys a picture, and the picture is this: by the shedding of the blood of the first goat the second goat can bear the sins outside the camp.

That's as far as the Law of Moses went in Leviticus 16.

Because of what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 1:18, *though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*, the Jewish legend says that before the live goat, the scapegoat, was chased out, they would tie a red ribbon around its horn or neck.

And miraculously, year after year without fail, by a miracle, the red ribbon always turned white, signifying that God had forgiven Israel for their sins for that year.

But the Jewish writings go on to state: a day came when the red ribbon no longer turned white. And that was in the year AD 30.

They continued the same ceremony for forty more years from AD 30 to AD 70, but the red ribbon never turned white again - showing that God was no longer forgiving their sins by means of the two goats.

What those who are Jewish believers find sad is this: The rabbis who record these legends failed to conclude why the red ribbon stopped turning white – because of *tetelestai, it is finished!*

As Hebrews 10:18 teaches, once you have remission of sins there is no more sacrifice for sins.

So again, while the Jewish writings do not record the rending of the veil, they do record that something significant happened in connection with the temple beginning in the year AD 30.

2. In Matthew verse 51, the second thing to happen was a great earthquake.
3. In verses 52-53 the tombs were opened, referring to cave tombs, not graves below the ground.

And many believers who were dead were now resurrected.

When are they resurrected?

Notice the wording. They are resurrected the moment He dies. But they do not come out of the tombs until His own resurrection. They stay in the tombs until He is resurrected. But they are resurrected the moment He dies.

What is the significance of this?

It provides the picture that by His death He provides life.

What kind of resurrection was this?

This is not the resurrection of the Old Testament saints into immortality, because that won't happen until the second coming in Daniel 12:2. This was merely a restoration back to natural life of saints that had not been dead all that long.

Because no one could be raised into immortality before Jesus' own resurrection these all died again later.

When do they leave the tombs and go into the city?

They stay in the tombs until His resurrection, and then they go into the city, in verse 53, Jerusalem, and appear to many.

We have no other record of their activities after this verse.

There are two major results of these accompanying signs.

Read Matthew verse 54 and Luke verses 48 – 49.

1. How did the centurion respond?

In Matthew verse 54, is belief on the part of the Roman centurion.

2. How did the crowds respond?

Luke 48 – 49. In in Luke verse 48 is fear in all the crowds, even among the Jewish leaders as they observed these things happening.

## F. The Burial of the Messiah, § 179, Mark 15:42-46; Matthew 27:57-60; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:31-42

The events of His burial are stages 27-30 of the things that happened between His death and the sealing of the tomb.

### 27) The piercing of Jesus

Read John 19:31 -37.

Now what day is it when these things occur?

Although there is a debate in Christendom about which day of the week Jesus was crucified, we see here several evidences that the crucifixion did occur on the Friday.

#### *The day of preparation*

First of all, John says that *it was the day of preparation*.

The words *the day of preparation* are all taken from a single word in the Greek. It is the word *paraskeue*, which is a technical Jewish term used of Friday.

It means a day on which preparations were made for a sacred or feast day — ‘day of preparation, Friday.’ And the identification of the fifth day of the week as *paraskeue*, the day of preparation, was so common that it eventually became the present-day Greek term for Friday.<sup>xi</sup>

#### *High Sabbath*

Now John tells us that this *was the day of preparation*. And he also tells us what the preparation was for.

What was that day preparing for?

It was preparing for the Sabbath, and John also points out that that particular Sabbath was a high Sabbath.

What would make a Sabbath day a high day?

What would render a Sabbath into a high Sabbath was that the Sabbath fell on a Jewish feast day.

Now the Passover on this year went from sundown Thursday until sundown Friday.

Immediately following Passover is the feast of unleavened bread. And the first day in the seven days of unleavened bread is a holy day.

And, in that year, the first day of unleavened bread was from sundown of Friday until sundown of Saturday. Therefore it is also a Sabbath.

And because the first day of unleavened bread is also a Sabbath, it will make the Sabbath a high Sabbath.

If it was unacceptable to have Jewish bodies exposed over a normal Sabbath, it was especially so on a high Sabbath. Therefore they asked Pilate to hasten the death sentence so the bodies could be removed before the Sabbath.

### *Breaking the legs*

Why do they break the victim's legs to hasten his death?

The way a person normally dies in crucifixions is by suffocation because the way they hang there they cannot breathe.

And the reason they put the wooden ledge by the foot is so that the victim could lift himself up, take a breath, and come down again. As long as he kept doing so, going up and down he could survive for a few days.

But keep in mind that the cross was not smooth, so after a while of going up and down it would make your back rather sore. And in the case of Jesus the pain was immediate because of the scourge he suffered.

And one way to hasten the death process is simply to break the legs of the victim so he could no longer lift himself up and he would suffocate shortly thereafter.

Why did the soldiers not break Jesus' legs?

They proceeded to break the legs of the other two, but Jesus had already dismissed His spirit from His body. And they do not break His legs, fulfilling the Passover motif of Exodus 12:46. No bones of His were broken.

<sup>46</sup> *"It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it.*

### *Jesus pierced*

But to make sure He is dead a soldier pierces His side.

And when he pierced His side out came blood and water, fulfilling another prophecy in Zechariah 12:10, they will look unto Him whom they once pierced.

<sup>10</sup> *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.*

### *Significance*

There has been some discussion about what this meant medically. Some doctors have written that this is a sign of a ruptured heart and they give a nice devotional, he died of a broken heart. Other doctors have written disputing that conclusion. So what this means medically I have no idea.

A far more important question is: what does this mean theologically?

Notice that only John reports this event, and he also mentions he was an eye-witness to that event.

Later on in the book of first John in 1 John 5:5-12, he makes a reference to the water and the blood. And for him it is the evidence that God did provide eternal life because it did mark the Messiah's death, and by death He provided eternal life. And that is the significance spiritually of the outpouring of the blood and the water.

1 John 5:5–12 (NASB95)

<sup>5</sup> *Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* <sup>6</sup> *This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* <sup>7</sup> *For there are three that testify:* <sup>8</sup> *the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.* <sup>9</sup> *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.* <sup>10</sup> *The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.* <sup>11</sup> *And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* <sup>12</sup> *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

## 28) The request for the body of Jesus

Read Mark 15:42 – 43.

### *Day of preparation*

Notice that Mark, writing to the Romans who may not know what the term meant, explains to them what *the preparation day* means. What does he tell them?

He explains it: *that is, the day before the Sabbath*. This is typical Jewish terminology. The day of preparation was Friday, and on Friday at sundown the Sabbath begins.

### *Joseph of Arimathea*

And now we meet a new individual we have not heard of before: Joseph of Arimathea. We learn several things about him from the gospels.

Read the other accounts also – Matthew 27:57 – 58; Luke 23:50 – 52; and John 19:38.

What do we learn about Joseph?

- i. He lived in Arimathea.
- ii. In Mark's account, where he says Joseph was *a prominent member of the Council*, the ASV says he was *a councilor of honorable estate*. It means he came from a line of well-known people.
- iii. Matthew notes that he was wealthy. And because he was wealthy he could afford his own tomb near Jerusalem, though that's not where he lived. He lived in Arimathea.
- iv. According to Luke he was a good man. That emphasises his external actions. Luke 23:50
- v. He was righteous. That was his internal state. Luke 23:50.
- vi. He was waiting for the Kingdom of God. He was a member of the remnant of that day. Luke 23:51 Mark 15:43.
- vii. He was a counsellor, meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin. Luke 23:50 Mark 15:43.
- viii. But he was not there to vote. Luke 23:51.
- ix. He was a secret disciple up until now. Up until now he was a believer but he kept quiet about it. (John 19:38; Matt. 27:57)

As John points out in verse 38 they were quiet because of fear of the Jewish community.

But now, in contrast to his previous fearfulness, at the end of Mark verse 43, he gathered up his courage and boldly went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Read about Pilate's response in verse 44 of Mark.

Pilate sends out someone to make sure He is dead. When that is verified, he then permits the body to be released.

### 29) The removal of the body from the cross

Now read about the removal of the body from the cross in John 19:38b – 40.

Here we meet Nicodemus again, and he is openly identifying himself with believers.

What did they do with His body?

They bound Him in strips of cloth.

Notice the plural. This is not a shroud over His body as a whole, but strips of cloth wrapped around Him just the way people buried bodies in the first century. This shows that whatever the shroud of Turin might be, it is not the shroud of Jesus.

Also remember from the account of His birth that when He was born He was wrapped in the strips of linen cloth used for burial.

### 30) His actual burial

Now the 30<sup>th</sup> stage is His actual burial.

Read John 19:41-42.

He is buried in the new, unused tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Read Luke 23:53b – 54.

And Luke says, <sup>54</sup>*It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.*

When does the Sabbath begin?

As soon as sundown occurs and three stars are visible the Sabbath will begin.

Now going back to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: the first point of the gospel is that He died for our sins. The second point of the gospel is: *and He was buried.*

Let me mention two theological significances of the burial of Jesus.

i. It marks the last stage of His humiliation in two ways:

a. It meant the death of the God-man.

Being sinless He should not have died, yet He died the death a sinner dies, because He died in substitution for us.

b. None of those who were close to Him participated in the burial.

Notice that. None of those who were close to Him in His life and ministry participated in the burial. He is buried by two men who are both Pharisees, who until now had been secret believers.

- ii. It marks the beginning of His exultation.

Now theologians speak about the humiliation of the Son going from His incarnation in the likeness of sinful flesh until His burial.

They also speak of the exultation of the Messiah.

They normally begin the exultation with the resurrection and conclude with His enthronement at the right hand of God the Father forty days later.

Arnold would begin the exultation with the burial for two reasons.

- a. He is buried in a new, unused rich man's tomb, the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.
- b. Furthermore, instead of being buried in a common cemetery, He is buried in a privately owned garden.

Centuries earlier the first Adam in the Garden of Eden brought judgement and death.

And now in this garden the last Adam will bring blessing and new life to come.

Why is the burial of Jesus an essential part of the gospel?

It is a necessary part of the gospel because it is the evidence of His real death.

So the first point of the gospel is: *He died for our sins*.

The second point is: *and He was buried*, which is the evidence of His real death.

The third point is, as we will see later on: *He rose on the third day according to the Scripture*.

## **G. The Sealing of the Tomb, § 180, Mark 15:47; Matthew 27:61-66; Luke 23:55-56**

The last two stages are found in this section.

### **31) The preparation for embalming**

Read all three accounts - Mark 15:47; Matthew 27:61; and Luke 23:55-56.

The women who came up with Him from the Galilee take careful note as to the exact tomb where they laid Him. And Matthew points out that two of the Mary's sit next to the sepulchre for a while. They didn't just get a look from the distance where they might be confused, two of them actually sat next to the sepulchre for a while.

And they also began preparing ointments with the intent of finishing the embalming procedure and the burial customs once the Sabbath comes to an end.

### **32) The sealing of the tomb**

Read Matthew 27:62 – 66.

The 32<sup>nd</sup> stage is the sealing of the tomb.

Now notice that the elders of Israel do remember His statement about being raised from the dead. That is interesting because the disciples never got that point. But the enemies did get that point.

What they are afraid of is that now someone will come and steal the body and then preach the resurrection.

And they point out from their perspective, at the end of verse 64, *the last deception will be even worse than the first.*

So Pilate does two things for them.

- i. He puts a Roman guard on the tomb to guard it for three days.

Keep in mind that under Roman law, if they fail to guard the tomb, or they fail to guard the body they will be facing the death penalty.

- ii. He has the tomb sealed with the Roman seal.

Let's see how that was done. The caves were dug out of the hill country around Jerusalem and Judah. The hill country is made mostly of limestone. And they would simply carve out a cave.

In front of the cave there would be a groove. The purpose of the groove was for the stone to be rolled back and forth. These were family tombs. So the stone could be rolled back and forth as necessary as different family members die.

Now to seal a tomb they would tie ropes, and criss-cross the ropes on hooks against the wall of the tomb and the ground.

In at least two different places, sometimes more, they would put on a small clay-wax seal where the ropes crossed and also on where the stone touched the tomb. It was done in such a way as to make it impossible to roll the stone away without breaking the Roman seal.

And to break the Roman seal was punishable by death.

So they tried to make it very secure so the body could not be removed, stolen, or whatever.

#### *The day He died*

Let me say a few more things about the day that Jesus died.

People are confused about the day of His death because they have ignored the Jewish background and the Jewish reckoning of time.

They try to get Him in the tomb for three full 24 hour periods by moving his death from Friday - sometimes to a Thursday, more often to a Wednesday, and in a few cases even to a Tuesday.

Now keep in mind that if He was in the tomb for three full 24 hour periods, and rose only one second later, it was already the fourth day and not the third day.

#### *Jesus statements*

Now Jesus actually made three different statements about the timing of His death and resurrection.

- i. He said He would rise on the third day.

One example of several is Matthew 16:21.

*From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*

- ii. A second way He said it is *after three days*, not on the third day, but after three days, implying the fourth day.

One example of several is Matthew 27:63,

*“Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ “*

- iii. The third statement He made is *in three days and three nights*, in Matthew 12:39-40.

<sup>39</sup>*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; <sup>40</sup>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.*

Notice I gave you all three statements from the same gospel because the variation is not a variation between the gospel writers. The same gospel writer uses all three different expressions.

#### *Jewish reckoning of time – a year*

Now, in Jewish reckoning of time, part of the year counts for the whole year.

If a king takes the throne in the twelfth month of the year he is viewed as having ruled the whole year. And the very next month will read, the second year of his reign.

How could it be the second year when he only reigned for one month? Because part of the year counts for the whole year.

#### *Jewish reckoning of time – a day*

The same applies to a day. A part of the day counts for the whole day, all 24 hours of it, both the day and the night of it.

#### *Three days*

So He was in the grave:

For part of Friday, which counts for all of Friday;

And then Saturday;

And then part of Sunday, which counts for all of Sunday.

So He did rise on the third day. Friday was the first day, Saturday was the second day, and Sunday was the third day.

And because part of Sunday counts for all of Sunday, it is also true He rose after three days.

#### *Jewish idiom*

The significance of three days and three nights is that it was a Jewish idiom of speech meaning any period of time that touches three days.

Part of a day counts for the whole day, which includes the night and the day of it.

*Old Testament examples*

In fact it is used that way in several passages of the Old Testament, where in context it cannot mean three full 24 hour days.

Let me give you some examples.

- i. Genesis 42:17, 18.

<sup>17</sup> So he put them all together in prison for three days. <sup>18</sup> Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

- ii. 1 Samuel 30:12-13.

<sup>12</sup> They gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. <sup>13</sup> David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago.

- iii. 1 Kings 20:29.

<sup>29</sup> So they camped one over against the other seven days. And on the seventh day the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed of the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.

- iv. 2 Chronicles 10:5, 12.

<sup>5</sup> He said to them, "Return to me again in three days." So the people departed. ...

<sup>12</sup> So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, "Return to me on the third day."

- v. Esther 4:16, 5:1.

<sup>16</sup> "Go, assemble all the Jews who are found in Susa, and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens also will fast in the same way. And thus I will go in to the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." ...

<sup>5:1</sup> Now it came about on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace in front of the king's rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to the palace.

In 4:16 she says fast for me three days and three nights and I will then go see the King. So if you just take that by itself, they are to fast for three days and three nights, and when that is over, on the fourth day she will go to see the king.

But in chapter 5:1 it says, *on the third day* she went to see the king.

There are not three 24 hour periods in it. And in Jewish reckoning of time it is not necessary.

*Jewish Talmud*

One more point comes from the Jewish Talmud which actually does mention the death of Jesus and specifies twice what day of the week He died. Arnold quotes it as it reads:

There is a tradition, on the eve of the Sabbath, and on Passover, they hung Jesus. The heralds went out crying, "Jesus goes forth to be executed because he practiced sorcery and seduced Israel into estrangement from their God. Let anyone who can bring forward a justifying plea for him come and give information concerning him." But no justifying plea could be found for him so they hung Jesus on the eve of the Sabbath and on the Passover.

Twice it says, "On the eve of the Sabbath", that makes it Friday, "And on the Passover day."

They had to justify it by saying he was seducing Israel because the execution on a festival day went contrary to Jewish law as we saw.

We will see some other evidence when we look at the resurrection scene.

## X THE RESURRECTION AND THE ASCENSION OF THE KING, § 181-198

Now we come to the tenth and final segment of His life, the resurrection and the ascension of the King.

Let's begin with the theological significance of His resurrection in four different categories.

### 1. The significance to the Messiah.

- a. It proved Him to be the Son of God, Romans 1:4.

<sup>3</sup> *concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,*

<sup>4</sup> *who was declared the Son-of-God-with-power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord*

It is the evidence that He is the Son-of-God-with-power.

- b. It confirmed the truth of all that He said, Matthew 28:6; 12:40; 16:21; 27:63.

Matthew 28:6 (NASB95)

<sup>6</sup> *"He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.*

Matthew 12:40 (NASB95)

<sup>40</sup> *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.*

Matthew 16:21 (NASB95)

<sup>21</sup> *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*

Matthew 27:63 (NASB95)

<sup>63</sup> *and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again.'*

- c. It means that He is the first fruits of the first resurrection.

Keep in mind that the Bible describes two different kinds of resurrections.

- i. The first kind is a restoration back to natural life.

That means you die again later. And there were people raised in the Old Testament, and there were people raised even by Jesus before His own death and resurrection. But they were restored back to natural life.

- ii. The second type of resurrection leads to resurrection life where mortality puts on immortality, corruption puts on incorruption. And being now immortal, anyone resurrected in this way cannot die.

Jesus was the first one to be raised in that kind of a body. He is the first fruit of the first resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

<sup>20</sup> *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.* <sup>21</sup> *For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.* <sup>22</sup> *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.* <sup>23</sup> *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,*

- d. It was the declaration of the Father that the Messiah met all the requirements of the Law of Moses, Philippians 2:9.

*Philippians 2:8-9 (NASB95)*

<sup>8</sup> *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

<sup>9</sup> *For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*

2. The significance to people in general.

- a. It makes certain the resurrection of all men.

He is the first fruit of the resurrection. This means that there will be more to follow, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

Both believers and unbelievers will be resurrected, though not with the same destiny.

- b. It also guarantees the judgement of all unbelievers, and all unbelievers will be judged by the resurrected Son, Acts 10:40-42, 17:30-31.

*Acts 10:40-42*

<sup>10:40</sup> *"God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.*

*Acts 17:30-31*

<sup>17:30</sup> *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, <sup>31</sup> because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."*

3. The significance to Old Testament saints.

- a. It was the fulfilment of the Old Testament promise of their salvation.

It meant the removal of their sins and the guarantee of their future resurrection, Acts 13:30 – 39.

<sup>30</sup> "But God raised Him from the dead; <sup>31</sup> and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. <sup>32</sup> "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, <sup>33</sup> that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten You.' <sup>34</sup> "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' <sup>35</sup> "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.' <sup>36</sup> "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; <sup>37</sup> but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. <sup>38</sup> "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, <sup>39</sup> and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

4. The significance for believers specifically.

- a. It proves our justification. We are justified by His death. But His resurrection proves our justification, Romans 4:23-25.

<sup>23</sup> Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited to him, <sup>24</sup> but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.

- b. It guarantees power for believers' service. Whatever He asks us to do He will give us resurrection power to accomplish, Ephesians 1:15-20.

<sup>15</sup> For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might <sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

- c. It guarantees the individuals resurrection to immortality.

Romans 8:11

<sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 6:14

<sup>14</sup> Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power.

2 Corinthians 4:14

<sup>14</sup> knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.

- d. It means the forgiveness of the believer's sins, 1 Corinthians 15:17.

We are forgiven because of His death, but this is the evidence of it.

<sup>17</sup> and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

- e. It designates the Messiah as the head of the church, Ephesians 1:19–22

<sup>19b</sup> These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might <sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

- f. It means the Messiah now has the keys of death as far as the believer is concerned. So when a believer dies it is Jesus who puts him to death, puts him to sleep. The one exception to the rule is when a believer has been excommunicated from the local assembly. When that happens then Satan can put that believer to death, only in the physical sense, not in the spiritual sense. But the normal case is that Jesus puts us to death, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–15 (NASB95)

<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in [Greek *dia*, literally 'through'] Jesus. <sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- g. It means that there is now a sympathetic High Priest in heaven, as a result of the resurrection, Hebrews 2:16–18, 4:14-16.

Hebrews 2:16–18

<sup>16</sup> For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

Hebrews 4:14-16

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

## A. The Dawning of Resurrection Day, § 181, Mark 16:1; Matthew 28:1

In this section we will see that Matthew and Mark record different events.

Read both accounts, Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1.

How many women are mentioned and who are they?

There were three women here:

1. Mary Magdalene,
2. Mary (the wife of Cleopas and mother of James and Joses – see also section 176, Mark 15:40-40; John 19:25-27), and
3. Salome (sister of Mary the mother of Jesus).

What were these women doing?

Two things (Matthew and Mark each describe a different activity):

1. They went to visit the tomb.
2. And they also went to purchase spices for the purpose of anointing Him.

*As it began to dawn*

On which day of the week did they do these things?

Matthew says, <sup>1</sup>*Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.*

In English we use the word ‘dawn’ to mean the wee hours of the morning as light begins to appear on the horizon before the sun appears.

But in Greek and Hebrew it simply means the beginning of the new day without telling us what time of day it was. (**ἐπιφώσκω *epiphōskō***)

In Jewish reckoning, when did the *first day of the week* begin?

In Jewish reckoning, which Matthew and his readers would be very conscious of, the first day of the week begins not with the wee hours of Sunday morning, but it begins at sundown Saturday and will continue until sundown on Sunday.

And so, late on the Sabbath day, in the late afternoon towards the early evening, they went to visit the tomb.

Then, according to Mark, when the Sabbath was over, they also went to purchase spices for the purpose of anointing Him.

## B. The Opening of the Tomb, § 182, Matthew 28:2-4

*Date – 17th of Nisan – 9 April, AD 30 – Sunday*

It is now Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, April 9<sup>th</sup>, AD 30.

And just as there was an earthquake which marked the moment of Jesus' death, now there is another earthquake which marked the moment of His resurrection.

Read Matthew 28:2 – 4.

What did the angel of the Lord do?

He descended from heaven and rolled the stone away, breaking the Roman seals on the tomb.

How should the Roman soldiers have responded to this?

Because he broke the Roman seal the soldiers should have proceeded to have this angel arrested.

But you don't go around arresting angels, especially in view of his appearance:

*And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.*

So instead of arresting him, *the guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.*

As we say in English, they were scared stiff. They were so afraid they couldn't move, either forward or backward.

## C. The Visit of Mary Magdalene, § 183, John 20:1

Read John 21:1

The first to arrive is Mary Magdalene. She comes *while it was still* dark.

What does she see?

She sees the stone rolled away and the tomb is empty.

What does she not see?

She does not see any angels.

## **D. Mary's Report to the Apostles, § 184, Luke 24:12; John 20:2-10**

### *The Report*

Now Mary runs to the two apostles, Peter and John, telling them only about the empty tomb.

Read John 20:2

What does she think happened to the body?

She makes the assumption that someone had moved the body.

### *Response*

Peter and John respond by running over and find out what the facts are.

Read Luke 24:12 and John 20:3 – 10.

And John outruns Peter. We are told he stooped down and he didn't go inside. And then Peter, who is a bit more impetuous, catches up and runs right into the tomb.

### *Evidence*

They saw two things.

What did they see?

1. They saw the linen cloth still rolled up.

What does that mean?

It wasn't necessary to unwrap Him as it was in the case of Lazarus when Jesus said, "unwrap him." These cloths were still wrapped up which meant was resurrected right through the linen cloths.

2. The head piece was over in a different part of the tomb, which again shows that whatever the shroud of Turin could be, it is not the shroud of Jesus.

### *Conclusions*

And both see the same evidence, but they leave the tomb with two different conclusions. What were they?

1. John leaves the tomb area believing a resurrection has taken place. But
2. Peter leaves the tomb area in a state of perplexity, not certain what he should do with what he just saw.

## E. The First Appearance: Mary Magdalene, § 185, Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18

Now Mary follows Peter and John back to the tomb. And when Peter and John return home, Mary stays behind, and she sees something new.

Read John 20:11 – 16.

### *Mary's assumption*

How does Mary respond to the angels when they ask her, “*why are you weeping?*”

She tells them what she believes at this stage: *Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.*

At that point Jesus appears to her, although she does not recognise Him straight away. And He asks her the same question, “*Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?*” And, assuming He might be the gardener, she asks Him if He moved the body and if He would show her where the body is she will take care of it from there.

### *Recognition*

Then He called her by name which was familiar to her. At that point she recognises Him and approaches Him *and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni!” (which means, Teacher).*

And this will be typical of the resurrection appearances in that people who knew Him, even knew Him well, do not always recognise Him straight away. But soon they do recognise Him to be the same person they knew. In the resurrection body enough changes occur so that recognition is not immediate. But enough things remain the same so they come to know that this is the same person.

She recognised Him by the way He called her name. We know from records that the Galilean accent was a very distinctive accent, quite distinct from the Judean accent.

### *Women witnesses*

Notice that the first appearance of the resurrected Messiah is to a woman and not to a man, which makes it highly significant in the Jewish context. By Jewish law women were not viewed as being valid witnesses. So when you need to have the two or three witnesses, a woman cannot be among those witnesses. A woman’s testimony was considered invalid.

Those who reject the resurrection say that these reports are fabrications by those who followed Him. But these were Jewish writers and so they would be writing Jewish fabrications.

Now if Jews wanted to fabricate the resurrection story like this they would make sure that the first witnesses were men, not women. The very fact that the first appearance is to a woman argues for its authenticity and argues against it being a fabrication.

### *Do not touch Me*

When she approaches Him in verse 17, He tells her, “*touch Me not,*” (ASV). The Greek does not necessarily mean she was already clinging to Him.

It is a command to not touch Him, which raises the question: why is she forbidden to touch Him when a week later Thomas is allowed to touch Him?

There are two ways to answer this.

1. There are two different Greek words used for touch. The first Greek word, the one used here, means to cling or hang on to. She wants to cling to Him, to hang on to Him so He does not go away, but go away He must.

And the word used later when Thomas is invited to touch Him means to feel, to touch lightly, not to hang on to.

That is a valid answer based on the two different Greek words which are used.

2. But Arnold prefers the second option to answer this question.

Notice the reason Jesus gives her why she cannot touch Him: because I have not yet ascended to the Father.

Now why would that be a reason not to touch Him?

Going back to the Day of Atonement motif: On that day, when the procedure would begin, the high priest would take off his multi-coloured garments, undergo ritual immersion, and put on the garments he wore only one day of the year, the day of atonement garments which were all white. When he finished the whole procedure, then he took off the white garments, underwent the second immersion, and went back to his multi-coloured garments which were his daily wear.

Now, once he underwent the first immersion the priest was untouchable. If anyone touched him, it rendered that priest unclean, and he would not be able to sprinkle the blood in the Holy of Holies. So until he finished the whole procedure and sprinkled the blood he was untouchable.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 9.

In Hebrews 9:11,12,24; 10:12 it points out that at some point Jesus entered into heaven to sprinkle His blood in the heavenly sanctuary.

Read Hebrews 9:11.

<sup>11</sup> *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation;*

Read Hebrews 9:12.

<sup>12</sup> *and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

Read Hebrews 9:24.

<sup>24</sup> *For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*

Read Hebrews 10:12.

<sup>12</sup> *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,*

And the contrast the writer to the Hebrews makes is that the animal blood could be used to cleanse the earthly tabernacle. But the heavenly tabernacle needed the cleansing of better blood, innocent human blood.

So at some point He took His blood into heaven to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary. Only after cleansing it could He be touchable.

And based upon the Hebrews passages I would say she could not touch Him because He had not ascended for the purpose of sprinkling His blood. He would have done that between His first and second appearances as we will see in a moment. And once He did that He was again touchable.

Read Hebrews 12:22–24

<sup>22</sup> *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,* <sup>23</sup> *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,* <sup>24</sup> *and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

Here the writer mentions six things in the heavenly Jerusalem, and the list includes *the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.*

The blood is now still present to this day. And it will serve as an everlasting witness of the price of our redemption.

*The first report to the disciples*

Read John 10:18 and Mark 16:10 – 11.

What did Mary report to the disciples?

Two things:

1. She has seen the risen Lord, and
2. His ascension to His Father and their Father.

How did they respond?

Mark points out that they refused to believe that He was alive and had been seen by her.

## **F. The Visit of the Women, § 186, Mark 16:2-8; Matthew 28:5-8; Luke 24:1-8;**

Meanwhile, after Mary left the tomb then the other women came.

Read Mark 16:2 – 5 and Luke 24:1 – 4

*When? Nisan*

When did these women come?

Mark says they came *when the sun had risen*. And Luke says it was *on the first day of the week, at early dawn*. (The word translated dawn here in Luke 24:1 is *orthros*, but in Matthew 28:1 it is *epiphosko*.)

So it is now in the early hours of Sunday morning, just after sunrise.

*Purpose*

What was their purpose?

The women come to the tomb for the purpose of finishing the burial procedures.

So what are they not expecting?

The very fact that they are performing all these burial procedures shows that they are not anticipating the resurrection to occur.

*The empty tomb*

But what did they find?

The found the stone was rolled away and there was no body of Jesus there.

### *Angelic message*

Then angels appeared to them with a message. Read their message in Luke 24:5-7 and Matthew 28:7.

What was the message?

The angelic message has three points (some facts, something to remember, and something to do):

1. In Luke 24:5b – 6a, Jesus has risen from the dead, so there is no need to seek Him among the dead.
2. In Luke 24:6b – 7, they are to remember how He taught them about His coming death and resurrection while He was still in Galilee.
3. And in Mark's account in verses 6-7, they are to go and tell the disciples two things:
  - a. Jesus has risen from the dead, and
  - b. They are to leave for Galilee where He will meet them, just as He told them.

Remember, during the last Passover He told them that when He was arrested they were to proceed to Galilee and He will meet with them there when He rises from the dead.

Although, at least four times that we have recorded, He taught them the whole program of death and resurrection, we are always told that they didn't comprehend what He was saying.

So it caught them by surprise and they still have not left for Galilee as they should have done as of Friday.

Now they receive a second command: leave for Galilee, He will meet with them up in the Galilee.

### *Response*

Read what happened next in all three accounts, Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:8-9a.

At that point three things happen.

1. In Luke, verse 8: They finally remember about His prophecy about being raised from the dead.
2. In Mark verse 8: They told no one outside the apostolic group.
3. In Matthew verse 8: They did run to tell the apostles.

## G. The Second Appearance: The Women, § 187, Matthew 28:9-10

And on their way Jesus appeared to them.

Read Matthew 28:9-10.

This is His second appearance. Notice two things that happen here.

1. Notice what it says in verse 9: *And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.*

This is a grasping or clinging type of holding. What Mary was not allowed to do they are allowed to do.

That is why I would take the events of Hebrew 9 & 10, where Jesus ascends to the Father for the purpose of sprinkling His blood, to occur in between the first and second appearance.

2. Then He instructs them to go back to the disciples and tell them, “get out of town already!” Head for the Galilee, He will meet with them there.

This is the third time they receive a message to get to the Galilee. He will appear to them there.

## H. The Women’s Report to the Apostles, § 188, Luke 24:9-11

Read how the disciples respond to the women’s report in Luke 24:9-12.

Again the report of His resurrection is not believed, and His instruction to go to Galilee is ignored. They don’t leave the city.

## I. The Report of the Guard: The Rejection of the Second Sign of Jonah, § 189, Matthew 28:11-15

The Roman guard finally got their act together and ran away.

Read Matthew 28:11 – 15.

Why did they go to the chief priests?

Now remember they were facing the death penalty because they failed to make sure the body did not get moved. And knowing their endangerment they decided to go directly to the chief priests who instigated the whole procedure. And the chief priests, who are the Sadducees, meet with the elders who are the Pharisees. So we have a combined Sanhedrin meeting again.

### *The stolen body theory*

And they decide to give these soldiers a large sum of money and they are to go around spreading the news that while they were sleeping the disciples came and stole the body.

And verse 14 says, *if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble*. So if the message is reported to the governor they will intervene to make sure the soldiers do not die. However, after the Passover the governor would go back to Caesarea, a two day trip anyway, and he would never hear of this failure to begin with.

That's what they do. They went onto the streets of Jerusalem saying that while they were sleeping the disciples came and stole the body.

Here we have the oldest theory for the empty tomb: the stolen body theory.

### *Questions*

But it raises a number of questions.

If the soldiers were sleeping, how would they know who came and stole the body?

Any Jewish person who was a thinking person would immediately recognise this inconsistency in their so-called testimony.

And who would steal the body anyway?

Now taking the body in this situation would carry the death penalty. Only two groups would have a vested interest to steal the body: either His friends, or His enemies.

### *Enemies?*

If His enemies stole the body then that would raise another question:

why didn't they produce the body to silence the apostolic teaching recorded in the book of Acts?

They could easily have proven the apostles wrong by producing the body. Instead they try all kinds of other tactics to try to silence the teaching about Jesus. The fact that they didn't produce the body shows that they didn't have the body to produce.

### *Friends?*

The other group that would have a vested interest in stealing the body is His friends, the apostles.

Now would that make sense?

No, because they suffered a great deal of physical suffering because of what they were preaching.

We know that one apostle was beheaded in Acts 12. And beyond the witness of the book of Acts, if our church records are correct, the apostles all died some horrendous deaths. Peter was crucified upside down. One apostle was boiled alive in oil. Another one was flayed alive. That meant your body was naked and you were stretched out and they peeled the skin off your body while you were still living. And in most cases they were given the option to recant and be released, more often to recant and have a more humane death. In every one of these cases they simply refuse to take an easy way out. It is difficult to believe they were willing to suffer all they suffered if they knew it was a lie. The only way their actions make sense, both within Acts and beyond Acts, is that they really did believe that the resurrection had taken place.

### *Conclusion*

So again, while the theory of the stolen body is the oldest theory of the empty tomb, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

## J. The Third Appearance: To the Two on the Emmaus Road, § 190, Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-32

Read Luke 24:13 – 18.

These are two disciples outside the apostolic group. Only one person is named, Cleopas, probably because of his role in the history of the church of Jerusalem. He will be the one to lead the believers out of Jerusalem in the year AD 66 during the Roman war. He took them out of the city before the city was re-besieged and destroyed. The other disciple is not named.

What were they doing?

They are heading back home after Passover, heading to the town of Emmaus. As they are walking they are discussing the recent events that have transpired. And as they are walking a third figure attaches himself to them, but they don't recognise him for who he is.

Read Luke 24:19 – 21.

*Sunday afternoon – the third day*

Which day is it?

We already know it is Sunday afternoon when these things take place. But notice what they say near the end of verse 21: *besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.*

So Sunday afternoon is still only the third day. The only way Sunday afternoon can still be only the third day is if the crucifixion occurred on the Friday. If the crucifixion is moved to Thursday, Wednesday, or Tuesday, there is no way Sunday afternoon could still be only the third day.

*Four things they believed*

When He asks them what they are talking about, their answer reveals four things that they were believing up until that time. What are they?

1. They believed Him to be a prophet of God, one who receives direct revelation from God the Father.
2. They believed He authenticated Himself by both His words and His works. His works authenticated His words, His claims.
3. He was arrested, tried, and crucified by the leaders.
4. Up until the crucifixion they had believed Him to be the redeemer of Israel, though the recent events seem to militate against that belief.

These are four things they had believed up until now. Notice they mention His arrest and trial and death.

### *One thing they disbelieved*

They also mention the one fact that they had disbelieved.

Read Luke 24:22 – 24.

What did they not yet believe?

The one fact they disbelieved is the resurrection. The recent reports by the women of His resurrection had amazed them, but none of the apostolic group has seen Him.

### *Messianic Prophecy fulfilled*

How does Jesus respond?

Read Luke 24:25 – 27.

First He scolds them for their unbelief.

Then He gives them an exposition of what we call Messianic prophecy, prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah. He went through Moses and the prophets showing that the very elements that seem to militate against His Messiahship are actually evidences for His Messiahship. These were the things that were supposed to happen to the Messiah.

### *Recognition*

Read Luke 24:28 - 32

Normally, in Jewish practice the host does the blessing over the bread. A blessing that the Jewish host will pray today: Blessed are you Lord God, King of the universe that brings forth bread from the earth. But, if your guest is a Bible scholar then he does the blessing over the bread.

And because of His exposition of prophecy they recognise Him to be the Bible scholar, and therefore He is the one who ends up saying the blessing over the bread.

At that moment they recognise Him for who He is. But at that moment He vanishes.

### *Report to the apostles*

Read Mark 16:13.

They go back to Jerusalem to report to the apostolic group. And how did they respond?

This is now His third appearance and the third report of His resurrection to reach the apostles. But His third appearance is also disbelieved.

## **K. The Fourth Appearance: Peter, § 191, Luke 24:33-35; I Corinthians 15:5**

Peter is the first member of the apostolic group to see the resurrected Messiah, necessary to comfort Him probably, because of his three-fold denial, and to reconfirm him in the faith.

Read Luke 24:33-35 and 1 Corinthians 15:5.

Luke points out that the fourth appearance occurred before Cleopas and his companion returned to relate their experience.

## **L. The Fifth Appearance: The Ten, § 192, Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25**

Read Mark 16:14a; Luke 24:36 – 37 and John 20:19.

When did this appearance take place?

Luke points out that the fifth appearance occurred while Cleopas and his companion were relating their experiences.

John points out that *it was evening on that day, the first day of the week*. So it is now Sunday night. And because of so much unbelief they never left the city. So, in His mercy He doesn't wait for them to get to Galilee. At that rate they may never get there. But He appears to them in Jerusalem.

And John points out in verse 19 that the doors were locked. He comes to them at the end of verse 19 and gives them the typical Jewish greeting, "Shalom Aleichem", meaning "peace be unto you".

Their reaction reveals what they were believing at the time. How did they react? And what does it show?

And Luke's verse 37 points out that even seeing Him at that point they were not ready to believe that He was resurrected. They thought that they were looking at His ghost.

Read what Jesus says to them about this in the rest of Mark verse 14 and in Luke verse 38.

He scolds them for their unbelief. And by now their unbelief has been manifested in three different ways.

1. They failed to leave for Galilee as they had been told three times to do.
2. They failed to believe the previous witnesses, which by now had been both women and men. Now keep in mind that the first and second appearance was to women.

Again, even the second appearance being to women argues against this being a Jewish fabrication because that is not the way the Jews would choose to fabricate the story. The first time men got to see Him was the third appearance.

So by now they failed to believe though the witnesses were both women and men.

3. When they finally do see Him they think they are looking at a ghost although they are now looking at an individual who has been raised from the dead.

So to prove He is resurrected He does two things.

1. Read about the first is in Luke verses 39 & 40.

He tells them to feel His side, and what they will feel is flesh and bones. And a spirit does not have flesh and bone.

2. Now read about the second is in verses 41-43.

When they still have trouble believing, He then eats a piece of fish to prove that He is a resurrected being because of a simple principle that ghosts don't eat.

Resurrected beings do get to eat. That's a good thing for us because we are the bride of the Messiah and we get to attend our wedding feast. It would be a terrible disappointment to go to a wedding feast if you couldn't eat anything.

Furthermore, we won't have to eat to stay alive, but we will be able to eat for the sheer enjoyment of eating. More good news is you will be able to eat all that you want and not gain an ounce of weight.

At this point they receive the first of three final commissions. This one has two points.

Read John 20:21 – 25.

1. *authority*

Why does He say, "*as the Father has sent Me ...*"?

In what way did the Father send the Son?

The Son came with the Father's authority.

And now they are being sent out with the Son's authority. They have Messianic authority to carry out the work that He is giving them to do.

2. *privilege*

In verse 23 He gives them a privilege that was previously only given to Peter (Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

*If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.*

What does this mean?

Now again, this is not forgiving or retaining sin in the salvation sense. Only God has that authority.

This is forgiving or retaining sin for discipline. And we find the apostles carrying out this kind of disciplinary authority, as in the case of Peter against Ananias and Sapphira.

### *Receive the Holy Spirit*

In verse 22, *He breathed on them and \*said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.*

Is this an example of the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

No, the baptism of the Holy Spirit won't happen until Acts 2.

The Spirit has a number of ministries. And among these ministries is the ministry of illumination. And as Paul defines it in 1 Corinthians chapters 2 and 3 (especially 2:6 – 16), illumination is to enlighten the mind of the believer to understand spiritual biblical truths.

And don't forget, on four different occasions He has explained to them the program of death and resurrection, adding more details each time. But as often as He tells them, just as often the text says they understood none of these things.

And now He will be with them for a forty day period between His resurrection and ascension. They have many things they have to learn. And therefore now they receive the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit so that now they can finally understand what they could not understand heretofore.

Now that 10 of the 11 have finally seen Him we might think that they are ready to go to Galilee as He has told them repeatedly.

But, for some reason, in verse 24, Thomas, or Didymus, was not present. When they tell him what they saw, he says in verse 25, *"Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

Because of Thomas they again don't leave town.

## M. The Sixth Appearance: The Eleven, § 193, John 20:26-31; I Corinthians 15:5

### *Time passes*

Time passes. Read John 20:26 – 29.

Notice how much time passes: *After eight days.*

It takes three days to go to Galilee. If they had gone to Galilee eight days ago, that would leave 5 days for teaching. But 8 days pass.

Jesus in His mercy again appears to them. And focusing on Thomas He says, *go ahead and feel, and be no more disbelieving.* And Thomas is convinced and says, *“My Lord and my God!”*

### *Greater blessing*

We sometimes work on the impression that because they were able to see Him and feel Him they were recipients of the greater blessing. It's true that it is easier to believe if you can actually see and feel, but that does not mean we are recipients of greater blessing in that context.

Look at what He says in verse 29: *“Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”* The greater blessing goes to us who are willing to be convinced based upon the testimony of Scripture and not based upon experience.

And trusting the word of the text is superior to anybody else's experience. And therefore having chosen to believe He rose from the dead based upon the testimony of Scripture makes us the recipients of even greater blessing.

### *Importance of the resurrection*

But Thomas illustrates the point made in Romans 1:4. The resurrection of Jesus proved Him to be the Son of God.

### *My Lord and my God!*

Now read verses 30-31.

Here John draws the conclusion to his gospel because the conclusion of Thomas, *“My Lord and my God!”* has been his theme throughout this gospel.

He will add an appendix in chapter 21. But the gospel closes here.

### *Many other signs*

Then he points out that there were many other signs than the ones he reports, and John reports only seven signs.

But as far as he is concerned, what he reports should be enough to convince his readers that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and believing in that they have life in His name.

## N. The Seventh Appearance: The Seven, § 194, John 21:1-25

At long last the disciples go up to the Galilee.

Read what they are doing in John 21:1 – 3.

*What are they to do?*

What do we find these disciples doing? .... And why do you think they are doing it?

The disciples have finally obeyed Jesus' instruction to go to Galilee. But now the question arises as to what are they to do? They know He will meet with them there. But when? And what are they to do in the meantime?

They still don't understand the full scope of their mission or the implications of the resurrection.

And perhaps they are remembering that He told them He would only be with them a little while longer.

As a result seven of them, who are fishermen by profession, decide to go back to the fishing business to earning a living.

Now perhaps they were a bit rusty after three years away from the business, or perhaps the fish were forewarned to stay out of reach. In any event they catch nothing, ... until ...

*Jesus appears*

Read verses 4 – 8.

Now Jesus appears on the shore, and what does He tell them to do?

He tells them to do something that makes no difference. He tells them to take the net and throw it on the other side of the boat, from the left side to the right side.

Is this beginning to sound familiar?

This is very similar to the time when He first called them to full time discipleship three years earlier (in section 44). There He told them to do something that would make no difference, and it made a big difference, and that's why He said, "*follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.*"

And now once again He tells them to do something that normally would make no difference, but it makes a big difference. They catch a multitude of fish.

*A lesson*

What is the lesson from this?

These are professional fisherman, but all their skill and all their labour will not enable them to catch fish. Only when they cast their net in obedience to Him will they catch fish.

And so it will be with their work as disciples. It is not by their labour and skill that men will become believers, but by their obedience to Him and His causing men to come.

### *Recognition*

Read verses 7 – 8.

John recognises that it is Jesus who is on the shoreline and tells Peter, in verse 7, “*It is the Lord*”. And Peter jumps overboard and wades to shore while the others bring in the large catch of fish.

### *Another lesson*

Read verses 9 – 14.

When they get to land, what do they find?

They don’t need a single one of all the fish they caught! Jesus already has fish broiling, and bread baked.

What is the lesson they have to learn from this?

They have a mission to fulfil and He will supply all their needs as they go about fulfilling this commission.

### *More details of the miracle*

Why did John point out that they caught 153 fish?

The point he makes of this is that, although there were so many, the net did not tear apart. The kind of nets they used back then would normally have been torn apart by so many fish, but in this case it didn’t tear apart, which was a minor miracle.

Verse 14 points out this was the third time He appeared to the apostolic group, although it is the seventh appearance altogether.

### *Peter*

Now Jesus has a private conversation with Peter.

Read verses 15 – 17.

### *Three-fold affirmation of love*

And Peter’s earlier three-fold denial is now cancelled by a three-fold affirmation of love. There are two different Greek words which are used, and we need to distinguish between them because of the point He makes.

The first word is *phileo*. *Phileo* is the love of the emotions in response to attraction, a love of friendship. When two people have a close friendship it’s a *phileo* love.

The second word that is used is the word *agapao*, which is the verbal form and *agape* which is the noun form. That is the love of the will. It is viewed as being superior because we can will to love the unlovely.

He wasn’t speaking Greek. He was speaking Hebrew, but there are Hebrew equivalents. The Hebrew for *phileo* is the word *raham*. The Hebrew for the word *agapao* is the word *ahavah*.

Let's look at the parts of the conversation.

1. The first interchange is verse 15.

*So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus \*said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?", using the word agapao.*

Do you agapao Me more than these? "These" refers to the apostles.

Why would Jesus put it that way?

Remember that during the last Passover Peter claimed to have a superior love for Jesus. When Jesus said that on that day they will all desert Him, Peter responded, "Maybe these other guys will desert you, but I'm not going to desert you. I'm ready to die for you this very night."

So, in the light of what you claimed at the Passover and your experience since then, do you really love Me, do you really *agapao* Me more than these others do?

His answer is: "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." And he uses the word *phileo*.

The point is, "No, I can no longer claim to *agapao* you more than the others. The best I can say is: I do *phileo* you. I am your friend.

He then receives his first commission: *Feed My lambs*.

The word translated *tend* in the NASB means "To feed sheep, to pasture or tend while grazing."<sup>4</sup>

And lambs are the baby believers who need to be fed with the milk of the Word of God. He fulfills this commission when he writes the book of 1 Peter, written to new-born believers, as chapter 2:1-3 makes clear.

2. The second interchange comes in verse 16.

*He \*said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"*

This time He drops the phrase, "more than these."

The point is this: Alright Peter, you can no longer affirm that you *agapao* Me more than the others, can you at least affirm that you do *agapao* Me at least equally?

But Peter answers, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You," using the word *phileo* again.

The point is: I cannot affirm that I *agapao* you more than the others, nor can I affirm that I *agapao* you at all. The best I can do is to affirm that I do *phileo* you. I am your friend.

He then receives his second commission: *shepherd My sheep*. The word *shepherd* is to exercise authority, oversight. And it "implies the whole office of the shepherd as guiding, guarding,

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<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

folding of the flock as well as leading it to nourishment.<sup>5</sup> He fulfils the second commission in his activity in the book of Acts as the chief of the apostles.

3. Verse 17 provides the third interchange.

*He \*said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?"*

Now He uses Peter's word, *phileo*. Do you really *phileo* Me? Alright, you cannot claim that you *agapao* Me more than the others. Nor can you claim that you *agapao* Me at all. Can you at least affirm that you really do *phileo* Me?

And then we read that *Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."* Again he uses the word *phileo*.

Peter's response is, well, I cannot affirm that I *agapao* you more than the others, or that I *agapao* you at all. This much I really can affirm: I do *phileo* you. I am your friend.

He then receives his third commission: *feed My sheep*. (Again the word translated tend means to feed.) And the *sheep* are the older believers to be fed with the meat of the Word of God. He fulfils that by writing 2 Peter.

So Peter's three-fold denial is cancelled by a three-fold affirmation of love.

*Peter's agape*

But Jesus doesn't stop there. Read verses 18 – 19.

What is Jesus telling Peter here?

He tells Peter, in verses 18-19, that someday he will prove he has *agape* love for Jesus, not more than the others, but at least equally, because he will not die of old age. He will die as a martyr. And when he dies in that way he will show that he has *agape* love for Jesus.

Now Peter points to John and says, "Well there's John. What about him?"

And Jesus' answer is basically, "Well that is none of your business." Verse 22, "*If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!*"

What is the point that Jesus is making here?

John is responsible for his own calling. And Peter is responsible for his calling. And so Peter should not be concerned about how God will lead John's ministry. So, even if God wills that he lives until the second coming, that doesn't concern Peter.

Each one is responsible for his own obedience to God's calling and should not be concerned about God's plans for another.

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<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, S. (2000). *The complete word study dictionary: New Testament* (electronic ed.). Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers.

*Johns' final paragraph*

Read how John closes his appendix to his gospel in verses 24 – 25.

What points does he make here?

He points out that he was an eye witness to much of what he wrote.

He also notes that nobody could sit down and write everything that Jesus said and taught. The world could not contain the books that would need to be written.

And considering this verse Arnold went through the harmony, and he counted up all of the days that we have on record of the life of Jesus. Keep in mind that He lived about 36 or 37 years of His life. Only 75 to 80 days of His life are recorded.

Jesus lived about 36 or 37 years. And His ministry lasted 3 years. Nevertheless everything recorded in the gospels only accounts for 75 to 80 days of His life.

That is it! It shows the evidence of that statement.

## O. The Eighth Appearance: The Five Hundred, § 195, Mark 16:15-18; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6

This section describes the eighth appearance, the appearance to the five hundred.

Here Jesus gives the second of the three final commissions that contains five specific points. Three are definite, but two are with a question mark.

Read Matthew 28:18 – 20.

1. What is His first point here?

His first point is that all authority has been given to the resurrected Son. Again, As the Father sent Him with the Father's authority, He will now send them with the Son's authority. All authority has been given to the resurrected Son.

2. Then He gives the commission. What is it?

The commission is: *make disciples*. If you look at Matthew verse 19, it begins with the word *go*, which sounds like an imperative in the English. Actually, in Greek that is not the commission.

The only imperative in this verse is *to make disciples*. That's the command: make disciples.

It is followed by three participles introducing participial clauses, and participles are subordinate to the main verb. And the main verb is: *make disciples*. What does that involve:

- a. *going* is the first participle, and going involves, as you see in Mark verse 15, going into all the world and preaching the gospel to all creation. So the first part of the mission is to go out and evangelise. That is where we make contact with the unbelieving world and share the gospel with them. If that's all we are doing we are evangelising, but we are not yet discipling.
  - b. Secondly, *baptizing: baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*. That will distinguish believer's baptism from other baptisms. There was Judaistic baptism, and John's baptism. And Christian or believer's baptism is signified as baptised in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Thirdly, *teaching: teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*. The reason Ariel Ministries and Bible believing churches have so much focus on teaching is that it is part of the Great Commission. Until we are doing all three things we are not fulfilling this commission.
3. The third point is with a question mark as I will explain. Read Mark 16:15 – 18.

The third point, found in verse 16, is that those who follow through will be saved and those who don't follow through will be lost.

*He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.*

The reason this is with a question mark is that verse 16 is not part of some of the older manuscripts that we have. And some question that Mark would have penned these words.

Now if we assume that these words were in fact penned by Mark, what are they telling us?

There are groups that like to teach that baptism is essential for salvation. They say if you believe only, no matter how strongly you believe, if you are not baptised you still end up spending your eternity in hell.

But is that what this verse teaches?

First notice that there are two parts to the verse: the first describes the condition for salvation and the second describes the condition for condemnation.

And salvation and condemnation are mutually exclusive. You cannot have both because the one excludes the other.

What is the condition for condemnation?

Unbelief.

Therefore the condition for salvation is belief. This is also what He told Nicodemus, in John 3:18, at the beginning of His public ministry.

Then why would he couple baptism and believing?

Because, as we see in the book of Acts, back then people were baptised the same day they believed. There was no period of time of any length between believing and baptism. Within the same hour those who believed were also baptised in water. And that was the right thing to do then because nobody was confused about what baptism entailed and what it meant in the Jewish context of that day.

But with so much confusion in the church about baptism, today it is wise to wait and educate the person before he undergoes the ritual.

Baptism is an outward evidence of an inward condition.

So His third point is that what determines whether a person will be saved or condemned is whether or not they believe.

4. The fourth point also has a question mark for a similar reason.

Within the body of believers certain signs will follow. He mentions five signs. What are they?

- a. They will cast out demons.
- b. They will speak in new tongues or languages.
- c. They will be healed of serpent bites.
- d. They will lay on hands and heal people.
- e. They will drink poison and not die.

Again this is questionable because this verse is missing from the oldest manuscripts of the gospel of Mark. And it is a dangerous thing to teach a major spiritual life issue based upon a questionable passage.

But there are those who teach that those who don't do these things are not even saved. Others will say that you may be saved but you are not Spirit filled if you don't do these things.

But is this verse saying that all believers should or could do all these things?

First of all notice that in verse 16, where He gave the condition for salvation and condemnation He was using the singular, speaking of "*he who has believed*", because salvation is individual.

But notice the switch from the singular to the plural in verse 17, where He gives some of the characteristics of "*those who have believed*". These signs will accompany those who have believed.

And by switching to the plural the issue is not that every believer should do these things or could do these things. Rather, he is saying that within the body of believers you will find these five signs. Not that they will be true of every believer.

So His fourth point is that within the body of believers you will see all these five signs.

How many of these five signs do we find in the book of Acts?

Four of them.

Which one is not mentioned?

The one we don't have a record of is the drinking of poison.

And for some reason those who teach that every believer should do all these things as a sign of being a true believer overlook being bitten by snakes and drinking poison. And that's convenient, but not honest.

Again, as in verse 16, every individual must believe for salvation, but in the plural, in the body of believers, you will see these five things.

So the fourth point is that these signs will be seen in the body of believers.

5. The fifth point is that He will be with them always, Matthew verse 20:

*and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

So to summarize the five points Jesus makes here:

1. Authority: He has been given all authority.
2. Disciple: They are to make disciples.
3. Belief: The key issue for every individual is whether or not they believe.
4. Signs: Various signs will accompany those who believe.
5. Presence: He Himself will be with us always.

## P. The Ninth Appearance: James, § 196, 1 Corinthians 15:7

Read 1 Corinthians 15:7.

The ninth appearance is to James.

This is not James the apostle, but James the half-brother of Jesus. It leads to his conversion, and as Acts 1:14 points out, also to the conversion of the other three half-brothers.

This also prepares the way for him to become the head of the first church in Jerusalem.

And in Galatians 1:9 we see that he became a member of the second group of apostles.

There are two different groups of apostles.

The first one is more exclusive in its requirements. The prerequisites for the first group were to have been with Jesus from the time He was baptized by John until His ascension. When it came time to replace Judas only two men met that qualification, and Matthias was chosen.

The second group of apostles also had a prerequisite, but not as exclusive. They only had to have seen the resurrected Christ.

So when Paul defends his apostolic authority in 1 Corinthians 9:1 he says, *have I not seen the resurrected Son?* And because James saw the resurrected Son he is a member of the second apostolic group.

## Q. The Tenth Appearance: The Eleven, § 197, Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:3-8

Now both of these accounts are by the writer Luke.

*Post-Resurrection teaching*

Read Acts 1:3 and Luke 24:4 – 27.

Luke tells us two things that Jesus focused on in His post-resurrection teaching. What were they?

1. First of all Messianic prophecy, prophecies about the first coming of the Messiah. We see that in Luke verses 44 and 46 – 47.

Notice that Jesus mentions all three divisions of the Scriptures because the Hebrew Bible has three parts: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The book of Psalms is the first book of the Writings.

Notice in verse 45 that *He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures*. That's why earlier He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them. Now finally they could understand what they could not understand heretofore.

2. The second area of teaching, mentioned in Acts verse 3, has to do with the Kingdom of God program.

This was essential for them to understand because they would be faced with the same Jewish objection that Jewish people still raise in our day:

If Jesus was the Messiah, what happened to the Messianic Kingdom?

### *Commission*

Now, having explained Messianic prophecy to them, and having explained God's Kingdom program to them, He explains their role in the fulfilment of those prophecies and gives them final instructions regarding their commission.

### *A question*

And in the middle of His instruction He is interrupted by a question they have.

Read Luke 24:48 – 49 and Acts 1:4 – 8.

What was their question?

*“Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”*

Why, at this time, are they asking Him about the restoration of the kingdom?

He has just been teaching them about the kingdom. And now He is telling them about the coming of the Holy Spirit which will also be a feature of the coming kingdom.

And how does He answer their question?

*“It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”*

He doesn't say there won't be a kingdom (as some make out), but that it is not for them to know when it will come.

### *The commission*

This is the third and final statement of their commission, and there are two main points.

1. First of all they are to remain in Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit.

What will the coming of the Holy Spirit mean?

It will mean three things:

- a. First of all it will fulfil the promise of the Father.

In the Upper Room Discourse we saw the promise was that He will send them another comforter. And this is the other comforter that will be coming.

- b. Secondly it will be the beginning of a new ministry of the Spirit, the ministry of Spirit baptism.

What does the baptism of the Holy Spirit mean?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13 where Paul defines it for us.

<sup>13</sup> *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

And how do we know this is a new ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus points out in Acts 1:5 that the Spirit had not come yet, but He will come in the next few days.

He will come in Acts 2:1-4. And that's how the church is going to begin. It begins with the baptism ministry of the Spirit.

- c. Thirdly the coming of the Holy Spirit will mean something for these apostles. What is it?

It will mean power to fulfil the commission He is giving to them.

They will have divine inner power because of the indwelling of the Spirit to fulfil the commission they are given.

- 2. And now having explained what the coming of the Spirit will mean He states their commission.

What is it?

It is to go out and preach the gospel in a geographically ordered manner.

- a. First of all, start in Jerusalem.
- b. Secondly, go unto Judea.
- c. Thirdly, move on to Samaria.
- d. And fourthly, move on to the outermost part of the earth.

And that is the outline of the book of Acts: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest parts of the earth.

Though He does not say, "the Gentile world", the phrase "*the remotest parts of the earth*" was an idiom for the Gentile world used by Isaiah, for example, in Isaiah 49:5-6. It was a phrase used for the Gentile world.

So during His last days with them Jesus has explained Messianic prophecy and the Kingdom of God to them. And now He tells them of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's coming will fulfil the Father's promise. It will mark the beginning of a new ministry baptizing believers into the body of the Messiah. And His indwelling will provide them with the power to fulfil their commission to preach the gospel from Jerusalem to the remotest part of the earth.

## R. The Ascension of the King, § 198, Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:9-12

### *Ascension*

Read Luke 24:50 – 51.

Now Luke tells us the ascension takes place and it was by the town of Bethany.

And Bethany is on the lower eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives. If you go to Israel today and look at the summit of the Mount of Olives, you will see a Russian Orthodox church called the Church of the Ascension. They assume that that's where He went up from because that is the highest point of the Mount of Olives. There is even a slab of stone there with two footprints embedded into it, because when He blasted off He burned His footprints into the rock! Now they missed the location of the transfiguration by about 45 miles. This was only off by about a mile and a half.

Slowly He is lifted up. They are able to see Him go only so high and a cloud hides the rest of His ascension.

### *Angelic message*

Read Acts 1:10 – 11.

They keep staring up into heaven hoping He will make a u-turn.

And angels appeared to them saying:

*“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*

### *The question*

What is the importance of this message to them?

Certainly it is comforting to be reassured that He will return.

But the question the angels ask, *“why do you stand looking into the sky?”*, surely is intended to remind them that they were given something to do.

Jesus has just finished giving them a commission. So don't just stand there staring into heaven! They have a commission to fulfil. And they are to wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes, and then they are to begin their commission.

### *The apostles*

Now what did they do?

Read Luke 24:52 – 53 and Acts 1:12.

They returned to Jerusalem and waited in the temple praising God.

And Mark records what they did after the Holy Spirit came.

As for Jesus, He kept on going into heaven, and upon arrival He took His seat at the right hand of the Father, and His glory was unveiled forever.

And there are theological implications of the ascension.

1. It proved the truth of what He said, *I go to the Father*, in John 14:28.
2. It means that Jesus is preparing a place for us, and once it is prepared He will come for us at the rapture of the church. John 14:1-2.
3. It marks the culmination of His exultation, the last stage of His exultation that began with His entombment in the unused rich man's tomb, and now enthronement at the right hand of God the Father. Ephesians 1:20-23.
4. It marks His headship over the church. Colossians 1:18.
5. It means there is a man seated at the right hand of God the Father. He left heaven only in the form of God. He came back to heaven in the form of the God-Man. Acts 2:32-35.
6. It began the high priestly ministry of Yeshua. He began His ministry only as of His ascension, Hebrew 4:14-16.
7. It marks the coming of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:8-10. That's when the spiritual gifts were given, following the ascension, and then later the Spirit came.
8. It makes Him the Son and forerunner according to Hebrews 6:20. The word forerunner means the first of more to come later, and we are the more to come later.
9. It marks the believer's new position as being seated in the heavenlies. Ephesians 1:20-21. In positional truth, there are certain things true of us, not because of what we are, but because of what we are in the Messiah.
10. By means of the ascension the gifts of the Spirit could be given. Ephesians 4:7-11.
11. It was the manner of His return, not the place, but the manner of His return. He left in the clouds of heaven. And He will some day come back in the clouds of heaven. Acts 1:9-11.
12. It means the Old Testament saints are now also in heaven. They were removed from Abraham's Bosom and they are now in heaven as well. Ephesians 4:8.

## Sequel to the Life of Christ

We will finish our course by looking at four points of sequel to the life of Christ.

### A. The policy of no more signs for Israel continues, 1 Corinthians 1:21-24

As we noted in section 61, as of section 61 in Matthew 12, once the unpardonable sin was committed, He refused to provide any more signs publicly on behalf of the people, except one sign, the sign of Jonah, the sign of resurrection.

And the policy of no more signs for Israel has continued.

1 Corinthians 1:21–24 (NASB95)

*<sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

The point he makes is that the Gentiles can continue seeking after philosophical wisdom (true of the Greeks) and Jews can continue seeking after signs, but both will receive the same message: Christ crucified. And with the crucifixion came the message of the resurrection.

As we saw earlier in this course, the multiplicity of signs and wonders is not convincing, except to those who already wish to believe. Look at the great miracles that Jesus did, miracles no one else has done before or since. But they find reason not to believe.

And when the apostles did all the miracles in the book of Acts there was more rejection than acceptance.

When the rich man (Luke 16:31) asked Abraham that Lazarus be raised from the dead so that his brothers would believe, Abraham answered him that they have the Scriptures and that is all they need. If they don't believe Moses and the prophets they won't believe if one rises from the dead.

If the Scriptures are not believed, as they read, miracles will not be of any benefit. And all Biblical history points to that.

Without doing any signs Ariel ministries has won many Jews to the Lord and they continue to do so to this day.

The policy of no more signs for Israel has continued to this day.

## B. The Relationship of the Life of Christ to the Book of Acts, Acts 6 – 8; 1 Peter 3:21-2

The book of Acts is Luke's sequel to his gospel account.

### *Peter's sermons & repentance*

In chapters 2-6 we read of the presentation of the gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem.

Peter's sermons recorded in these chapters must be understood in the light of the judgment which was hanging over that particular generation. In the Book of Acts there is a constant plea for Jews to repent, and that means to change their minds about Yeshua, before the judgment comes.

### *The second sign of Jonah rejected*

The first sign of Jonah was the resurrection of Lazarus, which was rejected by the Sanhedrin in John 11. The second sign of Jonah was the resurrection of Jesus, which is rejected in the first seven chapters of the book of Acts. The stoning of Stephen in Acts 7 marks the official rejection of the second sign of Jonah. That is why it is only in chapter 8 that the gospel goes out for the first time to non-Jews. It stays within the Jewish frame of reference in the first seven chapters. But once the second sign of Jonah is rejected by the Sanhedrin it then goes out to the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Gentiles in Acts chapter 10.

### *Salvation by baptism*

Now there are two passages in Acts that are used to teach that you have to be baptized to be saved. Those are Acts 2:38, and 22:16.

Acts 2:38 (NASB95)

<sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 (NASB95)

<sup>16</sup> 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

Now the first thing to observe is that both these passages are written to a specific Jewish audience. Secondly, it is written to the same Jewish generation that is guilty of the unpardonable sin and faces the judgement of AD 70. That generation was in need of salvation from two distinct events: the judgement to come in AD 70, and the eternal judgement in the Lake of Fire.

So in Acts 2:38 notice Peter tells them to do two things. First of all in verse 38 he says *repent*. And again, in the context repent means they need to change their mind about Jesus. He's not demon possessed. He is the Messiah. And that act of repentance, or changing of mind is going to save them spiritually. But it won't necessarily save them physically. Believing will save them spiritually, but it won't save them physically from the AD 70 judgement.

The second thing they have to do is to be baptized. And in the Jewish context what baptism does is: it will separate them from the Judaism of that day. And baptism will be the means of separation from this Judaism that rejected Jesus and from the generation that is guilty of the unpardonable sin.

And you only need to read two more verses to see what he is getting at. Look at verse 40.

Acts 2:39–40 (NASB95)

<sup>39</sup> *“For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”* <sup>40</sup> *And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”*

*It says: be saved, (save yourselves – ASV).* Does he mean save yourselves spiritually? No one can save themselves spiritually. So save yourselves from what? *From this perverse generation.* So what baptism will do for them is separate them from the perverse generation guilty of the unpardonable sin.

Both Acts 2:38 and 22:16 are addressed to a Jewish audience, not a Gentile one, focussing on physical deliverance. Only belief will save them spiritually.

There is one more passage that people use and that’s 1 Peter 3:21

1 Peter 3:21–22 (NASB95)

<sup>21</sup> *Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.*

1 Peter 1:1-3 shows he was writing specifically to Jewish believers of the dispersion. And the word dispersion refers to Jewish people outside the land. These are not just Jewish people, but Jewish believers outside the land.

Chapter 2:1-3 clarify that he is writing to new believers still needing the milk of the word of God to be raised from their level of immaturity to maturity. And one thing that kept them immature, and this often still happens to Jewish believers today, is a reluctance to be baptized, because they know it is a final break from Judaism.

So in chapter 3 he encourages them to undergo water baptism, which will save them, but save them from what? Now he makes a comparison with Noah’s Ark. (1 Peter 3:18 – 22.) The ark saved Noah. Did the Ark save Noah spiritually? No. He was already a saved man spiritually before he built the Ark. But the Ark did save Noah and his family physically. By the same token baptism will save them physically from the coming judgement. He already treats them as spiritually saved. They already have salvation in chapters 1 & 2. But baptism will save them physically from the coming judgement for the unpardonable sin.

### **C. The Relationship of the Life of Christ to the Book of Hebrews, Luke 21:20-24; Hebrews 13:11-14**

The book of Hebrews is written to a body of second generation Jewish believers undergoing some tremendous persecution. And because of this persecution they were seriously considering going back into Judaism to escape the persecution. They would then wait for the persecution to pass, and start their Christian life all over again later. The writer writes to warn them against doing so because if they go back into Judaism now they will re-identify themselves with the generation guilty of the unpardonable sin and will die a terrible physical death.

There are five warning passages in the book of Hebrews often used to teach individual salvation. All five passages are dealing with physical discipline, physical death, not loss of spiritual salvation. And if they go back into Judaism it will be an irrevocable decision and they will face judgement. And so what they should do is firstly, to make their break complete, which for Jewish believers then and now comes with water

baptism. And secondly: press on to spiritual maturity so as not to lose their reward. And then thirdly, when the time comes, they must abandon the city and go outside the camp, Hebrews 13:13-14.

We do not know from the book of Hebrews how they respond. But we have three ancient writings that tell us what happened. One is a man called Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, not a believer, he is a Pharisee and an eye witness to many of the events of AD 70. Secondly there was a man named Heggi Sophius, a Jewish believer of the second century. He wrote a seven volume set about the early history of the church. Although it is all lost much of it is quoted by the third writer, Eusebius, a fourth century Gentile believer.

Pulling all three sources together this is what we discover. When the recipients of Hebrews received the letter they accepted it, made their break from Judaism, and when the war against Rome broke out they left the city under Cleopas, and went to a city called Pela. Pela is just south of the sea of Galilee and east of the river outside the war zone. A total of 1,100,000 Jews died in that Roman war. But not one single Jewish believer was dead because of his obedience to the letter to the Hebrews. The letter to Hebrews had a happier ending!

#### **D. The Third Sign of Jonah, Zechariah 4:1-14; Revelation 11:3-13**

Look now at Zechariah chapter 4. Read 4:1 – 3, 11 – 14.

In Zechariah 4:1-10 Zechariah is given a vision, much of which he understands, but there is one key point he does not understand. What he sees in his vision is first of all a seven branched lampstand, called a menorah, which was the main symbol of Israel throughout Scripture. Above and beside the lampstand are two olive trees. Between the olive trees there is a bowl. And the olive trees empty olive oil into the bowl. Then from the bowl to each of the lamps there are seven smaller ducts or pipes, seven of them to each one for a total of 49. They feed oil to the seven lamps. The one common symbol used throughout the vision is the symbol of olive oil which is a common symbol of the Holy Spirit.

So what he sees is Israel filled with the Holy Spirit, finally fulfilling its calling of Exodus 19 to be the light to the Gentiles. But the source of the oil, the source of the Spirit, is the two olive trees on each side of the lampstand. Zechariah understands most of the vision because of previous revelation. What he does not understand is what these two olive trees represent. But somehow they are the oil of the spirit to Israel.

So in verses 11, 12, & 13 he raises the question: *“What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?”* And in verse 14 he gets a very cryptic answer: *“These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”* All he is told is that these are the two anointed ones that stand before the Lord of the whole earth. That’s all he is told. How much he understood we are not sure.

If that was all we had to go on, I couldn’t tell you more than what I’ve told you now.

Now turn to Revelation 11.

Revelation 11:3-13 describes the events that will occur at the mid-point of the tribulation. For the first half of the tribulation there are two prophets, two witnesses, whose witness is limited to Jerusalem. And while the 144,000 of Revelation chapter 7 are world-wide, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 are limited to Jerusalem. And the exact length of their ministry is 1,260 days, three and a half years. Any attempt to kill them prematurely fails. All those who try to kill them are killed themselves. He identifies them in verse 4. Notice what he says: *These are the two olive trees.* What two olive trees? No olive trees were mentioned in the first ten chapters of Revelation, yet he refers specifically to *the two olive trees*. The only previous mention of two olive trees is the prophecy of Zechariah chapter 4.

Now we learn that the two olive trees of Zechariah chapter 4 represent the two witnesses of Revelation 11. But again, how are they the source of the oil, the source of the Spirit?

Now at the mid-point of the Tribulation, what nobody else was able to do the anti-christ is able to accomplish. He is able to kill the two witnesses. And the whole world is really happy that they are dead. We are told they even have a world-wide Christmas celebration. They exchange gifts with each other, we are told. As for the bodies of the two men killed, they will remain unburied on the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days. And for three and a half days everybody is having a party. Then, after three and a half days, in the sight of all, the bodies are resurrected from the dead and they ascend into heaven. And the resurrection and the ascension of the two witnesses lead to four results, all in verse 13.

1. A great earthquake will hit the city.
2. One tenth of the city will be destroyed.
3. Seven thousand will die.
4. *And the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

The resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses will lead to the salvation of the Jews of Jerusalem at the midpoint of the Tribulation, just before they have to flee outside the land. That begins a process that is completed three and a half years later. And more specifically, in the last three days before the second coming, the whole nation will come to faith. You will find this in Hosea 5:15 – 6:3. In Isaiah 66:8 the nation will be born *in one day*. In Zechariah 3:9 He will remove the iniquity of the land *in one day*. In Romans 11:25 - 27 the whole nation will be saved.

And Israel's national salvation is the prerequisite to the second coming. So with Israel's national salvation will come the second coming and the Kingdom.

They did reject the first sign of Jonah. And they did reject the second sign of Jonah. But they will accept the third sign of Jonah and that will lead to Israel's national salvation and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

The life of Jesus is yet to have a happier ending. Selah.

## End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>v</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>vi</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>vii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>viii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>x</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>xi</sup> Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (653). New York: United Bible Societies.