

JESUS

Gospels

Integrated

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JESUS - Gospels Integrated

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Preface

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Almost everything we know about Jesus comes from the four Gospels. None of them were designed to be a history. Nor a biography. Nor even a collection of sermons. As is plainly stated by each, a Gospel's purpose is to evangelize, to proselytize.

No single Gospel writer records all that Jesus said and did. Each writer contributes distinctive, sometimes incompatible, information. Information which one, two or all the others omit, in part or in whole.

This booklet is a harmonization of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Included with these are those portions of John and Acts which contribute details to the story presented in the aforementioned three.

Gospel harmonies aren't new or unique; historians believe the first one was done prior to 200 A.D. Through the centuries, most of those produced (in many languages) used a format of four vertical columns. Some have been laid out in four parallel horizontal lines. We thought a harmony would simply be easier read if we compiled and organized the story by integrating each sentence, each clause.

It's not within the scope of this booklet to solve problems of chronology. That task is better left to those scholars who are expert in that field. The sequence of episodes in this work follows Mark generally. The solo incidents of Matthew and Luke, and those where these two agree, are arbitrarily placed where they seem to fit. The birth and childhood details at the front of Matthew and Luke are not used. We start where Mark started.

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The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Under the Roman emperor Tiberius Caesar, in the fifteenth year of his reign, these were the sub-rulers of those client states where most of the Jews lived: Pontius Pilate governed Judea. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee, and his brother Philip ruled Ituraea and Trachonitis. Lysanias ruled Abilene. Their religious rulers were Annas and Caiaphas, who shared the office of High Priest.

Then... the Word of God came to John son of Zachariah, in the wilderness.

John, known as 'the baptizer', appeared in the Judean desert and the countryside near the Jordan River. And he was proclaiming this message:

"Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is near."

He was preaching an immersion to signify a change of mind, and forgiveness of sins. John himself wore a camel's hair cloak, and lived on locusts and wild honey. Dwellers of Jerusalem and the rest of Judea and the vicinity of the Jordan were coming out to where he was. They were confessing their sins and being baptized by him in the river.

The Judean authorities sent agents (priests and Levites) from Jerusalem, to check him out, asking,

"You, who are you?" And John plainly stated,

"I am not the Messiah."

"Then what? Are you Elijah?"

"I'm not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

"No."

"So who are you? That we may give a report to those who sent us?"

Now the Pharisees had sent them; but John wasn't evasive, and admitted,

"I am the one written about in the prophet Isaiah, 'Behold, I am sending My messenger before Your face, who will prepare the way before Me. The voice of one crying in the desert; to prepare the way of the Lord, to make His paths straight. Every gully will be filled in, and each hill and mount leveled. The winding made straight, and the rough roads made smooth. And all flesh shall see God's salvation.'"

John noticed many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for immersion; and said, in front of the crowds,

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to run from the coming fury? Show something that proves your change of heart. And don't presume that you can tell yourselves, 'We have Abraham as forefather.' Believe me, God can generate children to Abraham from these stones here. Yes; and an ax is already laid at the tree's base. And any tree not bearing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

The crowds wanted to know,

"Then what should we do?" And John explained,

"Whoever has two tunics should give one to somebody who hasn't any. Those with food should share likewise." Some tax-collectors had also come for baptism; and they asked,

“Teacher, what should we do?”

“Collect no more than you’ve been ordered to.” Some of the soldiers asked,

“What about us? What should we do?”

“Don’t accuse anyone falsely. And don’t extort money by force; be satisfied with your pay.”

Now the people were in a high state of anticipation. All were wondering in their minds about John, whether he might be the Messiah. And those sent by the Pharisees were insisting,

“If you’re not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, then why are you baptizing?” Then John in his discourse answered them all,

“Me, I baptize you with water as an expression of your repentance. But standing among you is One you don’t know. There’s One coming after me Who ranks higher than me. I’m not even worthy to stoop down and unstrap His sandals. He’s going to baptize you with Holy Spirit; yes, and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand. He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor. He will gather His wheat into the barn, but burn the chaff in a fire that can’t be put out.”

In many other ways John urgently declared the Gospel to the people. These things took place at that Bethany opposite the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

And it came to pass in those days that Jesus of Nazareth arrived at the Jordan; coming from Galilee, to be baptized by him. When John saw Jesus coming to him, he tried to deter Him, saying,

“I need to be baptized by You; yet You come to me?” Jesus told him,

“Allow it at this time. It’s proper that we fulfill all righteousness like this.”

So he conceded to Him. And just as all the people were baptized, Jesus too, was baptized by John in the Jordan.

As soon as He was baptized, and came out of the water, Jesus prayed. As He prayed, the heavens opened; and the Holy Spirit was seen in bodily form, like a dove, descending and coming upon Him. And look, a Voice from Heaven saying,

“You are My beloved Son, in Whom I delight.” Then John declared,

“Look, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the World. He’s the One about Whom I said, ‘There’s One coming after me Who ranks higher than me; for He existed before me.’ I didn’t recognize Him; but the One Who sent me to baptize in water told me, ‘The One on Whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, He’s the One Who baptizes with Holy Spirit.’ Now I have seen it; now I can bear witness, He’s the Son of God!”

When Jesus began his ministry, He was Himself about thirty years old.

Then Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan; and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, out among wild animals. He ate nothing, but fasted for forty days and nights; being tempted by the devil. When those days were complete, He was hungry. And that’s when the tempter came, and said to Him,

“If You’re the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered him with Scripture,

“It stands written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

The devil then led Him to the holy city, Jerusalem. And had Him stand on the summit of the temple; and he quoted Scripture,

“It stands written, too, that ‘He will give His angels charge concerning You, to guard You. On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot on a stone.’ So if You’re God’s Son, throw Yourself down from here.” Jesus answered,

“That’s right. Nevertheless, it stands written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to a test.’”

Then the devil took Him atop a high mountain. And showed Him, in a moment of time, all the world’s kingdoms and their glory. And then the devil made his offer.

“I can give You all this dominion, and its splendor. For it’s been handed over to me; and I give it to whomever I please. So, if You’ll fall down and worship me, it will be all Yours.” But Jesus told him,

“Be gone Satan! This stands written: ‘You shall worship the Lord your God; and serve only Him.’”

After the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him alone until an opportune time. And angels came and began to take care of Him.

When the tetrarch Herod Antipas was reproached by John about Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for some other of Herod’s atrocities, he added this too: He had John imprisoned. Jesus heard that John was taken into ‘protective custody’. He knew that the Pharisees knew He was making and baptizing more disciples than John. (Actually, Jesus Himself wasn’t baptizing, but His disciples were.) So He left Judea; and, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee. From that time on Jesus began to proclaim the Gospel of God, saying,

“The time is ready; the Kingdom of God is close. Repent! Believe the Gospel.”

The news about Him was spreading throughout the whole area. He began to teach in their synagogues; and was praised by all.

He went to Nazareth, where He grew up. And on the Sabbath, as He customarily did, He went to the synagogue; and stood to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him; and He unrolled it to the place where this is written; and read it aloud,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to proclaim the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to preach liberty to the captives and for the blind to see again. To heal, and release those who are crushed; and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

Then he re-rolled the scroll, and handed it back to the steward; and sat down. Every eye in that synagogue was intently staring at Him. He said,

“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears.” And they were all witnesses to that statement. They were puzzled over the gracious words coming from His mouth; and were saying,

“Isn’t This Joseph’s son?” He went on,

“No doubt, you will surely quote to Me this proverb: ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ ‘What we’ve heard happened in Capernaum, do here in Your hometown too.’ But isn’t this true: no prophet is accepted in his own hometown?

“Listen. In Elijah’s day, there were lots of widows in Israel when the sky was shut for three and a half years, causing severe famine in the land. Yet Elijah wasn’t sent to any of them; but to a widow in Sarepta, a town of Sidon.

“In the prophet Elisha’s day, there were lots of lepers in Israel. But none of them was cleansed; only Naaman the Syrian.”

Hearing this provoked anger in everyone in the synagogue. They jumped up and ejected Him out of the city. And they pushed Him up to the brow of the bluff their own town was built on, intending to shove Him off head-first. But He moved through their midst; and went on His way.

Jesus left Nazareth; and went to stay in Capernaum, a city of Galilee on the lakeshore. It’s in the area of Zebulin and Naphtali. This fulfills what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah,

‘The land of Zebulin, and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea opposite the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people sitting in darkness saw a great light; and for those sitting in the land and the shadow of death, has the light arisen.’

And he was teaching them there on the Sabbaths.

Walking along by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus noticed Simon, called ‘Peter’, and his brother Andrew, casting a net in the lake; for they were fishers. Jesus told them,

“Follow me, and I’ll make you fishers of men.”

They left the nets at once and went with Him. Going on a little farther, they happened upon two others, James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. Those two were also in a boat, with Zebedee, repairing nets. He called them; and at once they left their father in his boat with his hired hands, and went with Him. And they all went to Capernaum.

There, promptly on the Sabbath, He entered the synagogue, and was teaching. Unlike the scribes, He was instructing them as One having authority.

Just then, there was a man in their synagogue, possessed by an unclean spirit; and he shouted loudly,

“Ha, what do we have to do with You Jesus, Nazarene? I know Who You are. God’s holy One.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying,

“**Shut up! Come out of him.**” Then the demon, right there in their midst, threw him into spasms, crying loudly; and came out of him without hurting him. They were all amazed, and began to wonder among themselves,

“What’s this? New doctrine? With authority and power He commands even unclean spirits. And they obey Him and come out.”

His popularity was spreading rapidly everywhere, into every locality in Galilee.

Jesus, as soon as they left the synagogue, went into the home of Simon Peter and Andrew, accompanied by James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was sick in bed, suffering a high fever. They quickly made request of Him on her behalf. He went at once and, standing over her, took her hand and rebuked the fever. The fever left her immediately; and she got up and waited on them.

That evening around sunset, they began bringing Him all who were sick with various diseases and many who were demon-possessed. Laying His hands on each of them, He cured all who were ill; to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities upon Himself, and carried away our diseases.’ Also, with only a word, many demons were cast out, crying,

“You’re the Son of God!” But He admonished them; and wouldn’t allow them to speak, since they knew He was the Christ.

Early next morning, while still dark, He got up and left; and went out to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and the crowd was searching for Him; and finding Him, he said,

“Everyone’s looking for You.” They tried to keep Him from leaving them, but He said,

“**Let’s go somewhere else, to the other towns nearby. I must preach there too; for I was sent for this purpose.**”

Jesus then traveled throughout Galilee; teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. Casting out demons. Healing all sorts of disease and sickness among the people. His fame was growing, even into all Syria. All who were ill were brought to him. Those stricken with various diseases and pains. Paralytics, demoniacs, lunatics. He healed them all.

This happened while He was in one of the towns: A man there was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he came and dropped to his knees, and bowed before Him, imploring,

“Lord, if You’re willing, You can cleanse me.” Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched him, saying,

“**I am willing. Be clean.**” Immediately, his leprosy left him; he was cured. But Jesus sharply warned him, ordering him not to tell anybody.

“**Don’t say anything about this to anyone. But go show yourself to a priest; and offer that which Moses instructed as a voucher to them, confirming your cleansing.**”

However, that man went and began to broadcast it freely; spreading the news about Him even farther. Huge crowds were gathering to hear Him, and to be healed of

their afflictions. So much so that Jesus started to avoid densely populated areas; and, quite often, would slip away to the wilderness and pray. But people were coming to Him now from everywhere.

Several days later, he caught a boat and, crossing over, returned to His own city, Capernaum. And it was heard that He was home. One day as he was teaching, some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law happened to be sitting there. They had come from all over Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem even. The Lord's power was there for Him to perform healing. Many were crowded together, so much so that there was no more space available, even near the door. And Jesus was instructing them in the Word.

Then, look, some men came. Four of them, bearing to Him, lying on a pallet, a man who was paralyzed. They were trying to bring him in to set him before Jesus; but couldn't, due to the crowd. So they climbed up and removed a portion of the roof above Him, and dug an opening. Then they lowered, through the tiles, the pallet with the paralytic, right in the center in front of Jesus. Jesus, observing their faith, told the paralytic,

"Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven."

And look, at that some of the scribes and Pharisees began to wonder among themselves,

"Who's this Man Who talks like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Jesus, immediately aware in His spirit that they were reasoning thus within, and between, themselves, said,

"Why are you rationalizing about these things in your hearts? Your thinking is evil. What's easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or 'Get up; pick up your pallet, and walk?' But just so you'll know that the Son of man does have authority, on earth, to forgive sins ...", He said to the paralytic,

"I say to you, get up! Take your pallet with you and go home." He got up at once; all of them could see it. And he picked up the pallet he had been lying on and went out, praising God Who had given such authority to men. And they were alarmed, saying, "We've seen strange things today!"

This happened around that time: He was standing next to the lake Gennesaret; and a crowd was pressing in on Him, listening to the Word of God. He saw two boats docked at the lakeside; the fishermen had stepped off and were cleaning nets. Jesus stepped into one of the boats, which was Simon's; and asked him to put out just a little way from shore. Then He sat down, and taught the crowd from the boat. When He finished speaking, He told Simon,

"Put out to deeper water, and lower your nets for a catch." And Simon said,

"Teacher, we've labored all night and took nothing. But at Your suggestion, I'll lower the nets."

Having done this, they caught such a large quantity of fish that their nets were coming apart. And they signaled their partners in the other boat to come help. They came; and filled both boats to the point of being swamped. Simon Peter, on seeing it, dropped to Jesus' knees, saying,

"Leave me, Lord; I'm a sinful man." For astonishment had overwhelmed him, as well as those with him, at the haul of fish which they, together, had taken. The same, too, for James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus told Simon,

“Stop being afraid. From now on you’ll be catching men, alive.” After pulling their boats up on the beach, they abandoned everything; and went with Him.

Later, Jesus went to the lakeshore again. The crowds were still coming and He was teaching them. Passing on from there, He noticed a tax-collector, Levi, called Matthew, son of Alphaeus, sitting in the tax booth. Jesus asked him,

“Follow Me.” And he stood up, and went with Him, leaving everything behind.

Later, Levi gave a big reception for Him. And many tax-collectors and sinners and others were reclining and eating with Jesus and His disciples. There were lots of disciples by this time; and they were accompanying them, following Him.

When Pharisees and their scribes saw Him eating and drinking with them all, they began to complain to His disciples,

“Why is your Teacher dining with tax-collectors and sinners?” Jesus overheard, and told them,

“It’s not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. You need to learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, not sacrifice.’ I haven’t come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Once, John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and asked Him,

“Why do John’s disciples and the Pharisees’ disciples often fast and offer prayers; yet Your’s don’t? Your’s eat and drink.” Jesus answered,

“Can you require the bridegroom’s men to fast and mourn while the bridegroom is still with them? No; but the time will come when the bridegroom is taken from them. His men will fast in those days.

“Hear this parable: Nobody cuts a piece of cloth from a new, unshrunk garment to patch an old garment. He would, of course, damage the new; and not only would the piece from the new not match the old, but the patch would pull away from the old, and a worse tear results.

“Nobody fills old wineskins with new wine. For new wine would burst the old skins, and the wine would spill out. New wine must be put in fresh wineskins; then both are preserved.

“However, nobody, used to old wine, wants the new; for he maintains, ‘The old wine is good enough.’”

It happened around that time, on a certain Sabbath, Jesus was passing through some grainfields. His disciples, while walking along, became hungry. And started picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. Some Pharisees, noticing it, wanted to know,

“Look, why are they doing what’s not lawful, working on a Sabbath?” Jesus answered,

“Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were in need, and became hungry? How he entered the house of God, in the time of the High-priesthood of Abiathar? How he took and ate the consecrated bread, which isn’t lawful for him to eat; only the priests? Even gave it to those with him, too.

“Or haven’t you read in the Law that, on any given Sabbath, the temple priests break the Sabbath, yet are innocent? But I’m telling you, Something greater than the temple is here now! Had you known what this means, ‘I desire compassion, not sacrifice,’ you wouldn’t have condemned the innocent.” Then He stated plainly,

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath also.”

He left there and, on another Sabbath, entered a synagogue and was teaching. And look, this happened: There was a man there whose right hand was shriveled. And some scribes and Pharisees were watching Jesus closely to see if perhaps He might heal on a Sabbath. They were looking for grounds on which to denounce Him. But He knew what they were thinking. He told the man with the shriveled hand,

“Get up and come up here.” The man did so; and Jesus asked those watching,

“On a Sabbath, is it lawful to do good or to do harm? To save life, or destroy it?” But they kept silent.

“What man among you, having one sheep fall in a pit on a Sabbath, won’t grab and lift it out? Well how much more valuable is a man than a sheep? It is lawful, absolutely, to do good on a Sabbath.” Yet they still kept silent. Then, angrily, He looked around at them all. And, saddened at their cold-heartedness, He told the man,

“Stretch out your hand!” He extended his hand; and immediately it was restored to normal, like his other. But the Pharisees seethed with rage. They left; and promptly conferred together with the Herodians against Jesus, discussing how they might destroy Him.

News about him was spreading everywhere now. Jesus withdrew to the lake with His disciples, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. From Judea too. From Jerusalem, from Idumea, from the Decapolis, and beyond the Jordan. From the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. A huge crowd had heard what He was doing; and came to Him.

Jesus had His disciples keep a boat handy for Him in case so many might start to overwhelm Him. For they had brought to Him all that were ill, suffering various infirmities. And He healed many, which caused all those with afflictions to press in on Him, trying to touch Him. For power was coming from Him, and healing them all.

Those who were troubled with unclean spirits were getting relief. Whenever demons saw Him, they would collapse before Him, shouting,

“You are the Son of God!” But he strictly warned them not to identify Him. And fulfilled that spoken through the prophet Isaiah,

‘Behold My Servant Whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in Whom My soul delights. I will put My Spirit upon Him; and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He won’t quarrel, nor cry out. A smoldering wick He won’t extinguish till He leads Justice to victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope.’

Around this time, Jesus went up a mountain to meditate; and spent the whole night there in prayer to God. At daybreak, He summoned His disciples to Himself, those He wanted; and they came. Then He appointed twelve of them, whom He also designated ‘apostles’, to accompany Him. And to send them out to preach; giving them authority over demons, to cast them out.

The twelve ‘apostles’ were these: First, Simon whom He also named ‘Peter’, and his brother Andrew. James son of Zebedee, and his brother John. (He named them ‘Boanerges’, means ‘Sons of Thunder’). Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew the tax-collector and Thomas. James son of Alphaeus, and Judas (or Thaddaeus) the brother of this James. Simon (who was called ‘The Zealot’). And Judas Iscariot (who later turned treacherous, and betrayed Him).

When he saw the crowds, Jesus came down a little and stood at a level place. He sat down, and everyone gathered about Him. Looking directly at His disciples, He began to summarize His teaching to them.

“Happy are the poor in spirit; the Kingdom of Heaven is for them.

“Happy are those who mourn; they will be comforted.

“Happy are those who weep now; they will laugh.

“Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; they will be satisfied.

“Happy are the humble; they will inherit the earth.

“Happy are the merciful; they will receive mercy.

“Happy are the pure in heart; they will know God.

“Happy are the peacemakers; they will be known as ‘sons’ of God.

“Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness sake; the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them.

“Happy are you when you are hated and ostracized, and all sorts of evil is said against you falsely, because of Me. Be happy in that day, and rejoice; for your reward is significant. Their forefathers did the same to the prophets who were before you.

“But woe to you who are rich now; you’re right now receiving your comfort in full.

“Woe to you who are well-fed now; you’ll have times of want.

“Woe to you who laugh now; you’ll experience grief and tears.

“And woe to you when everyone praises you; their forefathers honored false prophets the same way.

“Everyone will be salted with fire. You’re the salt of the earth. And of course, salt is good. But if salt becomes insipid, how can it be made salty again? It can’t. It’s useless. Fit only to be thrown out; and is trampled underfoot by men. So you, you have salt within yourselves. And be at peace with each other.

“You’re the light of the world. A city set on a hill can’t be concealed. Look, a lamp isn’t lit and put under a pail; but on a lampstand, to provide light for all inside.

“Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is clear, your whole body is full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if your inner light is darkened ... man, how deep is that darkness.

“But if your whole body is full of light, with no portion dark, it will be totally lit up, just like a lamp’s rays wholly illuminate for you. So you, you let your light so shine before men that they notice your good works, and give praise to your heavenly Father.

“Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. No, I have come to fulfill the Law. Trust Me, till heaven and earth pass away, not one character or stroke of the Law will pass away before all is accomplished.

“Whoever disregards even one of the least commandments, and teaches others so, will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet whoever keeps them all, and teaches others so, will be known as great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Actually, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you absolutely won’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

“You’ve heard the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’, and, ‘Any murderer would be liable to a court.’ But, believe Me, whoever calls his brother, ‘worthless idiot’, will be liable before the Sanhedrin. What’s more, to say, ‘you fool’, could make you liable for the always burning garbage dump out in Gehenna.

“So, if you’re offering something at the altar, but recall that your brother has some

matter against you, leave your offering there at the altar. Go reconcile with your brother first, then go back and make your offering.

“Try to settle promptly with your adversary while you both are still on the way to present your case before a magistrate. Your adversary might deliver you to a judge, and the judge to an officer, and you end up in jail! Then, you’ll not be released till you’ve paid up the last quadran. Why don’t you just, on your own initiative, determine what’s right?

“You’ve heard it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I’m telling you, if you look on a lady to lust for her, you’ve already committed adultery with her in your heart.

“If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and toss it away. It’s better for you to enter life half-blind. If your right hand causes you to stumble, hack it off and toss it away. It’s better for you that parts of your body perish than for your whole body to land in Gehenna.

“It was said too, ‘Whoever divorces his wife should give her a certificate of dismissal.’ But I’m telling you, anybody who divorces his wife, except for promiscuity, and marries another woman commits adultery against the first wife. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

“You’ve heard, too, the ancients were told, ‘You shall not make empty vows; but shall perform your vows to the Lord.’ But you, believe Me, make no vow whatsoever; either by Heaven or by earth or by Jerusalem. Heaven is God’s throne, and the earth is His footstool. And Jerusalem is ‘the city of the great king’.

“Nor should you make a vow by your head. You can’t make even one hair of it either white or black. So you, simply say, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’. Anything added to this is from evil.

“You’ve heard it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ But you, listen to Me, don’t resist one who is evil. If somebody back-hands you to your right cheek, offer the other to him, too. If somebody forces you to go with him a mile, go two. Give to the one who asks of you. Somebody takes what’s yours, don’t demand it back. And don’t refuse to lend to someone who is needy.

“You’ve heard it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemies.’ But I’m telling you to love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who persecute you. So you prove to be children of your heavenly Father; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil as well as the good. Sends His rain for the unrighteous as well as the righteous.

“If you love only those who love you, what reward have you in that? Don’t even tax-collectors do that? If you greet only your brothers, what’s unique about that? Don’t even Gentiles do the same? If you lend only to those from whom you expect repayment, what’s gracious about that? Don’t even sinners make loans to sinners, expecting to get it back?

“But you, you love your enemies. Do good; and lend, expecting nothing in return. And your reward will be significant. You will thus show yourselves to be children of the Most High. He Himself is gracious to the ungrateful and the corrupt. But you, you be merciful, as your Father is merciful. Perfect, as He Himself is perfect.

“However, don’t practice your righteousness in front of people, for their approval. If you do, you will have no reward from your heavenly Father. When you donate alms,

don't sound a trumpet ahead of you in the streets and synagogues like hypocrites do, to be acclaimed by men. Believe Me, they've just had all their reward. But you, when you give, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Your offering should be secret; and your Father, Who watches in secret, will reward you.

"When you fast, don't assume a dreary expression like hypocrites do. They screw up their face, and neglect their appearance; so people might notice they are fasting. Trust Me, they've just had all their reward. But you, when you fast, wash your face and groom your hair. So you're not noticed by men, but by your Father Who is in secret. Then, your Father, Who watches in secret, will reward you.

"When you pray, don't pray like the hypocrites. They love to stand praying on street corners and in synagogues, seeking men's attention. Believe Me, they've just had all their reward. But you, when you pray, go inside to your bedroom. When you have privacy, then pray to your Father Who is in secret. And your Father, Who watches in secret, will give it back to you.

"As you pray, don't use meaningless chanting as the Gentiles do. They presume they'll be heard by repeating their words. No, don't be like them. Your heavenly Father knows what you need even before you ask Him.

"Listen to Me, if just two of you, on earth, agree about anything you want to ask for, My heavenly Father will do it for you. And wherever there's two or three of you together, in My name, I too am right there with you.

"Guard yourselves against any sort of greed. Your life doesn't consist of your possessions, even if you have an abundance. Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal. Instead, store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where there are no moths or rust or thieves.

"I mean it, don't be anxious about your life, what you will eat and drink. Or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food? And the body more than clothes? Observe the ravens of the sky. How they neither sow and reap, nor own barns and cribs. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Well how much more valuable are you than a bird?

"And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field. They neither labor nor spin; yet even Solomon in all his splendor wasn't attired like one of these. Well, if that's how God clothes the plants of the field, which are alive today and burned tomorrow, how much more will He do for you, puny faiths?

"Which of you, by worrying, can add just one hour to his lifespan? Well since you can't even do this little thing, why worry about the rest? Don't always be so concerned about what you will eat and drink or wear. That's like the Gentile world, which continuously strives for such things. Your heavenly Father knows you need these things.

"So don't be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will tend to itself. Each day has problems enough of its own. No, you first seek His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things will be added to you as well. Fear not little flock; your Father is delighted to give you the Kingdom.

"Sell your possessions, and give to charity. Get yourselves purses which won't wear out; everlasting treasures that won't run dry. Safe from moths and rust and thieves. For wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be as well. Nobody can serve two masters. He'll hate one and love the other; or stick to one and despise the

other. You can't serve God and, at the same time, Mammon the god of wealth.

"And you, don't be judging; and you won't be judged. You, don't condemn; and you won't be condemned. You, pardon; and you will be pardoned. How do you notice a speck in your brother's eye, yet you aren't even aware of the log in your own eye? How can you tell your brother, 'Let me remove that speck from your eye', when your vision is blocked by that log in your eye?

"Hypocrite! Remove that log from your own eye first. Then you can see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

"Don't be giving what's sacred to dogs nor casting your pearls before hogs. For they might trample them under their feet; and turn and rip you to shreds.

"You, give grace; and grace will be given to you. Good measure, shaken together, tightly packed, spilling over; it will be poured into your lap. By your standard of measure, it will be measured out to you. And more will be given to you in return. You treat others just the same way you want others to treat you; this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

"But beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You can spot them by their fruits. Grapes aren't picked from thorn bushes, or figs from a briar patch. In fact, all good trees bear good fruit; bad trees bear bad fruit. And every tree not bearing good fruit is cut down and cast onto a fire. So you'll know them by their fruits.

"A good man, from the good treasure of his heart, brings out what's good. But an evil man, from his evil treasure, brings out what's evil. For his mouth speaks from what fills his heart.

"Now, how can you call Me, 'Lord, Lord', but don't do as I say? Not everyone who calls Me, 'Lord, Lord', is going to enter God's Kingdom; only those who do My heavenly Father's will. On that day, many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we, in Your name, prophesy and cast out demons and perform many miracles?' But I will declare to you, 'I never knew you. Leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

"Make every effort to enter by the narrow gate. Many will want to go in, but won't be able to. The gate is wide, and the street is broad, which leads to destruction; and many enter that gate. But the gate is small, and the street is narrow, which leads to life; and only a few find it.

"One who hears these words of Mine but doesn't act on them is like a foolish man. A foolish man who built his house on unstable soil, without any foundation. Then the rains fell, the winds blew, the floods came; and a torrent beat on that house; and it fell. And that house was totally demolished.

"But everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts on them, is like a wise man. A wise man who, building his house, dug deep and laid a foundation on solid rock. Then the winds blew and the rains fell. And yet, that house didn't fall; for it was founded on solid rock."

When Jesus had finished all His discourse in the hearing of the people, they were astonished at His method of teaching. Unlike their scribes, He was instructing them as One having authority.

After coming down from the mountain, He went into Capernaum, with a crowd following. A Roman army officer there, who heard about Jesus, sent Him a request with some Jewish elders; asking Him to come, and save his servant's life, saying,

"Lord, a servant of mine whom I highly regard is lying sick at home, immobile and in severe pain; he's about to die." When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him,

"He's worthy for You to grant him this favor; for he loves our nation. He's the one who built our synagogue for us." Jesus said,

"Of course, I will go cure him."

He was on His way with them, and almost to the house, when He received another message, which the centurion had sent by friends, saying,

"Lord, don't trouble Yourself further. I'm not worthy for You to come under my roof. Indeed, I didn't even consider myself worthy to come to You in person. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too, am a man under authority; with troops that are subordinate to me. I order this one 'Go', and he goes. And to another, 'Come', and he comes. To a servant, 'Do this', and he does it."

On hearing this, Jesus was taken aback, and marveled at him. And He turned and exclaimed to the crowd with Him,

"I'm telling you, I have yet to find such strong faith with anyone in Israel! I tell you too, many will come from east and west, and recline for dinner with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the Kingdom will be cast into utter darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Then He said for the centurion,

"Return, and say to him, 'Let it be done for you, as you have believed.'" And the servant was cured at that very moment. When those who were sent got back to the house, they found him fully recovered.

Soon after this Jesus journeyed to a city called Nain, with His disciples and a big crowd following along. He was about to the city gate when look, being carried out to be buried was a boy who had died, a widow's only son. And a sizable group from the city was with her. The Lord was touched with sympathy when He looked at her; and told her,

"Don't cry." Then He walked over and touched the casket. Those carrying it halted; and stood still. Jesus then said,

"Boy, I say to you, get up!" And the dead one sat right up; and started talking. And then was returned to his mom. At this, a fear came over them all. They were praising God, saying,

"A mighty prophet has risen among us. God has certainly turned His attention to His people." And the news about Him spread throughout Judea and all around that area.

John heard from his disciples about all these things. Since he was imprisoned, he summoned two of them; and sent these two to the Lord with a question. When these men reached Him, they said,

"John the baptizer sent us to ask, 'Are You the expected One, or do we watch for someone else?'" At that very moment Jesus was healing many of diseases, afflictions,

evil spirits; and was granting sight to many blind ones. He answered,

“Go report to John what you’ve seen and heard. The blind receive sight, cripples walk, lepers are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And happy is he who doesn’t stumble over Me.”

After John’s messengers left, Jesus spoke to the crowd about John.

“What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed shaking in the breeze? Well, what did you go out to see? A man attired in soft clothing? Look, those who are splendidly dressed and live luxuriously are found in royal palaces.

“So why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes! And I’m telling you, one who is no mere prophet. He’s the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.’ What’s more, of those born of women, there hasn’t arisen one greater than John the baptizer. Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John.

“Beginning at the time of John the baptizer, until now, the Kingdom of God is proclaimed; and the Objective is being assaulted by forceful ones, pushing their way into It. All the Prophets and the Law prophesied till John. And, if you wish to accept this, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

When the people, including the tax-collectors, heard this, they affirmed God’s justice; since they had experienced John’s baptism. But Pharisees and lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves; since they had not been baptized by him. Jesus continued,

“So, how can I describe this generation? What are they like? They’re like children sitting in market places, and calling out to other children, ‘We played a flute for you, but you didn’t dance. We sang you a dirge, but you didn’t weep.’ For John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and they said, ‘He has a demon!’ The Son of man has come both eating and drinking; and now they say, ‘Look, a glutton, a wino, a crony of sinners and tax-collectors.’ Nevertheless, Wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

Jesus then began to admonish the cities where most of His miracles had occurred, because they didn’t repent.

“Woe to you, Chorazin. Woe to you, Bethsaida. If the miracles which happened in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. I’m telling you the truth, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on judgment day than for you.

“And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to Heaven? Not so; you will be brought down to Hades. If the miracles which happened in you had been done in Sodom, it would still be here today. I mean it, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on judgment day than for you.”

At that same time though, Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, felt deep joy; and stated,

“I praise you, Father, Lord of Heaven and earth. You’ve concealed these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to babes. Yes Father, for thus it became Your approved way.

“Everything has been handed over to Me by My Father. No one fully knows the Son but the Father. Nor does anyone fully know the Father but the Son; and anybody to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who are fatigued and overloaded; I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; I am gentle and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your souls. My yoke is soft, and My load is light.”

Once, one of the Pharisees asked Him to lunch. He went into that Pharisee's house and was reclining to eat. A lady of the city, who was a sinner, having learned He was reclining there, came; and brought an alabaster coffer of perfumed oil.

She was weeping; and stood behind Him, by His feet. She began to wet His feet with her tears, and wipe them with her long hair. And kissing His feet and lathering them with the lotion. His host, the Pharisee saw it, and thought to himself,

"If He actually is the Prophet, this Man would surely know who, and what sort of woman, is touching Him; that she's a sinner." But Jesus said,

"Simon, I've something to say to you."

"Say it, Teacher."

"A certain lender, it could be anyone, had two debtors. One owed him five hundred denarii and the other owed fifty. Neither could repay him, so he freely forgave both their debts. Which of them will love him the most?" Simon said,

"I suppose, the one who was forgiven the most."

"Exactly, you're right." Then he turned toward that lady, but spoke to Simon,

"Are you watching this lady? I came into your home, and you gave Me no water to bathe My feet, She's washed My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss. She, since the moment I came in, hasn't ceased kissing My feet. You didn't anoint My head with oil; but she has anointed My feet with perfume, expressing her gratitude.

"Believe Me, her sins, though many, have been forgiven; for she loves deeply. But little is forgiven for the one who loves little." Then He said to her,

"Your sins have been forgiven."

At that, the others reclining there together started to question,

"Who is This, Who also forgives sins?" But Jesus told that lady,

"Your faith has saved you. Go your way in peace."

Soon afterwards, He was making a tour through the towns and villages, proclaiming, and preaching about, the good news of the Kingdom of God. The twelve were together with Him. Also some ladies who had been freed from evil spirits and infirmities: Mary the one called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out. And Joanna the wife of Herod's overseer, Chuza. Susanna too, and some other ladies, many of whom were supporting them from their own private means.

Once, Jesus had gone inside a house. But such a big crowd ganged around, they couldn't even eat a meal. His own family, when they heard, went to try to take control of Him. For they were saying,

"He's gone out of His mind!"

A demon-possessed man there, who was blind and mute, was brought to Him. And He cured him, so the man could speak and see. The crowd was amazed, and was beginning to wonder,

"Is this Man the Son of David?" But scribes and Pharisees, who had come down from Jerusalem, heard that; and were declaring to everyone,

"He's possessed. He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."

Jesus understood their thinking; and called them over, and told them,

"How can Satan cast out Satan? Any kingdom divided against itself cannot stand; and is laid waste. Any city, or even house, divided against itself cannot stand. So, if Satan is divided, and has rebelled against himself, how can his kingdom stand? It can't. He's finished.

“You say I cast out demons by Beelzebul. Well, if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? That’s who will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by God’s Spirit, then, for certain, the Kingdom of God has overtaken you.

“Nobody can enter a strong man’s house and raid his property unless he first binds the strong man. Then he will raid his home. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own household, his possessions are secure. But if somebody stronger than he assaults and overpowers him, he takes from him all the armor on which he relied; and shares out the spoils.

“He who is not with Me opposes Me; and he who doesn’t gather with Me, scatters.

“Listen to Me, all sins and whatever blasphemies they spout, will be forgiven the sons of men. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of man can have it forgiven. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. Either in this age or the age to come. He is guilty of an eternal sin.

“Every careless word that men utter, they will answer for on judgment day. By your words you will be justified. And by your words you will be condemned.” – because they were unyielding as to what they said about Him being demon-possessed.

While He was there speaking to those sitting around Him, His mother and brothers arrived. Unable to approach Him because of the crowd, from outside they sent word to Him, wanting to talk to Him. And someone interrupted,

“Look, Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to talk to You.” But He said to that one,

“Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?” Then He gazed around on those sitting about Him; and with His hand gestured toward His disciples, and declared,

“Look on My mother. And My brothers. For whoever will hear and do the will of God My Father, is in fact My brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus taught more that day, but out by the lake. So many had journeyed to Him from various towns. And such a large crowd was gathering that He got into a boat in the water there. He sat down, with the whole crowd standing on the beach; and taught them many things by parables.

“Listen, a planter went out to sow his seed. As he was sowing, some seed happened to fall beside the road. Those were trod under foot, and the birds of the air came and ate them. Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was thin. These sprouted quickly since they had no soil depth. But when the sun rose, they were scorched, for they had no root for moisture; and soon withered away. Still other seed fell among thorns. The thorns grew up with them and choked them out.

“But other seed fell into good soil. They grew up healthy; and increased and produced a crop, some a hundred times as much. And some sixty, some thirty.” As He was saying these things, He would call out,

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Later, in privacy, the twelve and some others near Him began to ask the meaning of the parable.

“Why do you speak to them in parables?” He said,

“To you, it’s been granted to know the mysteries of God’s Kingdom. But to them who are outside, it hasn’t. Those get everything in parables; so while seeing, they don’t see. While hearing, they don’t hear; nor comprehend.

“So I speak to them in parables. In their case Isaiah’s prophecy is being fulfilled, ‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand. You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear. And they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes. And hear with their ears, and understand with their heart; and return, and I should heal them.’

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see. And your ears, because they hear. Be assured, many prophets, kings, and righteous men wanted to see what you’re seeing, but didn’t see. And hear what you’re hearing, but didn’t hear.

“You didn’t understand that parable? So how can you understand any of them? All right, here’s the explanation of the parable of the sower:

“The planter sows the seed. The seed is the Word of God. Those, when sown, that fell beside the road are like this: When they hear the Word of the Kingdom, but don’t understand It, immediately the devil comes and consumes the Word which was sown in their heart; so they can’t believe, and be saved.

“Likewise are those sown on rocky ground: When they hear the Word, they quickly and joyfully accept It. Yet they have no deep root within themselves, but are only temporary. They believe for awhile, but in time of testing, when affliction or persecution happens due to the Word, they promptly fall away.

“Others are like those sown among thorns. They’ve heard the Word. But as they go about their business, the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of this life, the desire for other things, mix in and choke out the Word. And it brings no fruit to maturity.

“But then there are those sown in good soil. They’ve heard the Word in a good, honest heart. And they understand It. And accept It. And embrace It tightly. These, indeed, with perseverance, bear fruit. Some a hundred times as much; and some sixty, some thirty.

“No one lights a lamp, and covers it with a barrel or puts it under a bed. Isn’t it put on a lampstand to give light to everybody in the house? There’s nothing hidden that won’t be revealed. Or secret, that won’t come to light and be known. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.

“Just be careful how you listen. It will be measured out to you using your own measure. And the surplus, too, will be given to you. For to whoever has, more will be given; and he will have an overflow. But whoever does not have is going to lose even what he thinks he has.

“What can I compare the Kingdom of God to? What is It like? The Kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed on the earth. He would be sleeping and getting up, night and day; while the seed would be sprouting up, and growing taller. Just how, he doesn’t know.

“For on it’s own, the earth generates the produce. First the blade, next the stalk-head, and eventually the full grain in the head. Then, when it’s ready, the man promptly uses the sickle; for it’s harvesttime.

“The heavenly Kingdom is like a mustard seed, which a man sowed in his garden. Though it’s smaller indeed than all the other seeds in the ground there, when it’s fully grown it’s the larger of all the garden plants. It ends up being a tree; and makes large branches so ‘the birds of the air can nest in it’s shade.’

“Here’s another example of God’s Kingdom: It’s like yeast, which a lady took and

mixed thoroughly into three measures of flour, till the whole batch was leavened.

“Again, the Kingdom of the Heavens is like when a man has sown pure seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy’s men came there and sowed darnel seeds throughout the wheat; then went away. When the shoots protruded, and plants appeared, the weeds were apparent too. His farmhands came to the landowner, saying,

‘Sir, didn’t you sow pure seed in your field? So how is it having weeds?’ He answered,

‘A man who is my enemy has done this.’

‘Do you want us to go uproot them?’

‘No, no. Don’t at any time uproot the weeds. You might pull up some of the wheat along with ‘em. Just let them both grow up together, till the harvest. At harvesttime, I’ll instruct the reapers, ‘Pull the weeds up and tie ‘em in bales for burning. But collect the wheat into my storehouse.’”

With many similar parables, Jesus was speaking the Word to the crowds, as they were able to understand It. He spoke to them only by parable; to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet, ‘I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the creation.’

He bade farewell to the crowds then, and went into the house; where His disciples asked Him to interpret the parable about the darnel weeds in the fields. (When they had privacy, Jesus would explain everything to His own disciples.)

“All right, the One sowing the pure seed is the Son of man. The field is the world. The pure seed are the sons of the Kingdom. But the darnel weeds are the sons of the evil one; the enemy who sowed those is the devil.

“Harvesttime is the conclusion of the age; the harvesters are angels. And just as weeds are pulled out and set ablaze, so it will be at the conclusion of the age. The Son of man will dispatch His angels. They will pull out of His Kingdom everything that causes stumbling, and those who practice lawlessness. And cast them into a fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Then, the righteous will shine forth as the sun, in their Father’s Kingdom. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure which a man found hidden in a field. And, in his joy, re-hid it; and runs and sells as much of his own as he must to buy that field.

“Again, the Kingdom is like a merchant traveling in search of fine pearls. Having found one of exquisite value, he runs and sells as much of his as it takes to buy that pearl.

“Again, It’s like a drag-net cast into the sea, catching all kinds of species. When it’s full, it’s hauled up on the beach. Then men squat down and collect out the good into pails; and throw away the trash types.

“That’s how it will be at the conclusion of the age. Angels will go, and separate the righteous from the wicked; and throw the wicked into a blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They answered,

“Yes.” So He concluded.

“Yes! Through this, every scribe who’s learned about God’s Kingdom is like a head of a household, who pulls out of his locker things both old and new.”

That evening Jesus saw a big crowd around Him, and told His disciples,
“Let’s go to the other side of the lake.” They got into a boat and shoved off, leaving the crowd behind. They took Him just as He was; and several other boats went along with them, too.

As they were under way, a furious gale of wind came up, descending on the lake. Waves began to break over the boat, endangering it. But Jesus Himself was back in the stern, napping on a cushion. And they came aft and woke Him, crying,

“Teacher, Teacher, we’re perishing; save us.”

Being roused, He admonished the wind; and told the surging sea,
“Hush. Be still.” The wind slackened then; it became almost becalmed. And He said,

“Why are you so faint-hearted? Don’t you yet have any trust?” But they were overcome with fright and amazement, saying to each other,

“Just Who is This? He commands even the wind and sea, and they obey Him.”

Sailing on, they landed at the lake’s far side. Opposite Galilee, in the country of the Gerasenes. At once He was met by two men of the city who were demon-possessed, coming out from among some tombs. Who hadn’t worn clothes in a long time; and didn’t live in a house, but in tombs. They were so especially violent that nobody had courage enough to pass by that way.

Seeing Jesus at a distance, one screamed and ran up and fell before Him. He said loudly,

“What do we have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Have you come over here to torment us before the proper time?” Because Jesus was ordering the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

Now the demon had seized him many times. He was initially bound with shackles and couplings, and kept under guard. But he would break free of his bonds, and be driven out into the desert by the demons. No one yet had been able to keep him bound, even with chain. For he had snapped the chains, and smashed the shackles; and nobody had strength enough to subdue him.

Constantly, night and day, whether there amidst the tombs or up in the mountains, he kept screaming and slashing himself with sharp stones. Jesus was asking him,

“What’s your name?” He answered,

“My name is Legion.” (For many demons had entered him.) And they begged Him intensely not to order them out of the land, into the abyss.

A ways from them, a big herd of many pigs were feeding on a hillside. The demons began to beg Jesus more,

“If You are going to cast us out, send us to that herd of pigs; allow us to enter them.” He gave them permission, saying,

“All right, be gone.”

The unclean spirits then came out of the men; and entered the pigs. And look, the whole herd panicked. And stampeded down the steep bluffs into the lake, and drowned. Roughly two thousand of them.

The swineherds, seeing what happened, rushed to the city; where they reported this and, also, that about the demoniacs. And look, the whole city, and the surrounding countryside, came out there to see what happened. Reaching Jesus, they saw, too, the men from whom the demons had departed, sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in their right minds; the very men who had had the ‘legion’.

Those who had witnessed it described what occurred. How the demoniacs had

been cured; and how the pigs were lost. This caused a lot of apprehension among those people. Those of the region of the Gerasenes and surrounding countryside. And from fear, they implored Him to leave their area.

As Jesus was boarding to return, one who had been demon-possessed asked to go with Him. But He wouldn't let him. Instead, He sent him off, saying,

"No, you go home to your place, to your own. Report to them what all God's done for you. And how He had mercy on you."

And he went off to that city and, indeed, throughout the Decapolis, proclaiming what incredible things Jesus did for him. And everybody was astounded.

When Jesus, by boat, crossed back to the other side, a large crowd gathered to welcome Him. They had all been waiting for Him. So He remained there by the lakeshore.

While He was talking to them, look, a synagogue official, named Jairus, came up. Seeing Jesus, he fell at His feet; and started to plead earnestly for Him to come to his house,

"My only daughter, just twelve years old, is near death. But please, come lay Your hands on her; so she may recover and survive." Jesus got up and started to go with him. His disciples and a large group followed too; and was crowding Him.

Then look, a lady there, for twelve long years was afflicted with a hemorrhage. She had endured much discomfort from many physicians; and had spent all her resources. Yet was never helped by anybody; instead, she had grown worse. After hearing of Jesus, she came up behind Him by working her way through the crowd. She thought to herself,

"If only I could touch his cloak, I will get well." When she was in reach, she touched the border of His cloak; and at once her blood flow ceased. She sensed in her body that she was healed of this scourge.

Jesus, immediately aware that His power had gone out, turned around to the crowd, and inquired,

"Which of you touched My cloak?" They all denied it; and Peter said,

"Teacher, You see the throng crowding and pressing against You; and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" But Jesus said,

"Someone did touch Me; for I perceived that power had flowed out from Me."

When the lady realized that she hadn't escaped notice, she approached Him nervously. Afraid, she fell in front of Him; and confessed before everyone why she touched Him, and how she had been cured at once. Jesus told her,

"Daughter, your faith has saved you. Be healthy, and free from that affliction. And go in peace."

As He spoke this, someone from the synagogue official's house met them, and said to Jairus,

"Your daughter has died; there's no use troubling the Teacher further." But Jesus overheard that, and told Jairus,

"Don't be afraid. Just hold onto your faith; she'll be saved."

When He arrived at the synagogue official's home, He stopped everyone from going inside with Him except Peter, James, and James' brother John. And, of course, the girl's father and mother. He could see a commotion going on inside; people lamenting over her and wailing loudly. Going on in, He told them,

"Stop it! Why all this weeping and disorder? Get out of here. The child hasn't died; she's asleep."

They began to laugh at Him, knowing she had died. But He put that mob out; and, with her parents and His own companions, went into her bedroom. Taking her hand, He called to her,

“Tali, tha kumi.” (Which translated, means: “Little girl, I say to you, get up.”) At once, her spirit returned. She got up and was walking. And Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

Her parents were simply overwhelmed. But Jesus ordered them repeatedly that no one should learn of this. But the news of this incident got out into all that region.

Passing on from there, He was being followed by two blind men, who cried out, “Son of David, have mercy on us.” As soon as He came into the house, they came to Him. He asked them,

“Do you believe that I can do this?” They answered,

“Yes, Lord.” He touched their eyes, and said,

“According to your faith, let it happen for you.” And their eyes were opened. Jesus strictly ordered,

“See that you let no one learn of this.” But they broadcast it as soon as they left; and this story about Him spread throughout that whole region.

Even as those two were leaving, look, a deaf-mute who was demon-possessed was brought to Him. The demon was cast out; and the deaf-mute began to talk. And the crowd marveled, saying,

“Never in Israel has anything like this appeared.” But the Pharisees kept insisting, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

On leaving there, He went to the place where He grew up, Nazareth, His disciples with Him. And came the Sabbath, He went into their synagogue and began to teach. The many who were hearing Him were amazed.

“Where did He get these things? What’s the source of this wisdom which is given to Him? How have such incredible deeds happened through His hands?”

“Isn’t This the carpenter, Mary’s son? The brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And His sisters, aren’t they all here with us?” They were starting to stumble because of Him. Jesus told them,

“Of course a prophet is honored; but not in his own hometown. Or by his own kinsmen, or in his own household.”

Because of their unbelief, He could do almost no miracles there. Except He did lay His hands on several sickly ones, curing them. But He could hardly believe their lack of trust.

Then He made a tour of all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom. And curing all kinds of disease and infirmity. Observing the crowds, He felt compassion for them. They were like sheep without a shepherd, being sheared and jerked around. He said to His disciples,

“Yes, the harvest is plentiful, but the reapers are few. So beg the Lord of the harvest to put laborers into His harvest.”

Jesus, now, summoned His twelve disciples to Himself; and gave them power and authority over demon spirits, to be casting them out. And to be healing every disease and sickness. And He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. These were His instructions to them:

“Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. You be as crafty as snakes, and as harmless as doves. You are not to go into Gentile areas, nor into any Samaritan town. Go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go about, proclaim this, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven has drawn near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You got it free; you give it free.

“Don’t take bread with you. Nor gold, silver, or copper for your money belts. Carry no travel bag with you. No extra inner wear. No extra sandals. Take only one staff. For a worker is deserving of his upkeep.

“In whichever town or village you visit, inquire as to who is worthy; and stay there till you leave. Don’t be moving about from house to house. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they place before you.

“When you first enter that house, give it your blessing. Say, ‘Peace be upon this household.’ If that house proves to be unworthy, take back your greeting of peace. Any place that doesn’t accept you or heed your words, leave that house; leave that town. As you leave, tell them, ‘You be assured, the Kingdom of God did come close to you.’ Then shake off from your feet even the clinging dust of that town, as an expression of the charge against them. I mean it, on judgment day, it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

“No student ranks over the teacher, nor a servant over his lord. It’s quite sufficient for a student to become like his teacher; and a servant like his lord. And everyone, after being fully trained, will actually be like his teacher. Yes, if the lord of the house is called ‘Beelzebul’, how much more the others living there too?

“Anyone who accepts you, accepts Me; and anyone who accepts Me, accepts Him Who sent Me. Whoever accepts a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward. And whoever accepts a righteous man in a righteous man’s name will receive a righteous man’s reward. And anyone who, in a disciple’s name, gives any of these little ones even a cup of water to drink – trust Me, he won’t lose his reward.”

After Jesus gave these instructions, He left from there to preach and teach in their cities. His disciples, in pairs, departed from there too; and went about the villages, preaching the Gospel and that men should repent. They were casting out demons and anointing with oil many sick ones, and healing them everywhere.

About that time, Herod the king (actually, a tetrarch) heard of Jesus’ fame and all that was happening; for His name had become well known. Herod was perplexed, for it was said by some,

“This is John the baptizer risen from the dead. That’s why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.” But others were saying that Elijah has appeared. Still others, that one of the prophets of history has risen again. When Herod heard these things, he said,

“I myself had John beheaded; but Who is this Man about Whom I hear such things?” And he kept wanting to see Him.

Previously, Herod had arrested John; and bound and imprisoned him over Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John had told Herod,

"It's unlawful for you to have your brother's woman," because Herod had married her.

Herodias, embarrassed and vengeful, wanted John dead; but couldn't arrange it. Herod, too, wanted to kill him; but feared the possible reaction of the people, since they held John to be a prophet. Moreover, Herod knew him to be a holy, righteous man; so kept him safely. Having heard many things from John, Herod was puzzled; but he did enjoy listening to him.

An opportunity did arise, though, when, as part of his birthday celebration, Herod gave a banquet. Invited were his top-ranking officials, military commanders, and the leading citizens of Galilee. Herodias' own daughter came in and performed a dance in front of them, giving much pleasure to Herod and those reclining there with him. After her dance, the king vowed to her,

"Young lady, ask me whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." He further swore,

"Even if you ask for up to half of my kingdom, I'll give it to you." She went out, and ran to her mother, to ask,

"What should I ask for?" Herodias told her,

"The head of John the baptizer." The girl rushed right back to the king, and made her request,

"I wish for you to give me, right now, here on a platter, the head of John the baptizer."

This saddened the king. But he had sworn an oath to her; and didn't want to renege before all his guests who were witnessing this. So he promptly sent a bodyguard, with orders to bring back his head. That one went, and beheaded John in the prison. And brought it, on a platter, and gave it to the girl. And she gave it to her mother.

John's disciples, learning of it, came and took the body; and laid it in a sepulcher. Then came and reported all this to Jesus.

Also then, the apostles had returned and re-joined Jesus; and related to Him what they had done and taught. He told them,

"Come away by yourselves for awhile. To an isolated place for some privacy; and rest up." (For so many were coming, and so many going, that they had no leisure time, even to eat.)

They left, by boat, bound for an isolated spot near Bethsaida. But many recognized them, and saw them shove off. So, as they were under way, lots of people were running on ahead, on foot, to meet them there. Some from the crowd knew where that place was.

On landing, and coming ashore, He was confronted by a large crowd. But He welcomed them warmly; for He felt compassion for them. They seemed so like sheep without a shepherd. He healed those who were sick; and taught all much about the Kingdom of God.

That evening, as the day began to wane, the twelve approached, and said,

"It's getting late, and this place is practically deserted. Dismiss the crowd so they can go to the farms and villages around here; and maybe, find lodging and buy themselves something to eat." But Jesus told them,

“They need not leave; you give them something to eat.” One of them said,

“We would have to go purchase about two hundred denarii worth of bread to give all these something to eat.” Then Jesus asked Philip,

“What do you think? Where could we buy that much bread to feed all these?” (He was asking this to test Philip, for He Himself knew what He was about to do.) Philip answered,

“Two hundred denarii wouldn’t buy enough, even for each person to have just a little.” Jesus said,

“How many loaves do you have now? Go see.” When they found out, another disciple, Peter’s brother Andrew reported,

“There’s a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what’s that for so many?” Jesus said,

“Bring that here to Me.”

Now there was much green grass there; and Jesus had the crowd sit down, in groups of about fifty each. The people reclined on the green grass, in rows of anywhere from fifty to a hundred.

Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish; and, looking to Heaven, gave thanks. Then He broke the loaves; and He kept on passing portions to the disciples. Likewise of the fish. And the disciples kept on distributing portions to the crowds, as much as anybody wanted. They all ate as much as they pleased; and, after everyone was satisfied, He told His disciples,

“Now collect the leftover fragments so nothing is wasted”

So they gathered up the fragments from those who had shared in the meal of the five barley loaves and the two fish. They filled twelve baskets with these leftovers.

There were about five thousand men, not counting women and children, who had eaten their fill.

Those men, having witnessed Him demonstrate such a miraculous sign, declared, “Surely, This is that Prophet, the One Who was to come into the world.”

But Jesus sensed that they were starting to think about taking Him by force, to compel Him to become a king. So He promptly sent His disciples off, to get aboard the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side. He stayed just long enough to bade farewell to the crowds; then He went back up the mountain, by Himself, to pray.

After dark He was still up there alone. For that evening, His disciples had gone down to the lake, got into the boat, and shoved off; to cross the lake to Capernaum. But a strong wind blew up, causing lots of turbulence on the surface; and the boat was out on the lake, many stadia from shore. It was very dark now; and they were being hassled by the waves; struggling to make way, for strong seas were against them. Jesus, still ashore, hadn’t come to them yet; but He could see them, straining at the oars.

By the night’s fourth watch, they still had rowed only about twenty-five to thirty stadia. Then Jesus came toward them, walking on the surface of the water. Yet He intended to pass them by. They were terrified, seeing Him walking on the lake and coming close by the boat; and exclaimed,

“It’s a ghost.” Immediately, Jesus said,

“Take courage, It’s Me. Don’t be afraid.” Then Peter spoke,

“Lord, if It is You, order me to come to You upon the water.” Jesus said,

“Come on.”

Peter stepped off the boat and walked toward Jesus on the water. But, watching

the wind, he became frightened and started to sink; and cried,

“Lord, rescue me!” Quickly Jesus reached and caught hold of him; and said,

“Puny faith, what caused you to doubt?”

At this, they were reassured; and were willing to accept Him aboard. Too, the winds abated when He and Peter stepped into the boat. Those in the boat were simply dumbfounded; for their dull minds hadn't grasped the significance of the incident of the loaves. But they praised Him, saying,

“Absolutely, You are God's Son.”

Very soon, having crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret; where they were trying to go. And they dropped anchor nearby.

He was recognized as soon as they left the boat. The men of that place promptly sent runners throughout that whole region; with word to bring to Him, carried on their pallets, all who were ill. Wherever they heard He was, and wherever He was going along, in villages or towns or out in rural areas, they were laying sick ones in the streets. They were pleading to just touch the border of His cloak; and, as many as could do so recovered.

Later, some Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came. And they, having noticed some of His disciples eating bread with defiled (meaning: unwashed) hands, asked,

“By what do Your disciples disregard the traditions of the men of old? For they eat their bread with defiled hands.”

The Pharisees, like all the Jews, simply don't eat until they have washed their hands up to their forearms; thus observing the traditions from the men of history. Back from the market, they don't eat unless they first shower off. And there are many other customs which they have accepted to be observed, such as baptizing of cups and pitcher, and copper basins. Jesus answered,

“Hypocrites! Isaiah rightly prophesied about you, as it's written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

“For you yourselves disregard a commandment of God in order to keep a man-made tradition. God, through Moses, said, ‘Honor your father and mother’, and ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘If anyone says to his father or mother – ‘Anything of mine which might have helped you is under Korban (meaning: given to God.)’ – from then, you stop him from doing anything for his parents. Thus, you void the Word of God for the sake of your handed-down tradition. And you're doing many things like that.”

He called the crowd back to Himself; and told them,

“Listen to Me, all of you. And understand. There is nothing outside of a man which, going into his mouth, can defile him. No, it's what comes out of his mouth that defiles a man.”

In the house, after He left the crowd, His disciples said,

“Do you know those Pharisees, when they heard what You said, were insulted?” Jesus answered,

“Each plant My heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted. Ignore them. They're blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, they'll both fall into a ditch.” Peter asked,

“Make that parable plain to us.” Jesus said,

“You don’t understand either? Aren’t you aware that nothing going into a man’s mouth from outside can defile him? For it doesn’t go into his heart, but into his belly. And passes on out, and ends up in the sewer.” (Here, He declared all food clean.) He went on,

“No, it’s what proceeds out of a man’s mouth that defiles him. From within, out of a man’s heart, come destructive ideas: murder, adultery, fornication, thievery, slander, false witness, covetousness, evil deeds, pride, deceit, implacability, and foolishness. From inside a man, these evil things proceed out; that’s what defiles him.

“But to eat with unwashed hands doesn’t defile a man.”

Jesus left that place, and journeyed to the region of Tyre and Sidon; and He was staying at a certain house there. He had wanted that nobody should know of it; but it proved impossible to escape notice.

There was a Greek lady from that region that had a little daughter who was demon-possessed. As soon as the mother heard about Him, she rushed there and fell at His feet, begging Him to cast out the unclean spirit, crying,

“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is terribly demonized.” (Now the lady was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician.) He answered her not one word. His disciples came over asking Him,

“Could You send her away? She keeps after us, crying out.” Then Jesus spoke,

“I’ve been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she kept bowing and pleading,

“Lord, help me.” Then He said to her,

“The children have to be filled first. It’s not right to take the children’s bread, and toss it to dogs.”

“True, Lord; but little dogs are underneath, eating crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” At this Jesus exclaimed,

“O Madam, you show great faith by this statement. You have what you want. The demon has left your daughter, just as you wished.”

From that moment, her daughter was cured. When she reached home, she found her child free of the demon, and lying on a bed.

On leaving the region of Tyre, Jesus took a circular route, through Sidon, back to the Sea of Galilee, and on to Decapolis. There, a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment was brought to Him.

They were asking Him to put His hand on him. Jesus pulled him away from the crowd to a private spot. He spit; and touched this man’s tongue with His own saliva. Then He stuck His fingers into the man’s ears. Looking toward Heaven, He sighed deeply, and said,

“Eph pha tha.” (means: “Be opened clear through.”) And his hearing was given. What bound his tongue was broken; and he spoke normally. Jesus ordered them not to say anything about it to anyone. But the more He ordered them, the much more likely they were to be telling of it. They were just astounded, saying,

“He’s done everything good. Even enables the deaf to hear, and the speech-impaired to be talking normally.”

Large crowds were coming to Him; bringing the handicapped, the injured, the blind, the mute ones, and those with other afflictions. They were dropping them at His feet; and He healed them. People felt awe at watching mute ones suddenly talking, lame ones walking, and the blind now seeing. Gratefully, they praised Israel’s God.

Also around that time, a large crowd was with Him, and had nothing to eat. So Jesus motioned for His disciples, and said,

“I feel sorry for this crowd. They’ve already stayed with Me three days; now they’ve nothing to eat. I don’t want to send them home hungry. Some of them live far away; and, at any time, might give out on the way.” The disciples asked,

“Where around here in this lonely place could we find enough loaves to feed a crowd this big?”

“How many loaves do you have now?” They answered,

“Seven.”

He had the people sit back on the ground. Then He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks; and passed them to the disciples to distribute. And the disciples served them to the people. They had a few small fish, too. Jesus gave thanks for these and said,

“Serve these also.”

They all ate then, and were satisfied. And seven baskets full of leftover fragments were picked up. About four thousand men, not counting women and children, had eaten. Then He dismissed them.

Without delay, He and His disciples went by boat to Dalmanutha, in the area of Magadan. Here, some Pharisees and Sadducees began to confront Him. To test Him, they asked Him to show them a sign from Heaven. Jesus groaned audibly in His spirit; and told them,

“At evening, when you see a bright red sky, you say it will be fair weather. When you see bright red in the morning, but the sky is gloomily overcast, you say it will be cold and dreary. Do you know how to predict the weather by the signs in the sky; but the signs of the appointed times you cannot?”

“Why does this generation look for a sign? I’ll tell you why. A generation looking for a sign is an evil and adulterous generation. There’s not one going to be given to this one except the sign of Jonah.”

He got back on board then, leaving them behind; and crossed over to the far shore. They forgot to bring some loaves; having, in the boat, maybe one loaf between them. Jesus had given them an order, saying,

“Stay alert. Guard yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

And they were discussing with each other that it was because they brought no bread. But He knew that; and said to them,

“Puny faiths! Don’t you see yet? Or yet understand? Have your hearts become so dull? With eyes, you still can’t see; with ears, you still can’t hear. Don’t you remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments you picked up?” They answered, “Twelve.”

“And the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments you picked up?”

“Seven.”

“Don’t you grasp it yet? I wasn’t speaking about literal bread; but that you should shun the admixture of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

This happened in Bethsaida: A blind man was brought to Him; and some were requesting Him to touch him. So Jesus took his hand, and led him to a spot outside the village. Then He spit on his eyelids; and, laying His hands on him, asked,

“Can you see anything yet?” Looking up, he answered,

“I do see what seems to be trees; but I know it’s people, for they’re walking about.”

So Jesus touched his eyes again. And he looked intently, and his sight was fully restored; he could see everything distinctly. Then Jesus sent him home, saying,

“Don’t even go through the village.”

Jesus and His disciples went on a tour through the villages around the city of Caesaria Philippi. Along the way, while He was praying in a secluded place, He asked His disciples,

“The Son of man, whom do people say that He is?” They answered,

“Some say, ‘He’s actually John the baptizer.’ And others, ‘Elijah.’ Still others say that Jeremiah or one of the prophets of history has risen.”

“You though, whom do you say that I am?” Simon Peter spoke up,

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!” Then Jesus said,

“Happy are you Simon bar Jona. Flesh and blood didn’t reveal this to you, but My heavenly Father. “I declare to you, too, that you are Peter; and upon this bedrock I will build My church. And the very gates of Hell will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven. And whatever you loose on earth will be what’s loosed from Heaven.”

But He sternly warned the disciples not to say anything to anyone about Him being the Christ.

From then on Jesus Christ began to disclose to His disciples that the Son of man must go to Jerusalem eventually; and, there, be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes. To suffer many things from them; and to be killed. And, on the third day, be raised up. He was stating this unequivocally. Peter took Him aside and started to argue with Him, saying,

“Favor Yourself, Lord; never should this happen to You.” But Jesus noticed His disciples watching; and turned back to Peter, and rebuked him.

“Get far behind Me, Satan; you’re a stumbling block to Me! You’re not considering the things of God, but the things of men.”

Then He motioned for the crowd to join the disciples; and He told them all,

“If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself. He must pick up his cross each day, and follow Me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake, and the Gospel’s, will find it. What’s the advantage for a man to gain even the whole world, yet forfeit his damaged soul. Just what would a man trade his soul for?

“Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this sinful and adulterous generation, the Son of man will be ashamed of him, too, when He comes in His glory, and that of the Father and the holy angels. For the Son of man is due to come, with His angels, in His Father’s glory. He will then repay each one according to his deeds.

“What’s more, there are some of you standing here now who won’t taste death before they glimpse God’s Kingdom after It has come with power.”

About a week after issuing these statements, Jesus took along only Peter, and James and his brother John, and led them up to a secluded spot on a lofty mountain; to pray.

While praying, He was transfigured, right in front of them. His face shown like the sun. His clothes became brilliantly white; much whiter than any launderer on earth could achieve.

Then look, they saw two men, Moses and Elijah. Who, having appeared in glorious forms, were talking with Jesus about His departure which would soon be fulfilled in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had become very drowsy. But now, fully awake, they witnessed His splendor; and that of the two standing there with Him. The two then disappeared from Jesus; and Peter blurted out,

“Teacher, it’s fortunate we’re here! If You wish, let’s establish three tabernacles here; one each for You, Moses, and Elijah.” They were upset, and he didn’t know what to say. Yet even as he spoke, they were engulfed by a bright cloud. And a Voice came from the cloud,

“This is My beloved Son, the chosen One, in Whom I delight. You listen to Him.”

They were already frightened by the cloud enveloping them; and, on hearing this, fell on their faces. But Jesus came over and touched them, saying,

“Get up; don’t be afraid.” And looking around, they saw no one at all; but that He was suddenly alone.

As they were coming down off the mountain, He gave them orders,

“Don’t talk to anyone about the vision you’ve witnessed, until after the Son of man has risen from the dead.”

They took and kept that statement; but among just each other, they discussed what ‘risen from the dead’ meant. And they asked Him,

“So how do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus answered,

“Yes, Elijah does come first; and is restoring all things. But, I’m telling you, Elijah has already come; and wasn’t recognized. They did to him whatever they wanted to, just as it was written of him.

“And how is it written of the Son of man; that He is destined to suffer many things at their hands, and be scorned as contemptible?”

The disciples caught on then that He was referring to John the baptizer. But kept quiet about it; saying nothing to anyone in those days about what they had witnessed.

They came down off the mountain the following day. And, going to re-join the other disciples, they could see a crowd around them; and some scribes contending with them. The crowd, surprised at seeing Him, ran at once to welcome Him. And Jesus asked,

“What were you discussing with them?” Just then a man called out from the crowd,

“Teacher, have mercy on my son!” He came forward, and knelt before Him, pleading,

“Lord, I have brought You my son, my only child; and I beg You to look at him. He’s afflicted with epilepsy, and possessed by a mute spirit. Whenever it attacks him, he suddenly screams; and is paralyzed. Then it throws him to the ground, racking him with convulsions and gnashing of his teeth and foaming at the mouth. It hardly ever leaves him; and is injuring him. I brought him to Your disciples, and pled for them to cast it out; but they weren’t able to.” Jesus, vexed, said,

“O hard-headed, faithless generation! How long will I be with you? How much longer do I have to put up with you? All right, bring your son here to Me.”

Even as they were approaching Jesus, bringing the lad, the demon saw Him; and immediately threw him to the ground in spasms, thrashing about and foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father,

“How long has this been happening to him?”

“Since childhood. Lots of times it throws him onto a fire, and sometimes into water; trying to destroy him. Have mercy, and give us help if there’s something You can do.”

Jesus exclaimed,

“If there’s something I can do! Everything is possible to one who believes.” The boy’s father cried out,

“Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief.” Jesus noticed more of the crowd rushing up; so He quickly rebuked the unclean spirit.

“You deaf-mute spirit, I order you to come out of him. Furthermore, never enter him again.” The demon screamed, and caused him a seizure; and then came out. And he became so limp and lifeless that some remarked,

“He’s died.” But Jesus took his hand and lifted him; the lad stood up, cured at once. And Jesus returned him to his dad. Everyone watching was astounded at the magnitude of God’s power.

After Jesus went into the house, His disciples came to Him in privacy, asking,

“Why weren’t we able to expel it?”

“Because of your tiny faith. Believe Me, if you have faith only the size of a mustard seed, you could tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it would move. Nothing would be impossible for you.

They left that place and continued on through Galilee. Everyone was amazed at all He was doing. After they all came together in Galilee, Jesus wasn’t wanting it publicly known; for He was training His disciples only. He told them,

“Let these words sink into your ears. The Son of man is about to be given over to the hands of men; and they will kill Him.” They were saddened; but He went on,

“After being killed, He will be raised up on the third day.”

They didn’t know about this prophecy. It was concealed from them, keeping them from understanding it. And they were afraid to inquire further of Him about this remark.

When they got to Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter, saying,

“Doesn’t your Teacher pay the two-drachma?” Peter said,

“Yes.” Then he came into the house; but Jesus anticipated his query, and asked him instead,

“What do you think, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they collect customs or head-taxes? From their sons, or from strangers?” Peter answered,

“From strangers.” Jesus said,

“In that case, the sons are exempt. But, so we don’t offend them, go down to the lake and cast in a hook. The first fish you pull up, open and look into it’s mouth. You’ll find a stater in it. Take and give it to them, for Me and you.”

There too, after all the twelve had come inside, He motioned them over; and began to inquire,

“What were you talking about on the way here to Capernaum?”

But they kept silent. For they had been arguing among themselves over which of them might rank higher in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus knew why they were thinking like this in their hearts, and said,

“Just who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? If anyone wishes to be first, he must be last of all; and a servant to all.” Then He sat down and called a little boy to His side. And He stood this child in front of them; and said,

“For sure, unless you turn around and become like children, you’ll never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” He put His arms around the little boy, and went on.

“Whoever will humble himself, as this child is, is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever accepts one child like this one in My name, accepts Me. And whoever accepts Me, is not accepting Me, but the One Who sent Me.

“Whoever is the least among you, that one is the greatest.”

Then John told Him,

“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name. And we interrupted him since he wasn’t one of us.” But Jesus said,

“Don’t interfere with him. There’s no one who performs a miracle in the power of My name, who could soon thereafter criticize Me. Whoever is not opposing us is on our side. Trust Me, even whoever might get you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, will absolutely not lose his reward.

“Woe to this world because of it’s stumbling blocks. Things coming that cause stumbling are unavoidable; but woe to him through whom they come. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have an ass’s millstone hung around his neck, and he be cast into and sunk in the depths of the sea.

“See that you never despise one of these little ones. I am telling you, their heavenly angels are always watching the face of My heavenly Father. It’s not My Father’s will for even one of these little ones to perish.”

“Handle things among yourselves. When a brother sins, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. Even if he sins against you seven times a day, if he comes back saying ‘I repent’, you must forgive him.

“Whenever a brother sins, show him his error privately, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you’ve won over your brother. But if not, take along one or two others, so ‘every fact may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

“If he won’t heed them, tell it to the group. But if he won’t listen even to the group, treat him just as you would any Gentile or tax-collector. Believe Me, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven; whatever you loose on earth will be what’s loosed from Heaven.” Then Peter asked,

“Lord, how many times must I forgive a brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

“No, not just seven. But up to seventy-seven times. This fact can be illustrated by this example of the Kingdom of Heaven: A king wanted to resolve the accounts of his slaves. As he began to, a slave owing him ten thousand talents was brought forward. Since this man was unable to pay up, his lord ordered him, his wife and children, and all he had to be sold; and re-payment be made. That slave fell to his knees begging,

‘Be patient with me; I’ll repay everything.’ Moved by pity, his lord wrote off and forgave his debt. But that one went out and found a fellow-slave who owed him one hundred denarii. And he grabbed him by the neck, demanding,

‘Pay back what you owe me.’ His fellow-slave fell to his knees pleading,

‘Be patient with me; I’ll repay everything.’ He refused though and had him thrown in jail till he could pay up. The other slaves, seeing this, became very upset; and told their lord about it. His lord summoned him then, and said,

‘You wicked slave! I forgave you your huge debt because you begged me to.

Shouldn't you, in turn, have mercy on your fellow-slave, just as I had mercy on you?' And, moved to anger, his lord handed him over to the jailers till he paid back all that he owed.

"That's how My heavenly Father will deal with any of you who refuses to forgive your brother from your heart."

As the time grew near for His predicted ascension, Jesus set His face determinedly to head for Jerusalem. And He assigned seventy others to go as forerunners, in pairs, on ahead to every town and place He planned to visit, to prepare for Him. He told them, **“Yes, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Beg the boss of the harvest to send more laborers into his harvest.”**

On His way He passed through Galilee and Samaria, and they came to a Samaritan village. But the villagers wouldn't receive Him since He was adamant about going on to Jerusalem.

Seeing this, His disciples James and John said,

“Lord, should we call down fire from Heaven to destroy them?” But He turned and reproached them. So they went on to another village.

On the road a scribe came alongside, and declared,

“Teacher, I'll follow You wherever You go.” Jesus told him,

“Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.” He told another disciple,

“Follow Me.” And that one said,

“I will Lord; first let me go bury my father.” Jesus answered,

“Let the dead bury the dead. But you, you go proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God.” Another said,

“I'll follow You, Lord. First let me say goodbye to those at home.” Jesus said,

“No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for God's Kingdom.”

Coming into a village, ten lepers met Him. But they stood at a distance, and called loudly,

“Jesus, Teacher, have mercy on us.” He saw them over there, and told them,

“Go show yourselves to priests.”

As soon as they started off, their cleansing occurred. One, seeing he was cured, turned back, praising God. He fell at Jesus' feet, joyfully thanking Him. Incidentally, he was a Samaritan. Jesus remarked,

“Weren't ten cleansed? Where's the other nine? Did none of them turn back to thank God, but this man of another nation?” Then He told him,

“Get up, you can go. Your trust has saved you.”

Then the seventy re-joined Him, elated; and saying,

“Lord, in Your name even the demons are subject to us.” At that Jesus said,

“Already I see Satan starting to fall, like lightning from the sky. Look, I've given you authority to trample snakes and scorpions, and even the enemy's strength, underfoot. And there's no way anything can hurt you.

“But don't be rejoicing that spirits are subject to you. Rejoice, instead, that your names are recorded in Heaven.”

On their way, Jesus stopped at a village where a lady named Martha welcomed Him as a guest into her home. And her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to Him. But Martha was distracted, as she was making all the preparations. Finally she asked,

“Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me alone to tend to everything? Tell her to help me.” He answered,

“Martha, Martha, you’re anxious and upset by lots of things. Just a few things are necessary, actually only one. Mary has chosen the more important, which won’t ever be taken from her.”

And look, an expert in the Law rose; and to test Him, inquired,

“Teacher, what do I do to inherit everlasting life?” And Jesus said,

“What’s written in the Law? How are you reading It?” And that one answered,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. And your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus responded,

“You’ve answered correctly. Do this, and you will live.” But the man wanted assurance of his righteousness; and asked,

“Who, actually, is my neighbor?” Jesus said,

“A man going from Jerusalem to Jericho was ambushed by robbers, who battered and stripped him; and took off, leaving him half-dead. By chance, a priest happened to be going down that same road; but, on seeing him, passed by on the opposite side. So too, a Levite, coming upon the place and seeing him, went by on the opposite side.

“But a certain Samaritan, traveling that road and seeing him, was moved with compassion. Going to him at once, he cleansed his wounds with wine and oil, and bandaged them. He mounted him on his own animal; and then took him to an inn, and cared for him. The next day he gave the innkeeper two denarii, requesting,

‘Take care of him. When I come back this way, I’ll repay you for any additional expense.’ In your opinion, which of the three was ‘neighbor’ to the man ambushed by robbers?” And he answered,

“Obviously, the one who acted mercifully.” Then Jesus explained,

“That’s right. As you go on in life, do likewise.”

As He was talking, a lady from the crowd shouted loudly,

“Happy the womb that carried You; and the breasts You sucked.” He said,

“Happiness is for those who hear, and practice, the Word of God.”

Jesus told them, too,

“An evil spirit, on coming out of somebody, wanders through arid areas looking for a resting place. Finding none, it says, ‘I’m going back to that house I left.’

“On arriving, it finds it swept clean, and orderly. And wanting company, it takes along seven other spirits, even more evil than itself. They all get inside, and live there; and the last condition of that person is much worse than at first.”

The crowds were growing larger now; and He began to tell them,

“This generation is a wicked one; it’s watching for a sign. Yet no sign will be given, but the sign of Jonah. Like Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, the Son of man will likewise be to this generation.

“The citizens of Ninevah will rise at the judgment with this generation; and will condemn it. For they repented when Jonah preached; but look, Something more than Jonah is here now.

“The queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation; and will condemn it. For she came from the end of the earth to hear Solomon’s wisdom; but look, Something more than Solomon is here now.

“Seeing a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘We’ll get rain’, and so it happens. Any day the wind is from the south, you say, ‘We’ll have a hot one’, and so it is. Hypocrites! You know by just glancing at the signs of earth and sky. Why is it you can’t discern this present time?”

When He finished speaking, a Pharisee asked Him to lunch and Jesus went in and reclined with him. Now, the host was surprised that He didn’t wash His hands before eating. Jesus told him,

“Yes, you Pharisees cleanse the outside of cup and platter; but inside you’re full of avarice and wickedness. Half-wits! Didn’t He Who made the outside make the inside too? So give charitably from inside yourself; and look, everything about you would be cleansed.” Then He left.

After that the Pharisees and scribes began to be especially critical. And to question him closely on many points; lying in wait, hoping to catch Him in something He said.

Some Pharisees asked Him when the Kingdom of God was coming. He replied, “The Kingdom of God doesn’t come with spectacular scenes. Nor will folks be saying,

‘See, here!’ or, ‘There!’ For look, the Kingdom of God is in your midst.

“Watch out for the Pharisees’ leaven; it’s hypocrisy. But there’s nothing hidden that won’t be uncovered. Or secrets that won’t become known. What you’ve whispered in parlors will be broadcast from housetops.

“Hear this too, My friends: Don’t fear those who kill the body. After that, there’s nothing more they can do. No, I’ll warn you Whom to fear. Fear Him Who, after killing, can toss you into Gehenna. I’m telling you, that’s the One to fear.

“Aren’t five sparrows worth only two assarii? Yet not even one of them goes forgotten in God’s eyes. In fact, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t worry, you’re worth more than lots of sparrows.

“Believe Me, the Son of man will acknowledge before My heavenly Father and the angels all who acknowledge Me before men. But whoever denies Me before men will likewise be denied.”

Someone in the crowd said,

“Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me.” Jesus said,

“Man, who appointed Me judge or referee for you people? You all need to watch for, and keep fenced out, any sort of greed. Your lives don’t consist of just an accumulation of possessions. Let Me illustrate:

“The fields of a rich man were highly productive. And he wondered,

‘What shall I do? I don’t have space to store my crops.’ Then he thought,

‘Here’s what I’ll do; I’ll tear down my old barns and build bigger ones, I’ll gather all my grain and goods into those; and then tell my soul, ‘Soul, you’ve stored goods enough to last many years. Now, take it easy; eat, drink, enjoy yourself.’

“But God told him, ‘Half-wit! This very night your soul is taken back from you. Now who will use everything you’ve accumulated?’ That’s what it’s like for a man who saves up treasure for himself, but isn’t rich toward God.

“I’ve come to cast a fire on the earth; My only wish is that it’s already ignited. But I do have a baptism to undergo; and how anxious I am till it’s accomplished.

“You think I came to establish peace on earth? Not so. But rather division. Believe Me, a man’s foes will be those of his own household. From now on there’ll be five in the same home divided. Three against two, and two against three. They’ll be divided: a father against son, and son against father. A mother against her daughter, and daughter against her mother. Mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law. A young wife opposing her mother-in-law.”

Also then, someone there told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate blended with that of their sacrifices. Jesus replied,

“Do you think those Galileans were the worst sinners of Galilee, since they suffered that? You think those eighteen at Siloam, killed when that tower collapsed, were the worst of who lives in Jerusalem? Not so! Trust Me, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Let me illustrate:

“A man came to a fig tree in his garden, looking for fruit on it. Finding none, he told his gardener,

‘Three years now I’ve waited for fruit from it, and been disappointed. Chop it down. It’s just taking up good ground.’ But his gardener said,

‘Sir, let it be this year, too. I’ll dig around it and apply some manure. If it then bears fruit, fine. If not, cut it down.’”

He was teaching on a Sabbath in a synagogue; and look, a lady with an infirmity for eighteen years was there. She was bent almost double, unable to straighten up. Jesus addressed her as soon as He saw her,

“Madam, you’re free from your affliction.” He laid His hands on her and, at once, she straightened up and began to praise God. The synagogue official became indignant because Jesus healed on a Sabbath; and told everyone,

“Hey, there are six days for work to be done. Come on any one of those and be healed, not on a Sabbath.” But the Lord said,

“Hypocrites! Don’t each of you on any given Sabbath free his ox or ass from the stall; and lead it out to water? And this lady, a daughter of Abraham, who’s been tied up by Satan for eighteen long years, shouldn’t she be freed on a Sabbath, or any other day?”

His critics were shamed by this statement. But the crowd was delighted by every marvelous thing He did.

He pushed on, from city to city and village to village; teaching as He headed for Jerusalem. Someplace, somebody asked,

“Lord, are only a few being saved?” Jesus answered,

“Struggle hard to get in through the narrow door. Many will try to enter, yet won’t be able to. Once the master of the house gets up and locks the door, many standing outside will start to knock, and say,

‘Lord, open for us.’ But he’ll answer,

‘I don’t know where you’re from.’ They’ll say,

‘We dined where you did; you taught in our boulevards.’ But he’ll repeat,

‘I don’t know where you’re from’, and say,

‘Get away from me, all you evildoers.’ And there’ll be weeping and gnashing of teeth as they watch Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets there in God’s

Kingdom; but the sons of the Kingdom cast outside in the dark.

"I'm telling you, many will come from east and west, north and south; and recline to dine in God's Kingdom. And look, some last ones will be first; and some first ones, last."

One Sabbath, He went to dine in a prominent Pharisee's home. He was being watched closely; and look, there in front of Him was a man with dropsy. Jesus responded by asking the Pharisees and lawyers there,

"Is it lawful to heal on a Sabbath, or not?" But nobody said anything. Then He grabbed the man and cured him; and sent him on. And said,

"Which of you, having a child or an ox fall into a well, won't immediately pull him out, even on a Sabbath?" They had no answer for that.

Jesus noticed how the guests were maneuvering to take the most prominent places for themselves, and said,

"When you're invited to a marriage feast, don't recline in the place of honor. Someone more distinguished than you might have been invited. And the host would come over and tell you,

'Let him have this place.' Then you'll be embarrassed as you move to the lowest place.

"No, you take the lowest place. And when the one who invited you comes in, he'll tell you, 'Friend, come on up higher.' Then you'll be honored in front of your fellow-guests. He who exalts himself will be humbled; and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

He went on to advise the man who invited Him,

"When you give a lunch or supper, don't call your friends, brothers, kinsman, or wealthy neighbors. They may sometime invite you in return; and you would be paid back. No, when you spread a feast, invite the poor. And cripples, and the lame, and the blind; and you'll be blessed. They can't pay you back. But you will definitely be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

One of those reclining there, on hearing this, remarked,

"Blessed is he who'll dine in God's Kingdom." And Jesus told them,

"A man spread a lavish dinner, and invited many. At dinnertime, he sent his servant to tell those invited, 'Come on, everything's ready.'

"But they all alike began to beg off. One said, 'I've acquired a field; I need to go see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I've bought some oxen; I'm going to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married; I can't go.'

"The servant went back and told his lord this. Then the head of that house became angry; and told his servant,

'Go quick to the city avenues and streets. Bring in here the poor, the cripples, the blind, the lame.' Soon, his servant reported back,

'Lord, what you've ordered is done; yet there's still space.' His master told him,

'Then go find them on highways and along fences; and get 'em in here. I want my home filled. For sure, not one of those invited will taste my dinner.'"

Around that time, some Pharisees came and told Him,

"You need to get away from here; Herod wants to kill you." Jesus told them,

“Go tell that fox, ‘Look, I am healing and casting out demons today and tomorrow; and on the third day, I will reach My objective.’ Besides, I must keep moving on today, tomorrow, and the next day. For no prophet ought to perish outside Jerusalem.”

Big crowds were traveling with Him; and, at one point, He turned and told them,

“If you come to Me, yet care more for your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes even your own life, you cannot be My disciple. You would have to pick up and carry your own cross, to follow Me; or you couldn’t be My disciple.

“Look, doesn’t any of you, wanting to build a tower, sit down first and count the cost; to see if you have enough to complete it? Otherwise, after laying the foundation, you might not be able to complete it. Then onlookers would laugh at you, and say, ‘He made a good start, but couldn’t finish.’

“And what king, planning to battle another king, doesn’t sit down first and determine whether he can, with ten thousand troops, prevail over one with twenty thousand. If, in fact, he can’t, while that king is still far off, he’ll send a delegation to sue for peace.

“It’s like this: To be My disciple, you’ll simply have to give up all you have.”

Many sinners and tax-collectors were coming to hear Him; and Pharisees and scribes were griping among themselves,

“This man welcomes sinners; even eats with them.” Jesus responded with a parable:

“Any man with a hundred sheep, on losing one, will leave the ninety-nine in the country, and hunt for the lost one till he finds it. And, on finding it, he puts it up on his shoulders and rejoices. When he gets home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, and says,

‘Celebrate with me; I’ve found my lost sheep.’ Believe Me, there’s more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous ones who don’t need to repent.

“What lady, having ten coins, and losing one, doesn’t light a lamp, and sweep and search the house carefully till she finds it? And, on finding it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, and says,

‘Celebrate with me; I’ve found my lost coin.’ Believe Me, there’s much more joy among God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

“Listen, a man had two sons. And the younger asked him, ‘Father, give me now my share of the property.’ So he divided his wealth between the two.

“Not long thereafter, the younger son gathered his things together and traveled abroad, to a distant country. And there, he squandered his property on one party after another. When he was broke, a bad famine hit that land; and he became destitute. He finally hired out to a citizen of that land, who put him to feeding hogs in his field. And he often longed to be filled with the carob pods which the hogs ate; but he wasn’t given any.

“Eventually, he came to his senses, and thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have a surplus of food, while I’m here starving to death? I’ll get away from here; and go back to my father and say, ‘Father, I’ve sinned against Heaven in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be your son; just let me be one of your hired hands.’ So he returned to his father.

“But his father saw him coming while he was still far off; and was moved with sympathy. He ran to him; and hugged his neck and kissed him tenderly. Then the boy said, ‘Father, I’ve sinned against Heaven in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be your son; just let me be one of your hired hands.’ But his father turned to his servants, and said, ‘Hurry! Bring a robe, the best one, and clothe him. Put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet. Go get the fattened calf, and slaughter it. We’ll feast and enjoy ourselves; for my son here was dead, but is alive again. He was lost, but now is found.’ And they all began to celebrate.

“Meanwhile, the older son had been in the field. As he came in and neared the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called a servant, and asked, ‘What’s happening?’ That one said, ‘Your brother has returned! Your father slaughtered the fattened calf; for he got him back alive and well.’

“But older brother got mad, and wouldn’t go in. So his father came out and begged him to. He replied, ‘So many years I’ve served you, and not once broke your commandment. Yet you’ve never given even a goat so me and my friends could enjoy ourselves. But as soon as this son of yours, who wasted your property on whores, arrives, you slaughter the fattened calf in his honor.’

“His father answered, ‘My son, you’ve always been with me; and everything I have is yours. But we just had to rejoice and celebrate; for your brother was lost, but now is found.’”

The apostles asked Him,
“Increase our faith.” Jesus replied,

“If you have faith only as big as a mustard seed, you could tell this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted, and planted in the sea.’ And it would obey you.

“Which of you tells your servant, who comes in from the field after plowing or tending sheep, ‘Come quick; recline to eat?’ No, you tell him instead, ‘Fix something for supper. Get an apron on, and serve me till I finish. Then you can dine.’

“You need not feel gratitude to that servant who only did his assigned tasks. You, too, after you’ve done everything assigned to you, just acknowledge, ‘We’re useless servants; we’ve only done what we ought to.’”

“A rich man had a steward accused of mishandling and wasting his assets. He called him, and said, ‘What’s this I hear about you? Hand in your title of steward; you’re not competent to be a manager.’

“The steward thought, ‘What will I do? My lord has fired me as steward. I’m not strong enough to labor; and I’m too embarrassed to beg.’ Then he had an idea: ‘Here’s what I’ll do; so after I’m let go as steward, some will accept me into their homes.’ He called on each of his lord’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my lord?’ He answered, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he told this one, ‘Take your contract, and sit down; and quickly write in fifty.’ Next, he asked another, ‘How much do you owe?’ That one answered, ‘A hundred measures of grain.’ He told him, ‘Take your contract; and write in eighty.’

“Well, his lord commended the steward! Though unrighteous, he did show discretion. In fact, worldly persons are usually shrewder in dealing with their own kind than are the sons of light.

“Look, use unrighteous Mammon to make friends for yourselves. So when he fails you, you’ll still be accepted into everlasting homes. One who is faithful in the least

matter is also faithful in much. And one who is unrighteous in small matters is unrighteous in much.

“So if you haven’t shown yourselves to be faithful with unrighteous wealth, who would trust you with Truth? And if you haven’t shown yourselves to be faithful with what is another’s, who would give you yours?”

Listening to this, the Pharisees, ardent lovers of money, were ridiculing Him. He responded,

“You present yourselves to men as righteous, but God knows your heart. What’s admired among men is putrid in God’s sight.

“Listen, a rich man used to dress himself in purple and fine linen. And enjoyed himself sumptuously day after day. A beggar, Lazarus, covered in open sores, used to be put at his gate. Lazarus hoped only to be filled with what dropped from the rich man’s table. Dogs used to come lick his sores. In time, the poor one died; and was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom.

“Later, the rich one died, and was buried. From Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far off, with Lazarus at his bosom. And he called,

‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me. I’m in anguish in this inferno. Send Lazarus; to just dip his fingertip in water, and cool my tongue.’ But Abraham said,

‘You recall, child, that in your lifetime you received in full all your good; and Lazarus, the bad. But he’s being comforted now; while you’re in pain. What’s more, a wide chasm is fixed between us and you. Nobody, wanting to, can go from here to you; nor can any of you cross over to here.’

“The rich man said,

‘Then do this: Send him to my father’s house, where I have five brothers. That he might give them solid testimony; so they won’t end up here in this place of torment.’ Abraham answered,

‘They have Moses and the Prophets. Let ‘em hear them.’

‘No, father Abraham; but if someone from the dead would go to them, they would repent.’

‘Not so. If they won’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they won’t be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead!’

On one occasion, someplace, Jesus was praying. When He was through, a certain one of His disciples asked,

“Lord, teach us how to pray like John taught his disciples.” And He said,

“Sure. Whenever you pray, say,

‘Our heavenly Father, hallowed be Your name. Your Kingdom come; Your will be done. Like in Heaven, so upon earth.

‘Give us each day our daily bread.

‘Forgive us our sins, as we ourselves have forgiven all who are indebted to us. And do not bring us into hard testing, but do deliver us from the evil one.’

“For if you forgive people their trespasses against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you don’t forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

“Suppose you have a friend whom you go to at midnight to ask, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves. Another friend of mine has just arrived on a trip, and I have nothing to set before him.’ But from inside, he hears, ‘Quit bothering me. The door has already been locked, and me and my kids are all in bed. I can’t get up now to give you something.’

“Believe Me, even though he won’t get up and help him out of friendship, for his boldness he will. Because of his sheer persistence, his friend will get up and give him anything he needs.

“That’s why I tell you to keep asking; it will be given to you. Keep searching, you will find it. Keep knocking, it will be opened to you. Everyone who asks, receives; everyone who searches, finds; and to everyone who knocks it will be opened.

“Come on now, which father among you would give his child a stone when he asks for bread? Or a snake if he asks for fish? A scorpion if he asks for an egg? Even sinful you know how to give good gifts to your children. Well, how much more so will your Father, the God of Heaven, give good things to those who ask Him?”

He went on, giving an illustration why they should always pray, and never give up.

“In a city, there was a certain judge who had no fear of God nor respect for man. But there was a widow there who kept on taking her case to him, pleading, ‘Give me justice from my adversary.’ For awhile, he didn’t want to. But finally he thought, ‘I don’t fear God or respect man; but I’m going to see she gets justice. Otherwise, continually pestering me, she’ll wear me out.’

“Do you hear what that judge, although unrighteous, said? Won’t God surely grant justice to His chosen ones who cry out to Him night and day, even though He’s patient with them? Believe Me, He’ll avenge them very quickly. But when the Son of man comes, will He actually find faith on the earth?”

“Keep your loins girded, and your lamps lit. Be like servants waiting for their lord to come home from a marriage feast, so they can open to him as soon as he arrives and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the lord finds watching.

“I’m telling you, he’ll dress himself to serve, and have them recline, and come wait on them. Whether in the second watch, or maybe the third, they will be blessed if he finds them so. You be ready too. The Son of man will come in a watch you don’t expect.

Then He gave an illustration of those who were self-righteous, and disregarded everyone else as unimportant.

“Two men, a Pharisee and a tax-collector, went to pray. The Pharisee stood and began to pray this, about himself, ‘O God, I thank You that I am not like other men: unrighteous, swindlers, adulterers, or even this tax-collector here. I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of anything I get.’

“But the tax-collector, standing at a distance, was ashamed to even look heavenward. And kept beating his breast, saying, ‘O God, be gracious to me, a sinner.’

“I have to tell you, he went home more righteous than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Jesus left Galilee after finishing this discourse and came to the borderlands of Judea and trans-Jordan. They were traveling together and, all along the way, many crowds were meeting or coming to Him. He was teaching them, and healing them, as He ordinarily did.

Some Pharisees, having come to test Him actually, were asking,

“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?” But Jesus asked them,

“What did Moses teach about that?” They said,

“Moses, as a concession, taught to write for her, and give to her, a Note of Divorce; and send her away.” Then Jesus stated,

“Moses allowed you this, and wrote this commandment for you because of the hardness of your hearts. But from the beginning, it’s not been like this.

“Certainly, you’ve read that from the beginning of creation, ‘He created them male and female’, and ‘for this reason, a man is to leave his father and mother, and cling to his wife; and the two will become one flesh.’

“So, they’re no longer two apart, but one flesh joined. What God has yoked together, man shouldn’t pull apart.”

Back in the house, the disciples were asking Him about this. He said,

“Specifically what I mean is this: he who divorces his wife, except over promiscuity, and marries another, would be committing adultery against her. The same if she ever divorces her husband and marries another; she is committing adultery.” Then they said,

“If it’s like this between men and women, is it better to just not marry?” He answered,

“Not everyone can bear this suggestion; it’s only for those who have the gift. There are eunuchs who are born that way from their mother’s womb. There are eunuchs who are made that way by men. And, too, there are some who are voluntarily celibate, for the purpose of serving God’s Kingdom. Whoever is able to do so, should do so.”

Infants too, were being brought to Him, to lay His hands on and pray for them. Noticing this, the disciples started to reprimand them. But Jesus noticed that, and was irritated. He called them over to Himself, and said,

“Don’t stop the children from coming to Me. Don’t be excluding them; for God’s Kingdom consists of such as these. I’m telling you, whoever won’t accept the Kingdom of God like a trusting child, definitely won’t enter It.”

Then He took them in His arms; and, after laying His hands on and blessing them, He went on His way from there.

As He was going along the road, a certain ruler rushed up to Him. Having dropped to his knees, he asked,

“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit everlasting life?” Jesus answered,

“Why are you calling Me ‘good’? No one is good but God alone. Nevertheless, if you wish to enter life, keep the commandments.” And that one asked,

“Which ones?” Jesus said,

“You’ve known the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and mother. And.... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

“Teacher, from my youth, I have kept all these; what more am I lacking?” On hearing this Jesus looked more closely at him; and loved him. And said,

“There’s one thing you still lack. If you want to be perfect, go sell everything you have; and give to the poor. Then you will have treasure in Heaven. And join and follow Me.”

But the young man became sad at hearing this suggestion. He went away discouraged about this because he had many possessions. Jesus watched him go for a moment; then looked around to His disciples, and commented,

“Believe Me, it’s truly difficult for those with money to make their way into God’s Kingdom.” The disciples were taken aback by this statement. So Jesus repeated it,

“I am telling you again, it’s a hard thing to enter God’s Kingdom. It’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich one to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Hearing this, the disciples were even more puzzled; and asked,

“Then who, in fact, can be saved?” Jesus looked straight at them; and stated plainly,

“With men, this is impossible; but not with God. Anything is possible for God.”

Peter spoke up at that point, asking,

“Look, we’ve abandoned everything of our own, and came along with You. What, actually, will there be for us?” Jesus told them,

“Trust Me, in the re-creation, when the Son of man sits on His throne of glory, you yourselves will sit on twelve thrones; and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

“There’s no one who abandoned houses, farms, wife, brother, sister, father, mother, children, for My name’s sake, and the good news of God’s Kingdom, who won’t assuredly receive, now in this present time, a hundred times as many houses and farms and brothers and sisters and mothers and children, along with persecution. And in the age to come, will inherit everlasting life.

“But many of the first will be last; and the last, first. The Kingdom of Heaven is like the lord of an estate, who goes out early at the same time each morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. The laborers agreed to a wage of one denarius for the day. So he sent them into his vineyard.

“Going out again about the third hour, he saw others with nothing to do standing in the market place. He told those, too, ‘You go now to the vineyard; I’ll pay you whatever is fair.’ And they went. He went also about the sixth hour, and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.

“About the eleventh hour, going once more, he found others there; and asked, ‘Why have you stood here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Nobody hired us.’ So he told them, ‘You, too, go into the vineyard.’

“That evening, the owner told his overseer, ‘Call in the workmen and give them their pay. Start with the last ones and proceed on to the first ones.’ Those of the eleventh hour came and each received one denarius. So the first ones expected to receive more. But they, too, each received one denarius. So they began to complain to the owner,

“Those last ones only labored one hour; but you’ve made them equal to us who’ve endured the whole day, and it’s heat.’ He replied to one of them, ‘Man, I haven’t cheated you. Didn’t you agree with me for a denarius? Pick yours up and get out. I wanted this last one to get the same as you, Can’t I do with my own things whatever I want? Or are you simply envious because I am generous?’

“Like this, the last will be first, and the first ones last”

They were now on the road leading up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was moving on ahead of them. People were astonished; and His followers were becoming nervous. Once more, He drew the twelve disciples aside at an isolated spot along the way; and began to tell them what was about to happen.

“Look, we’re going into Jerusalem; and everything written about the Son of man will be fulfilled. He will be given over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles. Those will ridicule Him, and spit on and maltreat Him. And, after flogging Him, they will crucify Him. But on the third day, He will be raised up.”

Yet there was nothing of this they understood; the meaning of the statement was hidden from them. They simply did not know what He was talking about.

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, bringing their mother to speak on their behalf, came and bowed before Him; to ask a favor of Him.

“Teacher, we desire that what we request of You, You will do for us.” He asked them,

“What do you want Me to do for you?” And she said,

“Give a command that, in Your glorious Kingdom, these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left.” But Jesus said to them,

“You don’t know what you’re asking for. Are you able to drink the cup I am about to drink? Or be baptized with the baptism with which I am to be baptized?” They answered,

“We’re able.” And He stated,

“Yes, you will indeed drink the cup that I drink. And be baptized with the baptism that I’ll be baptized with. But to sit at My right and to My left, this is not Mine to grant. That’s only for those for whom it’s been prepared by My Father.”

Overhearing it, the other ten became incensed at the two brothers, James and John. It provoked a dispute among them as to which of them might rank higher. Jesus motioned them over, and told them,

“You know that those who are acknowledged as rulers by the Gentiles lord it over them. Their leading men exercise authority over them; and are called ‘deities’. But it’s not like this among you. Among you, whoever wants to become great shall be your servant. And whoever wants to rank highest among you shall be the slave of all.

“Who is greater, the one reclining or the one serving? Isn’t it the one reclining? But among you, I’m like the one serving. Even the Son of man didn’t come to be served, but to serve. And to give His life as a ransom for many.”

He was near Jericho now, with His disciples and a significant crowd following along. Along their route, just out from Jericho, two blind men were sitting at the roadside, begging.

On hearing this throng traveling by, one of them, Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) asked what was going on. He was informed that Jesus the Nazarene was passing through. On learning this, he began to shout,

“Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.” Those out front rebuked him, saying to be quiet. But instead, they were crying out all the louder,

“Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us.” Jesus stopped and just stood there. After a moment, He said,

“Call him.” And they called to him,

“Take courage and get up. He wants you.” Jesus ordered that they be led to Him. But that one cast away his cloak; and jumped up and came near Jesus, Who asked,

“What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind one said,

“Rabboni, open our eyes, so we might see again.” Jesus, moved with compassion, touched their eyes, and said,

“See again! Go on your way, your faith has saved you.”

Instantly, their sight was restored; and they followed Him on the road, praising God. All who witnessed this incident were giving praise to God.

Jesus went on into Jericho, and was passing through. A man there named Zacchaeus, a supervisor of tax-collectors, and wealthy, wanted to see Who this Jesus was. But he, being short in stature, couldn't see Him because of the throng. So he ran ahead to a certain point he knew Jesus would pass; and climbed a mulberry tree, to view Him.

When Jesus came to that place, He looked up and saw him; and said,

“Zacchaeus, climb down from there at once; I must stay in your home today.” So he quickly got down; and was delighted to have Him as guest. Some who saw this were displeased, and grumbled,

“He's gone to stay with a man who's a sinner.” But Zacchaeus paused, and told the Lord,

“Lord, look, I'm giving half my possessions to the poor. Whatever I took from anyone by fraud, I'll reimburse it four-fold.” Jesus stated,

“Today, salvation has come to this house; for he, too, is a son of Abraham. The Son of man has come to seek out, and to save, those who are lost.”

While they were listening, He went on to include a parable. By this time He was near Jerusalem, and people thought the Kingdom of God might be established very soon. Because of that, He told them,

“A man of noble birth journeyed to a distant country, to negotiate for himself to be appointed king; and then, to return. Before leaving, he summoned ten of his servants. He gave each of them a silver mina, with instructions,

‘Do business with this till I get back.’ Now his fellow citizens hated him; and sent a delegation behind him, to petition,

‘We don't want this man to reign over us.’

“He did, however, obtain the kingdom; and returned home. Then he ordered those servants to whom he entrusted the money to be summoned, to ascertain what they had gained by doing business. The first one presented himself, saying,

‘Look, lord, your mina has earned ten more.’ He said,

‘Well done, good servant. Since you've proven yourself trustworthy in such a small matter, you take charge of ten cities.’ A second one came, saying,

‘Your mina, lord, has earned five more.’ He told this one, too,

‘And you, you take charge of five cities.’ But another came, saying,

‘Look, lord, here's your mina; I kept it laid up, hidden in a handkerchief. I was afraid of you, for you're an austere man. You take up what you didn't lay down, and you reap what you didn't sow.’ His lord exclaimed,

‘You worthless servant! I'll judge you by your own words. You knew me to be an austere man? That I take up what I didn't lay down? I reap what I didn't sow? Then why didn't you put my money in a bank; so when I returned, I could have at least collected interest?’ Then he said to those standing by, **‘Take his mina from him and give it to the one having the ten minas.’** But they said,

‘Lord, he already has ten minas!’ – (I've told you: to everyone who has, more will be given; but from the one who has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away.) – And he ended, saying,

‘Those enemies of mine who didn’t want me to reign over them, bring those here; and slay them in front of me.’

Then Jesus, after saying these things, moved on, going up to Jerusalem.

Many of the Judeans who saw what he was doing believed in Him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus was doing. The Pharisees gathered together the chief priests; and convened an assembly of the Sanhedrin, and they were debating,

“What should we do here? This Man is performing many miraculous signs. If we allow Him to go on like this, everyone will believe in Him. Then the Romans would come and take both our positions, and the nation, away from us.”

But a certain Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, spoke up.

“You know nothing at all. You haven’t concluded that it’s in your interest that one man die for the people, and not for the whole nation to perish.”

So, from that day on, they conspired to kill Him.

The time for the festival of the Jewish Passover was fast approaching. Many were coming early into Jerusalem from the countryside, for their ritual cleansing prior to the Passover celebration. They kept watching for Jesus; and contemplating among themselves as they stood around in the temple,

“What’s your opinion? Maybe He’s not even coming to the festival?” The chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew His whereabouts, he should report this so they could apprehend Him.

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, lived. They gave a supper for Him in the home of Simon the leper. Martha was there, serving; and Lazarus was among those reclining with Him.

While He was dining, Mary came, with an alabaster vial of about a litera of expensive perfumed oil, pure nard. She broke open the vial and began to pour, some on His head and the rest on His feet; and wiped His feet with her long hair. The perfume’s fragrance pervaded throughout the house. Seeing it, some disciples were expressing indignation among themselves.

“For what purpose has this perfume been wasted?” They were aggravated at her. Judas Iscariot, His disciple who later betrayed Him griped,

“Why wasn’t this perfume sold for three hundred denarii; and that donated to the poor?” (He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag, and use to filch much of what was put into it.)

Jesus, aware, finally told them,

“Leave her alone. Why do you give her trouble? This lady has done a fine thing for Me. You always have the poor among you, and you can do them good whenever you want; but Me, you don’t always have. She’s done what she could. When she poured this perfume on Me, she did it to observe the custom, beforehand, of anointing My body for the day of My burial.

“I assure you, wherever in the whole world this Gospel is preached, what this lady did will also be spoken of, as a memorial to her.”

Meanwhile, a large number of Judeans learned that He was there; and they came. Not because of Jesus only, but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

The chief priests then plotted how to kill Lazarus, too; for because of him, many Judeans were going there, and actually putting their trust in Jesus.

The next day, the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. Some took palm branches, and went out to meet Him. And they were shouting,

“Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.”

He was getting close to Jerusalem now, coming into Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called Mount of Olives. Jesus sent off two disciples, with instructions,

“Go to that village opposite you. As soon as you enter, you’ll find a donkey colt tied there with its mother. A colt on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring them here to Me. Should anyone question you about why you are untying it, answer, ‘The Lord

needs it', and he'll promptly send them here."

The ones He sent went, and found the colt tied outside a door on a side street; and they untied it. Its owners, watching, said,

"What are you doing untying that colt?" They said,

"The Lord needs it." They were allowed to; and led the donkey and her colt to Jesus. They threw their cloaks over the colt; and He sat atop it. This actually happened to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet,

'Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Look, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'

When He came near the place where the road starts to descend from the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began to joyfully praise God, with loud voices, because of the miracles which they had witnessed. As He rode along, many in the crowd were spreading their own cloaks in the road. Others were cutting tree branches from the fields; and spreading those in the road. Those preceding Him, and those following, kept crying out,

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the King Who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven, and glory in the Heights. Blessed be the coming Kingdom of our forefather David." Some Pharisees among the crowd demanded,

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" But Jesus said,

"Believe Me, should these become silent, the stones would cry out." The Pharisees said among themselves,

"Well, you can see you're getting absolutely nowhere. Look, the whole world has gone after Him."

When He came nearer and could view the city, Jesus wept over it; and stated,

"If you, even you, had only known, in this day, what things make for peace; ... but no, they've been hidden now from your eyes. For days are coming upon you when your enemy will throw up, and encircle you, with breastworks. They're going to assault from every direction; and level you to the ground, along with any children there with you. They'll not leave in you even one stone erect. This because you didn't recognize the appointed time of your inspection."

When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city became enlivened; and some were wondering,

"Who is This?" They were told by the crowds,

"This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

He went into the temple, and looked around at everything. The blind and lame came up to Him there, and He healed them. But the chief priests and scribes, seeing the wonderful things He did, and the children shouting in the temple area,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" became indignant; and complained to Him. He said,

"Yes. Haven't you ever read this: 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You have furnished praise?'"

Then, since it was already late, He and the twelve went out of the city to Bethany; where He spent the night.

Early next morning, they left Bethany to return to the city; and Jesus became hungry. On the way, at a distance, He spied a lone fig tree, in leaf; and He detoured over to see if He might find something on it. Yet there was nothing on it but leaves,

since it wasn't the season for figs; but He addressed it,

"Never again will there be, from you, fruit to eat!" And His disciples heard this. The fig tree soon withered.

They came on into Jerusalem, and Jesus went into the temple. He began to chase out those who were engaged in commerce in the temple area. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the stalls of those selling doves. And He wouldn't allow anybody to be carrying merchandise through the temple area. He began to teach, saying,

"Hasn't it been written, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?' Yet you've turned it into a robber's den."

Now He was teaching everyday in the temple; and all the people, from early in the morning, were coming to listen to Him. The chief priests and scribes and leaders of the people heard, of course, and wanted to destroy Him; for they feared Him. But they couldn't find a way to, because the people were hanging on His every word. They were simply astounded by His teaching. When it became late, He and His disciples would go outside the city to spend the night on the hill called Mount of Olives.

As they returned in the morning, passing by that fig tree, they noticed it had withered, from its roots up. Seeing this, the disciples remembered, and were surprised. Peter exclaimed,

"Rabbi, look, the fig tree which you cursed has withered." Another asked,

"How did it wither so soon?" Jesus explained,

"Trust in God. Believe Me, if you have faith, and do not doubt in your heart, but keep believing that what you ask for is being done, it will be done for you. Not only this thing of the fig tree can you do, but if you said to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and cast into the sea', it will happen.

"Everything for which you ask in prayer, keep believing that you have received it; and you will receive it."

They came into Jerusalem again. And Jesus was strolling about in the temple, declaring and teaching about the Gospel to the people. While He was teaching, a group consisting of chief priests and scribes, together with some elders, stopped Him; and demanded,

"Tell us, by what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?" Jesus said,

"I, too, will ask you just one thing. If you'll answer Me, then I'll tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism by John, where was it from? From Heaven? Or from men? Answer Me."

But they reasoned among themselves, concluding,

"If we say, 'From Heaven', He will say, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men ...?'" They were intimidated by the crowd, for all were convinced that John had indeed been a prophet. So all they could say was,

"We don't know from where." So Jesus told them,

"All right, neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first one, and said,

'Son, go work in the vineyard today.' This one said,

'I will, sir.' But he never went. The father approached the other son, and told him

the same thing. And that one said,

‘I don’t want to.’

“But later, he changed his mind; and went anyway. Now which one of the two did his father’s will?” They said,

“The latter one.” Jesus then stated,

“Yes. And I assure you that whores and tax-collectors are entering God’s Kingdom ahead of you. John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you refused to believe him. But whores and tax-collectors did. Yet even after seeing that, you didn’t feel regret later, so as to believe him.”

Then He began to speak to the people in parables.

“A property owner planted a vineyard and fenced all around it. Dug a vat for the winepress, and erected a tower. Then he leased it to some tenant growers; and went on an extended journey.

“When it was nearly time to harvest the fruit, he sent a servant to the growers to get his share of the produce. But those growers took and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. Again, he sent another servant to them. And they gave that one a head wound, abused him, and sent him away empty-handed. He sent a third; and they killed that one. And so with many more, beating some and killing others.

“The vineyard owner had one more, a beloved son. And he thought,

‘What will I do? I know, I’ll send my beloved son. They’re bound to respect him.’ But the growers, seeing the son, decided among themselves,

‘This is the heir. Let’s kill him, so the inheritance may belong to us.’ So they seized him and cast him outside the vineyard; and killed him. When the lord of that vineyard comes, what will he do? He will utterly destroy those evil growers. And he will lease his vineyard to different growers, who will give him his share of the fruit at harvesttime.”

On hearing this they said,

“May that never happen!” But He looked them straight in the eye; and stated,

“Haven’t you ever read this scripture. ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing, and it’s marvelous in our sight?’ It’s why I tell you that God’s Kingdom will be taken away from you; and given to a nation which will produce fruit. Everyone who stumbles over this Stone will be shattered; and on whomever It might fall, It will crush him to pieces.”

Hearing these parables, the chief priest and scribes and Pharisees knew He was referring to them. They so wanted to seize Him that very hour; but couldn’t because they feared the people who accepted Jesus as a prophet. So they moved away from Him, and left.

With another parable, Jesus went on to say,

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man, a king, who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. And he sent out his servants to summon those invited to the festivities. But they didn’t want to attend. Again, he sent out more servants, saying,

‘Tell those who were invited, ‘Look, I’ve prepared my banquet. My oxen and fattened animals have all been butchered; everything’s ready now, for the marriage feast. Come on.’

“But they were unconcerned, and ignored him. They wandered off, one to his field, another to his business. The rest even seized his servants, mistreated them, and killed some.

“Now the king was furious; and dispatched his forces, and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he announced to his servants,

‘The banquet is ready, now. But those invited weren’t worthy. Go to the roads leading out of the city; and, there, invite anyone you find to the wedding feast.’

“As instructed, those servants went out to the roadways; and gathered all they could find, both good and evil. And the hall for the marriage festivities was filled with those dining. When the king came in to look over the guests, he saw there a man not dressed in clothes suitable for a marriage celebration. He said to him,

‘Fellow, how’d you get in here not dressed for a wedding?’ But the man didn’t know what to say. Then the king told the ushers,

‘Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness outside; where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

“For there are many invited, but few are chosen.”

The Pharisees had gone to plan, together with the Herodians, how to provoke Him into saying something with which they could hand him over to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. They spied on Him; and sent their disciples to snare Him in some statement, asking,

“Teacher, we know You’re truthful; for You don’t consider anyone’s position, but teach God’s way in truth. So give us Your opinion on this: Is it lawful for us to give Caesar a head-tax, or not? Should we pay, or not pay it?” Jesus saw through their deceit, and said,

“Hypocrites! Why are you testing Me? Show Me a coin used for the head-tax.”

They brought Him a denarius; and He asked,

“Whose image and inscription is this on it?” They said,

“Caesar’s” Then He said,

“So give back to Caesar whatever belongs to Caesar; and to God, what belongs to Him.”

They were dumbfounded at hearing this reply of His. Not clever enough to catch Him in any statement, they became silent. They moved away from Him, and left.

That same day, some Sadducees (who maintain there is no resurrection) came, asking,

“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a married man dies before bearing a child, his brother, as next of kin, should marry his widow to raise children to him.

“All right, there were seven brothers with us. The oldest, who was married but childless, died. The second brother took her; but he, too, died before having a child. And so on, until all seven had died; still no children. Lastly, she died too.

“Now, in the resurrection, when they all rise again, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.” Jesus said,

“Isn’t this why you’re in error? You just don’t understand either the Scriptures or the power of God.

“The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy to gain that age, and the resurrection when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Nor can they die anymore; for they’re like heavenly angels, and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.

“As concerns the validity of the truth of the resurrection: Haven’t you read that part, in the writings of Moses, where God declared,

‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’

“No, He’s not the God of the dead, but of the living; for to Him they’re all alive. No, you are seriously mistaken.”

And hearing this, the crowd was astounded at His explanation.

The Pharisees learned that He had silenced the Sadducees, and came there in a group. One of them, trained in the Law, to test Him, asked,

“Teacher, what’s the supreme commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered,

“‘Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your strength’. This is the first and foremost command. The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There are no greater commandments than these. On these two hang the whole Law and the Prophets.”

A scribe was there, and overheard their discussion; and said,

“Right, Teacher. You’ve spoken well. You’ve declared the truth, ‘He is One; and there is no other beside Him.’ And to love Him with all the heart, all the understanding and all the strength; and to love one’s neighbor as one’s self, is much more important than the whole total of sacrifices and burnt offerings”

Jesus, seeing how intelligently he stated this, told him,

“You’re not far from the Kingdom of God.”

While that group of Pharisees was still there, Jesus asked them,

“How can the scribes teach about the Christ that He’s the Son of David? What do you think? Whose son is He? They answered,

“David’s”. Jesus said,

“So how does David, by inspiration, refer to Him as ‘Lord’? For David says in the Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies into a footstool for Your feet.’ Now if David himself, by the Holy Spirit, calls Him ‘Lord’, how then is He his Son?”

After that no one questioned Him further. They didn’t, from then on, dare to ask Him about any aspect of doctrine. But the large crowd thoroughly enjoyed listening to Him.

While the people could overhear, He continued to teach His disciples, saying,

“Beware of the scribes. They, with the Pharisees, have seated themselves in Moses’ place. So keep and practice what they teach you; but don’t imitate their deeds. They instruct you to do things they themselves don’t do. They bind up heavy loads and lay them across men’s shoulders, but they themselves aren’t willing to touch them with even a finger.

“All their deeds they do to seek men’s attention. They like to walk about in long robes, lengthen the borders of their garments, carry outsized phylacteries. They love the most prominent places at banquets, front seats in synagogues, and respectful greetings in market places. And being addressed by men, ‘Rabbi’.

“But you’re not to be called ‘Rabbi’. For One is your Teacher; and you’re all brothers. And, on earth, you shouldn’t call anybody ‘father’. For One is your Father, your heavenly One. Nor should you be called ‘leader’. For One is your Leader, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your slave. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

“But woe to you scribes and Pharisees! Hypocrites. You who devour widow’s

houses, and pretend to offer long prayers. You've hidden the key of knowledge and barred men from the Kingdom of Heaven. You don't go in yourselves nor let those who want to enter do so. You'll receive heavier condemnation.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees! Hypocrites. You travel over sea and land to make one convert. And when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of Gehenna as you are.

"Woe to you, blind guides! You who say, 'If someone swears by the temple, it means nothing. But if someone swears by the gold in the temple, he's bound by his vow.' Blind fools! Which matters more, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? And, 'If someone swears by the altar, he is bound by his vow.' Blind one's! Which matters more, the gift or the altar that sanctified the gift?

"Listen! Whoever swears is making a vow both by the altar and by everything on it. Whoever swears by the temple is making a vow both by the temple and by Him Who inhabits it. And whoever swears by Heaven is making a vow both by God's throne and by Him Who sits on it.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees! Hypocrites. You give a tenth of every mint, dill, rue, cummin, and every other kind of garden herb; but you've side-stepped the Law's weightier matters, namely: justice, mercy, faithfulness, and the love of God. These you were bound to do, yet still regard those others. Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel.

"Woe to you scribes and Pharisees! You're like graves which aren't apparent; and people walk on unaware. Like whitewashed tombs which on the outside actually appear beautiful; but inside are full of dead men's bones, and every sort of uncleanness. Like this, you too, appear beautiful on the outside; but inside you're full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

One of those trained in the Law interrupted,

"Teacher, when You say these things, You insult us too." Jesus told him,

"Yes! Woe to you lawyers as well. You erect memorials to the prophets and decorate the tombs of the righteous. Yet it's your forefathers who killed them.

"You say, 'Had we lived in our father's day, we wouldn't have shared with them in the blood of the prophets.' By this you bear witness of yourselves that you are, indeed, sons of those who murdered them; and approve of their acts. They killed them; and you build their tombs!

"So fill up the measure of your father's guilt, you snakes. You brood of vipers! How can you possibly escape the sentence to Gehenna? That's why the Wisdom of God says,

'I am sending them prophets and wise men, and public teachers, and apostles. Some they will persecute from city to city and flog in synagogues. Some will be crucified and killed.'

"This so that on you will be the righteous blood of all the prophets spilled since the beginning of the world. From righteous Abel, down to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, who was murdered between the altar and the temple. I'm telling you, all these things will be charged to this generation.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Killer of prophets, and stoner of those sent to you. How often I've wanted to gather your children, like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings; but you wouldn't have it. Look, your house is being abandoned to you. Believe Me, you won't be seeing Me from now on. Not until you declare,

‘Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Jesus sat down then, across from the treasury. He was just sitting there watching people toss their donations into the treasury. Some of the rich were tossing in lots of coins. Then, one poor widow came; and tossed in two copper lepta (which equals one quadran). And He motioned His disciples over, and said,

“I want you to notice, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all who are contributing. All those gave out of their abundance. But she, out of her poverty, threw in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

Jesus left the temple then. And as He was going His way, His disciples were commenting about how the temple had such fine buildings, and was adorned with such beautiful stones. One of His disciples said to Him,

“Teacher, have You observed these magnificent stones and impressive buildings?”
Jesus said,

“You’re looking at all these splendid buildings? Believe Me, days are coming when not even one stone here will be left upon another, which won’t be demolished.”

He was relaxing at a spot on the Mount of Olives opposite from the temple when Peter, James, John, and Andrew came over privately, to ask,

“Teacher, tell us when these things will happen. And what will be a sign when these things are about to be fulfilled. And of Your coming; and of the conclusion of the age.” So Jesus began to inform them,

“Be careful no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, stating, ‘I am the Christ’, and ‘The time has come’, and will deceive many. Don’t run off after them. You’ll hear of wars and rumors of wars and disturbances. Don’t be alarmed, for this must take place first; it’s not the end yet.

“Nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. In various places there will be earthquakes, plagues, and severe famine. Also terrors, and significant signs from Heaven. All these things are just the beginning of birth pangs.

“But be careful. Before these things occur, men will seize you and persecute you, delivering you to courts and jails, and beating you in synagogues. You will be brought to stand before governors and kings for My name’s sake. This will be a chance for you to witness to them. The good news of this Kingdom must be proclaimed to the whole inhabited world. Then the end will come.

“When you’re arrested and handed over to synagogues and rulers, don’t become anxious about how or what to answer. Resolve in your minds not to rehearse beforehand how to defend yourselves. In that moment, the answer will be given to you. It’s not you who will be speaking, but the Holy Spirit, Who speaks through you. I will give you a voice and wisdom which none of your adversaries can resist or refute.

“Nevertheless, at that time, many will fall away and will denounce one another. False prophets will arise and deceive many. Because lawlessness is multiplied most men’s love will grow cold. You’ll be handed over even by brothers and parents and kinsmen and friends. Some children will rise up against their parents, and have them put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. By your endurance you gain your lives; not a hair of your head will perish.

“When you see Jerusalem encircled by encamped armies, know that its destruction is near. Those inside the city should get out; those outside in the country should not enter the city.

“When that abomination of desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel, is set up in the holy of holies, where it shouldn’t be standing (let the reader understand), those in Judea should flee to the mountains. Anybody on a housetop should go down, but not enter to retrieve something from the house. Anybody out in a field shouldn’t even turn back to get his cloak. For these are the days of vengeance; to fulfill everything which is written.

“Woe to pregnant women in those days, and to ones who are nursing babies. Pray that your flight isn’t in wintertime or on a Sabbath. Those days will be a time of major tribulation. One such as hasn’t happened since God created the world in the beginning, until right now. No, and never shall be. If the Lord hadn’t shortened those days, no human life would have survived. Yet for the sake of the chosen ones, whom He chose, He cut short those days.

“But there will be severe distress upon the land, and wrath to this people. Many will fall by the edge of the sword, and others taken as slaves into all nations. And

Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

“So if someone tells you, ‘Look! Here’s the Christ’, or, ‘Look, there He is’, don’t believe it; for, look, the Kingdom of God is in your midst. False Christs and false prophets will arise to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones. If you hear, ‘Look, He’s in the wilderness’, don’t go out there. Or, ‘Look, He’s inside’, don’t believe it. Be careful; I’ve told you everything beforehand. Just as lightning, flashing out of the east, lights up the whole sky, even to the west, thus it will be at the coming of the Son of man, in His day. Wherever the carcass is, that’s where the vultures will gather.

“Soon after the tribulation of those days, there will be signs in the heavens: The sun will be darkened. The moon won’t give it’s reflective light. Stars will be falling from the sky. And, on earth, dismay among nations. Men perplexed at the roaring of the sea and waves; and fainting with fear and foreboding over what’s coming on the world. For the powers of those in Heaven will be disturbed.

“Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in the sky, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with much power and glory. He will send His angels with a loud trumpeting. And they will gather His chosen ones from the four winds, from the farthest ends of the earth to the edge of heaven.

“When these things start to happen, straighten up, lift up your faces. Your redemption is imminent. From a fig tree, indeed all trees, learn an example: When its branch has already become tender and puts out leaves, you see it and realize that summer is close. So, you too, when you see these things happening, realize that God’s Kingdom is close, right at the gates. Believe Me, this generation will not pass away until all these things occur. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

“However, of that day or hour, no one knows when. Not the heavenly angels, nor even the Son; but the Father only. The coming of the Son of man will be just like what happened in Noah’s time. In those days, before the flood, people were eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, right up to the moment Noah boarded the ark. They didn’t understand until the catastrophe came and drowned them all. Same way in Lot’s day. They were eating and drinking, and buying and selling, and planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, blazing sulfur and lava rained from heaven and destroyed them all.

“It will be the same on the day the Son of man is revealed. Remember Lot’s wife? Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life will keep it. There’ll be two men in a field; one is taken and the other left. Two women grinding at a mill, one is taken and the other left. It will be like this at the Son of man’s coming.

“So stay alert; for you don’t know the appointed time. Discipline yourselves, that your hearts don’t become fatigued from overeating or drunkenness or life’s anxieties. And that day spring on you like a trap. For it’s going to come on all those who dwell on earth. So stay alert all the time, praying that you survive all this that is destined to happen; and to stand before the Son of man. You don’t know which day your Lord is coming.

“The Son of man is destined to come in His Father’s glory, with holy angels; and sit on His glorious throne. All nations will be assembled before Him; He will divide them just like a shepherd divides His flocks, putting the sheep on the right and the goats to his left. Then He will recompense every man according to his deeds. He will say to the righteous,

‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom that was prepared for you from the founding of the world.’ And they will enter into eternal life.

‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat. Thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me in. Naked, and you clothed Me. I was ill, and you took care of Me. In jail, and you visited Me.’ And the righteous will ask,

‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and fed You? Or thirsty, and gave You a drink? When did we see You a stranger, and invited You in? Or naked, and we clothed You? Sick, or in jail, and came to You?’ And the King will answer,

‘Whatever you did for the least of My brothers, you did it for Me.’

Then He will turn to those others, on His left, and tell them,

‘Get away from Me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat. Thirsty, and you gave Me no drink. I was a stranger, and you wouldn’t invite Me in. Naked, and you didn’t clothe Me. Ill, and in jail, and you didn’t take care of Me.’ Those, too, will ask,

‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in jail, and we didn’t help You? And He will answer,

‘Anything you didn’t do for one of My brothers, you didn’t do it for Me!’

“Then, these will depart into everlasting punishment; but the righteous ones into eternal life.

“It’s like a man who, leaving home to go on a journey, puts his servants in charge. He assigns each his task; and also orders the doorkeeper to keep watch. So keep watching. You don’t know when the Master of the house is coming. In the evening or midnight or at cock-crow or early morning. He could arrive suddenly, and find you asleep. What I say to you, I say to all. Keep watching.

“Be certain of this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would’ve kept watch and not had his house burglarized. The same way, you too must keep yourselves prepared. The Son of man is coming at an hour which you don’t expect.” Peter asked,

“Lord, is this parable for us only; or for everybody?”

“Just who is the faithful, trustworthy steward, whom his lord put in charge over his domestics; to provide them their food ration at the proper time? Blessed is that steward whom his lord finds so doing, when he finally comes. Trust Me, he will appoint him over all his possessions.

“But should that wicked servant think in his heart, ‘My lord is long delayed’, and should start to abuse his fellow-servants, both men and maids, and to eat and drink with habitual drunks, that slave’s lord will arrive on a day he doesn’t expect, and will punish him with a severe beating. He will assign him a place with the unfaithful, there where the weeping and gnashing of teeth will be.

“And, too, that servant who knew his lord’s will, but didn’t prepare or act in accord with his will, will receive a severe beating. Yet the one who didn’t know his will, and so committed acts deserving of lashes, will receive only a few.

“Yes, From whom much is given, much will be required. People demand much more of whom they entrust much.

“At that time, the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who brought their lamps and went over to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. When the foolish ones took their lamps, they brought no extra oil with them; whereas the wise took oil in flasks, along with their lamps.

“The bridegroom was delayed; and the virgins became drowsy, and finally nodded off. But around midnight, there was a shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is here! Come out to meet him.’

“The virgins, then, woke up; and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones asked the wise ones,

‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are running low.’ But those answered,

‘No, there may not be enough for us and you, too. Instead, you go to the oil dealers; and buy some for yourselves.’

“As they were going to make the purchase, the bridegroom arrived. Those virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later, the other virgins returned, saying,

‘Lord, Lord, open up for us.’ But he said,

‘I’m telling you, I don’t know you.’ So keep watch. Because you don’t know the day or hour.”

When Jesus finished these statements, He told His disciples,

“You know that after two days, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, the Passover, is to be observed. And the Son of man will be given over to be crucified.”

The chief priests and scribes and temple elders assembled in the courtyard of the High Priest, Caiaphas. They counseled together, searching for a stealthy way to seize and kill Him. But they were afraid of the people, and said,

“It can’t be anytime during the festival, for the crowd might riot.”

But Satan entered into one who belonged to the group of twelve, the one named Judas Iscariot. This man went to the chief priests and officers, to offer,

“What are you willing to give me for turning Him over to you?”

They were delighted to hear this, and promised him thirty pieces of silver money. He agreed; and, from then, watched for an opportunity to deliver Him at some convenient time, apart from the crowd.

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread, the day the Passover is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, telling them,

“Go prepare the Passover, so we may eat it.” They asked,

“Where do You want us to prepare it? He said,

“Look, after you enter the city, a man carrying a crock of water will meet you. Follow him to whichever house he is heading, and tell the lord of that house,

‘The Teacher says, “My appointed time is near. I and My disciples will celebrate the Passover with you. Where’s the guest room where we might eat it?” He will show you a large upper room, completely furnished, with couches aligned. Prepare it for us there.’

Those disciples did as Jesus instructed, and prepared the Passover.

That evening Jesus and the twelve were together there. While they were reclined and dining, He told His disciples,

“You are the ones who have stayed with Me throughout My trials. Just as My Father has promised Me a Kingdom, I promise you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom. And, you will sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

“I have so greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Believe Me, I will never eat it again until its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God. I am telling you now,

one of you who is eating with Me will betray Me; one whose hand is with Mine on the table.”

On hearing this, they were shocked and saddened; and began to speculate among themselves which of them might do such a thing. One by one, they began to ask Him,

“Surely not me, Lord?” He answered them all,

“It’s one of you twelve. One who dips with Me in the bowl, who will betray Me. The Son of man is destined to go just as it has been written of Him; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed. It would be better for him to never have been born.”

But when Judas, who was betraying Him, also asked,

“Surely not me, Rabbi”, Jesus told him,

“You’ve said it yourself.”

While they were still dining, Jesus took a loaf; and, after blessing it, broke it and gave a part to each disciple; and said,

“Take this and eat it. This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

“After they had eaten it, He likewise took a cup. And having given thanks, offered it to them, saying,

“Drink from it, all of you.” And they did; and He said,

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you; indeed, for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you’re presenting My death until I return. Believe Me, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new, with you, in My Father’s Kingdom.”

After singing a hymn, they left. Jesus came, as He usually did, to the Mount of Olives, with His disciples following along. And there, He began to tell them,

“All of you will desert Me tonight; for it is written, ‘I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ But after I’ve been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” But Peter said to Him,

“Lord, even if all might desert You, I will not.” Jesus said,

“Oh, you won’t? Listen to Me, this very night, before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” But Peter kept insisting,

“Lord, I am prepared to go with You even to prison, even to death.” The other disciples were saying the same thing too. Jesus said,

“Simon, Simon. Look! Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, for your faith not to fail. And as soon as you turn back, strengthen your brothers. When I sent you out without a purse, or bag, or extra sandals, you didn’t want for anything did you?” They answered,

“No.” He went on,

“That’s right. But now, if you have a purse, take it. Likewise, a bag of rations. Whoever doesn’t have a sword should sell his extra cloak and buy one. I’m telling you, this which is written, ‘And He was numbered with transgressors’, must be fulfilled in Me, so all that refers to Me is accomplished.” They said,

“Lord, look, here are two swords.” He told them,

“That’s enough.”

They came to a place there named Gethsemane; and Jesus told His disciples,

“Sit here while I go over there and pray. And you pray, that you yourselves might not enter into temptation.”

He had taken just Peter, James, and John with Him; and He now began to be troubled and very distressed, and told them,

“My soul is very distressed. Stay here and keep watch.” He went a little farther from them, about a stone’s throw; and fell to the ground and began to pray,

“Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. If You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Yet not My will but Yours be done.”

Then an angel from Heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. He arose from prayer and went back to the disciples; and found them asleep from sorrow. He said to Peter,

“Simon, why are you sleeping? Couldn’t you men keep watch with Me for just one hour? Get up and keep watching; and pray that you might not come into temptation. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” He went off a second time, and prayed,

“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

Then He came back to them; but found them asleep, for their eyelids were very heavy. They didn’t know what to say to Him. He left them and went off the third time, to pray, asking the same request.

He was in anguish now; praying so fervently He was sweating, drops of which were like drops of blood falling to the ground. Then He came back to the disciples the third time, and said,

“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It’s all right. Look, the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, we have to go; see, the one betraying Me is at hand.”

As He was still speaking, a large group came up; led by Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve. This group, carrying swords and clubs, was a cohort from the chief priests and scribes and elders. The one who was betraying Him had a pre-arranged signal; had instructed them,

“The One Whom I kiss is the Man. Seize Him, and lead Him away under guard.” He walked straight to Jesus, and said,

“Greetings, Rabbi”; and kissed Him. Jesus said,

“Judas, why are you here? To betray the Son of man with a kiss?”

Then they seized Jesus, and held Him. Those who were with Him realized what was going on, and cried out,

“Lord, should we strike with swords?” One of them reached and pulled His sword; and struck the High Priest’s servant, lacerating his ear. But Jesus interrupted this, by ordering,

“Stop! No more of this. Put your sword up; all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

“You don’t think I can’t appeal to My Father, and He won’t supply Me, instantly, with more than twelve legions of angels? But how could the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen this way?” And He said to the priests, and officers in charge of the cohort,

“Have you come out here with swords and clubs, as against a bandit, to arrest Me? I’m with you day after day in the temple, teaching; and you never laid a hand on Me. But this whole incident happened to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets. This hour, and the power of darkness, are yours.”

Then all of them deserted Him, and fled. There was a certain young man, wearing only a fine linen smock over his bare body, following Him nearby. They did catch this one; but he left out of his smock, and escaped naked.

Those who arrested Jesus led Him away to the palace home of the High Priest, where the chief priests and scribes and elders had gathered. Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas served alternate years as High Priest. This year was Caiaphas' turn; but they brought Jesus before Annas first.

Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. And Jesus told him,

"I have spoken openly to the world. I've always taught in synagogues, or at the temple, wherever Jews come together. I've never spoke in secret. Why question Me? Question these who have heard Me. Surely, they know what I said."

When He stated this, one of the officers standing nearby slapped Him in the face, and said,

"Is this how You answer a High Priest?" Jesus said,

"If I said something wrong, bear witness of the wrong; but if true, why did you slap Me?" Annas then sent Him, still bound, on to Caiaphas, the High Priest.

Now Peter had followed too, a ways behind, right into Caiaphas' courtyard. He sat down there with the officers, warming himself by a fire; and waited to see the outcome.

Meanwhile, the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus, with which to put Him to death. They weren't finding any. Many false witnesses came forward, but were contradicting each other. Two who came forward said,

"We heard this Man claim, 'I'm able to destroy this temple made by hands; and in three days, build another not made by hands.'" Yet not even in this was their testimony in agreement. Finally, the High Priest stood up among them, and questioned Jesus,

"Aren't You going to answer? What are these men accusing You of?" But Jesus remained silent, making no reply whatsoever. The High Priest kept on, demanding,

"I order You, under oath to the Living God, to confess to us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God, or not." Then Jesus said,

"You've said it yourself; I am. Nevertheless, I'm telling you, from now on, you all will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

At this the High Priest ripped open His cloak, and shouted,

"Blasphemy! What further need have we for witnesses. Look, you've now heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" And they all condemned Him, saying,

"He is deserving of death!"

Then the men who held Him in custody began to mock Him and spit in His face and beat Him with their fists. They blindfolded Him and beat Him more, saying,

"Prophecy to us, You Christ. Which of us hit You?" And saying all kinds of blasphemous statements against Him. And the officers were punching Him as they received Him.

Meanwhile, Peter had been sitting downstairs in the center of the courtyard with some who had kindled a fire. One of the High Priest's serving girls, seeing him in the firelight, warming himself, came over and looked carefully at him; and said,

"You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I don't know what you are talking about, woman. I don't know Him."

He went out to the gateway. There, another maid saw him, and said to those who were standing around,

“He’s one of them; this man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” He denied it again; stating with an oath,

“Not me, I don’t know the Man.”

A while later, about an hour, some of those standing there approached Peter; and one said,

“Surely, you’re one of them, too; for you are Galilean. Your accent gives you away.”

Peter began to curse; and swore,

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I do not know the Man.” Just then, as he spoke, a cock crowed a second time. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered Jesus’ statement, that He had told him,

“This day before the cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

And he went off and began to weep bitterly.

When Judas, who betrayed Him, learned that He had been condemned, he had bitter regret. And he returned the thirty pieces of silver money to the chief priests and elders, saying,

“I’ve sinned! I have betrayed righteous blood.” And they responded,

“So? What’s that to us? You must see to that yourself.”

Judas hurled the silver pieces into the temple, and left. And went away; and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the silver, but said,

“It’s not lawful for us to put this money into the temple treasury, because it’s blood money.”

Following a discussion, they used it to buy the potter’s field, as a place to bury strangers, Therefore, that place has been called, to this day, ‘Hakel dama.’ (means: ‘Field of Blood.’) And what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled,

‘They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the Man on Whom the price was set by the sons of Israel. And they traded them for the potter’s field, just as the Lord ordered me.’

Early that morning, the entire Sanhedrin convened an assembly. Chief priests, scribes, elders; they were all conspiring against Jesus, to put Him to death. They brought Him into their Council hall, and asked,

“Tell us, are You the Christ?” Jesus answered,

“If I told you, you wouldn’t believe Me. And if I questioned you, you wouldn’t answer Me.” And they all began asking,

“So You are the Son of God?” He declared,

“You said it yourselves. Yes, I am!” Then they agreed,

“Why do we need further testimony? We, ourselves, have just heard it from His own lips.”

Then the whole body of them arose and led Jesus, bound, from Caiaphas’ to the Praetorium; to hand Him over to the governor, Pontius Pilate. By now, it was early in the day; and they themselves wouldn’t go into a Praetorium of the Gentiles, so as not to be defiled (A requirement for Jews, to eat the Passover meal). So Pilate came outside to them, and asked,

“What charges do you bring against this Man?” They said,

“We found this Man subverting our nation. He maintains that He Himself is the Christ, a King. Too, He opposes the paying of taxes to Caesar.” Pilate responded, “Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your Law”. They said, “We aren’t allowed to put someone to death.”

Pilate went back into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus. Jesus stood before the governor; who put the question to Him,

“Are you king of the Jews?” In answer, Jesus said,

“Do you ask this from your own intuition, or have others told you about Me?”

“Am I a Jew? Your own people and Your chief priests have handed You over to me. What have You done?”

“My Kingdom is not part of this world. If It was, My servants would have fought to keep Me from being delivered to the Judeans. But, for now, My Kingdom is not a part of this realm.”

“Then You are a king?”

“You said it yourself, I am a King. For this very purpose, I was born into the world, to bear witness to the truth. All who are on the side of the truth listen to My voice.”

Pilate paused; then said,

“What is truth?”

Pilate went back out to the Jews, and said,

“I find no grounds for charges in Him.” But the chief priests and elders kept accusing Him of many things, none of which Jesus would reply to. Pilate said to Him,

“You have no answer? Don’t You hear how many charges against You they bear witness of?”

Jesus made no further answer, not a word; and Pilate was very curious about that. But His adversaries kept insisting to the governor,

“He agitates the people by His teaching, all over Judea; starting in Galilee, to all the way here.” Hearing this, Pilate asked whether He was a Galilean. After confirming that He was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod; who happened to be in Jerusalem at that time.

Herod was delighted to meet Jesus. For a long while he had wanted to see Him because of what he had heard of Him. He was hoping to see Jesus perform some miracle.

Herod began to question Him extensively; yet Jesus gave him no answer. But the chief priests and scribes kept jumping up to vehemently accuse Him. Then Herod and his bodyguards began to ridicule Jesus and treat Him disrespectfully. And mocked Him by dressing Him in an elegant robe; then returned Him to Pilate. (On that very day, Herod and Pilate became friendly with each other. Previously, there had been enmity between them.)

Pilate summoned the chief priests and rulers of the people. He was aware that it was envy only that caused them to hand over Jesus; and he wanted to release Him. He told them.

“You’ve brought this Man to me, charging Him with inciting the people to revolt. I have, in front of you, examined Him. I find no basis for the charges you bring against Him. Nor, for that matter, has Herod; for he sent Him back to us. Look, He’s done nothing to deserve death. So, I will punish Him; and release Him.”

Pilate took Jesus inside, and had Him flogged. Then he came back out, and said,

“Look, I’m bringing Him out to you, to let you know I find no crime in Him. Behold, ...the Man!” As soon as the chief priests and officials saw Him, they started shouting,

“Crucify! Crucify!” Pilate said angrily,

“Take Him; and crucify Him yourselves.” But they insisted,

“We’re not permitted to inflict death on someone. But we do have a Law; and according to that Law, He is to die. He appointed Himself to be the Son of God.”

Hearing this, Pilate became even more afraid. He took Jesus back into the Praetorium, and asked,

“Just where are You from?” But Jesus ignored his question. Pilate went on,

“You’re not talking to me? Don’t You realize I have the power to release You; or, to crucify You?” Then Jesus stated,

“You would have no power whatsoever over Me were it not given to you from above. So, the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin.”

Pilate was thinking harder now, how to release Him. But he could still hear the Jews outside shouting,

“If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar’s. Anybody who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

Hearing this, Pilate brought Jesus back out. And he sat down on a judgment seat at a place called ‘Gabba atha’ (That’s Hebrew for ‘The Stone Pavement’). While there, he received a note from his wife, which read,

“Have nothing to do with that righteous Man. Because of Him, I was terribly distressed by a dream last night.”

It was about the sixth hour now; and Pilate presented Jesus, having been flogged. And he declared to the Jews,

“Look! Your king.” But they shouted the more,

“Away with Him. Crucify Him.”

“Why? What evil has He done?” But they were adamant, insisting that He be crucified.

In celebration of the Passover, it was the custom of the governor to pardon and release to the crowd a prisoner, one whom they asked for. At that time, the Romans were holding a notorious felon named Barabbas, who was with those who had committed murder in some insurrection in the city.

The crowd which had gathered there was petitioning Pilate to make this pardon, which he customarily did for them. So Pilate tried this: Responding to their petition, he said,

“Do you wish me to release the king of the Jews?” But the chief priests riled up, and persuaded, the mob to petition him for Barabbas instead; and have Jesus destroyed. They started to call out in unison,

“No! Away with this Man; give us Barabbas.”

“Then what shall I do with Jesus, Whom you call ‘King of the Jews?’”

“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?”

“We have no king but Caesar. Crucify Him!”

“Why? What evil has He done? I find no crime in Him demanding death. Which of the two do you want me to release, Barabbas, or Jesus, the so-called Christ?”

“Barabbas!”

They were insistent, and kept shouting all the more; and their loud voices began to prevail. Pilate, seeing that a riot was starting, took water and washed his hands in front

of the crowd, saying,

“I am innocent of this Man’s blood; you are liable for that yourselves.” They answered,

“His blood be on us; and on our children.”

So Pilate, wishing to appease the crowd, gave in to their demand. He released Barabbas, the murderer they asked for; and, according to their desire, handed Jesus over to be crucified.

The governor’s soldiers took Jesus back into the Praetorium; and called out the whole garrison around Him in the courtyard. They stripped Him, and placed a purple cloak around Him; put together a crown made of thorns and jammed it on His head. They stuck a reed, as a scepter, into His right hand; and were bowing before Him, mocking Him, declaring,

“Hail to the King of the Jews”, and were spitting at Him. They grabbed the reed scepter, and were hitting His head with it. After they had sport with Him, they stripped off the purple cloak and put His own robe on Him. Then they led Him, bearing His own cross, out to be crucified.

Going out, they laid hands on some man (Simon of Cyrene; he’s the father of Alexander and Rufus) coming in from the country. They pressed him into service to lift up Jesus’ cross, and carry it behind Him. There was a large number of people following, including ladies, beating their breasts and lamenting over Him. Jesus turned to those ladies, and said,

“Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me. Weep instead for yourselves and your children. Days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed. For then they will tell the mountains, ‘Fall on us’, and the hills, ‘Cover us.’ If this is done in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?”

They led Him, along with two others, convicted felons who were also being taken out to be executed, to a place called, ‘Golgotha’ (That’s Hebrew, means: Place of a Skull). They offered Him a mixture of wine drugged with myrrh; which, after tasting, He declined to drink.

Here they crucified Him, along with the two criminals. One to His right and one to His left, with Jesus in the center between them. Jesus said, “Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” It was about the third hour when they nailed Him to the cross.

Pilate had prepared a placard, written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, of the charge against Him; to be posted on the cross. It read,

“This is Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.” And it was put on the cross above His head. Many Judeans read this placard, since the location of the crucifixion was near the city. So the chief priests of the Jews protested to the governor,

“Don’t write, ‘King of the Jews’; but that He claimed Himself to be King of the Jews. But Pilate answered them angrily,

“What I have written, I have written.”

The soldiers who crucified Jesus took His outer clothing, four parts, and divided them, one part for each soldier; and a tunic remained. This tunic was seamless; having been woven into one piece, from its top throughout its length. So they said to each other,

“Let’s not tear it; but decide whose it will be by casting lots.” This happened to fulfill that Scripture which says, ‘They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they casts lots.’

So the soldiers actually did this; then sat down there, to keep watch over Him.

People stood by looking on. Some who were passing by were insulting Him, and wagging their heads. One called out,

“Ha! You who would cast down the temple, and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself. If You’re the Son of God, come down off the cross.”

In the same way the chief priests, along with scribes and elders were making fun of Him among themselves. One said,

“Other’s He saved; Himself He cannot save.” Another said,

“If This is the Christ, His Chosen One, let Him save Himself. Let this King of Israel come down off the cross right now. If we see that we’ll believe in Him.” Still another said,

“He trusted God, let Him rescue Him now, if He wants to; for He claimed, ‘I am God’s Son’.” The soldiers were making fun of Him, too. Coming up close, they offered Him wine vinegar, and said,

“If You’re King of the Jews, save Yourself.”

One of the condemned hanging on crosses there with Jesus was insulting Him similarly, saying,

“Aren’t You the Christ? So save Yourself and us.” But the other criminal reproached that one, saying,

“Don’t you fear God at all, seeing as how you’re under the same sentence? And we, justly so, for we’re getting what we deserve for what we did. But He’s done nothing wrong.” Then, to Him he said,

“Jesus, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” Jesus told him,

“Trust Me, this day, you will be with Me in Paradise.”

Standing near, by His cross, were His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. Jesus, seeing His mother, and that disciple whom He loved, standing there, said to His mother,

“Lady, look. Your son.” Then He said to that disciple,

“Look. Your mother.” From that moment on, this disciple took her into his own household.

By now it was about the sixth hour; and until the ninth hour a dark heavy overcast fell over the whole land, obscuring the sunlight. About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out loudly,

“Eli, Eli, lama Sa bach tha Ni?” (Which translates: My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?) Hearing this, some standing nearby began to say,

“He’s calling for Elijah.”

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were accomplished, said, for the Scripture to be fulfilled,

“I thirst.”

A bucket of wine vinegar had been set there; and, quickly, somebody ran to it and soaked a sponge full with it. Then he stuck the sponge on a hyssop stalk, and lifted it up to His lips; and gave Him a drink. But the rest said,

“Let Him be. Let’s see if Elijah comes to rescue Him.” When Jesus had taken the wine vinegar, He said,

“It is completed.” Then loudly,

“Father, into Your hands I deposit My spirit.”

Having said this, Jesus exhaled His last breath and bowed His head; and died.

And look, the curtain of the holy of holies was torn in two from top to bottom, right down the middle. The ground shook, solid rocks split. Tombs cracked open. And the bodies of many righteous ones who had fallen asleep were raised. (Coming out of the tombs, after His resurrection, they went into the holy city; and were made apparent to many.)

The guard standing watch over Jesus was frightened at seeing the quake, and everything that happened. Their officer-in-charge, who was standing directly in front of Him and saw the way He died praised God, and said,

“Certainly, this Man was righteous. He was, in truth, the Son of God.”

The crowd which had gathered out there for this spectacle, having witnessed what occurred, began to go back, beating their breasts. Moreover, all His acquaintances, including many ladies who had accompanied Him to Jerusalem, were standing and observing these things from a distance. Among those ladies were Mary Magdalene, as well as Mary the mother of James the shorter and Joses, and Salome, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons. These, together, used to take care of Him when He was in Galilee.

It was now already late in the afternoon, and this was the preparation day; that is, the day before the Sabbath. The Judeans didn’t want to have bodies left on crosses on a Sabbath. (And this one was to be a special Sabbath.) They asked Pilate to have the legs broken, and the bodies hauled off. So some soldiers came and, indeed, broke first the legs of one, then of the other, of those crucified with Jesus.

But coming to Him, they saw He was already dead; so they didn’t break His legs. Instead, one of the soldiers stabbed his spear into His side. Immediately, blood clots and fluid flowed out. This happened to fulfill that Scripture which says, ‘Not a bone of Him shall be crushed.’ And, as another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on the One Whom they have pierced.’

After this, since the next day was the Sabbath, there came a rich man named Joseph. Joseph was from the Jewish city, Arimathea. He was a reputable member of the Sanhedrin; but was, himself, hoping for the Kingdom of God. He also was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Judeans. (Joseph had not consented to their decision or course of action.)

This good and righteous man took courage and went in before Pilate to ask permission to take Jesus’ body. Pilate wondered if He was dead already. So he summoned the officer and inquired as to whether Jesus had died. After the officer verified it, the governor granted Joseph’s request; and ordered the corpse be turned over to him.

First, Joseph purchased some fine linen. Helping him was Nicodemus, a Pharisee who earlier had first approached Jesus privately after dark. Nicodemus brought a package of aloes and myrrh, about seventy-five pounds weight.

In the vicinity where Jesus was crucified there was a garden. And in this garden was Joseph’s own tomb. A new tomb he had hewn out in solid rock; and in which no

one had yet been lain. They took Jesus' body down; and, as Jews customarily prepare a burial, wound It around, including the spices, with the clean linen, and laid It inside the tomb. Then they rolled a large stone over the entrance; and left.

They laid Jesus there because it was preparation day; the evening twilight of the Jewish Sabbath was fast approaching. And that tomb was handy.

Some ladies who had come with Him from Galilee, including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses, were sitting there across from the gravesite. They had followed along to see where the tomb was, and how His body was laid. Then they went back and prepared spices and perfumed lotions. And rested on the Sabbath, as is the commandment.

The next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and some Pharisees met together; and went before Pilate, to say,

“Sir, we recall that charlatan, while He was still living, said, ‘After three days, I am to be raised again.’ Therefore, give orders for the gravesite to be made secure till the third day. Or else, His disciples could come at any time and steal His corpse; then spread the tale, ‘He was raised from the dead’. And this last fraud would be worse than at first.” Pilate told them,

“You have your own guards. Go make it as secure as you know how.”

So they went and secured the gravesite by sealing the stone, and posting a guard detail.

The Sabbath was past now; and it was still dark on the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Joses, Salome, Joanna, and the rest of the ladies set off, just as the first light of dawn showed, to visit the gravesite. They were bringing the spices they had purchased and prepared, to anoint Him. Yet, they were wondering among themselves,

“Who will roll back the stone from the tomb door for us?”, for it was very heavy.

But when they arrived, the sun was up now, they looked up and saw the stone had already been rolled back from the tomb entrance.

(For look, earlier a severe tremor occurred; and an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven. His appearance was like lightning and his clothes were white as snow. And he came over and rolled the stone back; and sat on top of it. He so frightened the men watching that they shook, and became like dead ones.)

A few of the ladies went inside; and found that the body was missing. At once Mary Magdalene took off, to go report this to Peter. Then the other ladies entered, and also saw the tomb was empty.

While they were puzzling about this, this happened: Suddenly, two young men in brilliant clothing stood near them; and they were stunned. Fear so overwhelmed them, they could only stare at the ground. Then the angel to their right, who wore a white robe, sat down and spoke to them,

“Don’t be afraid. I know that y’all are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, the One Who was crucified. He’s not here. He has been raised, just as He told you. Come here, see the place where He was lying.

“Don’t you remember what He told you while He was still in Galilee? That the Son of man must be given over into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and to rise on the third day?” Then they remembered Jesus’ words. The angel went on,

“Now go quickly, and report to Peter and all His disciples that He’s been raised from the dead. And that He’s going ahead of you to Galilee. You all will see Him there. Look, I have given you the message.”

They came out at once and hurried away from the gravesite, trembling but ecstatically joyful. Too afraid to say anything to anybody, they ran to report these things to all His disciples.

While they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and told the chief priests everything that occurred. These joined the elders for a consultation.

And they decided to offer the soldiers a sufficient amount of silver money, to claim that Jesus’ disciples had come at night; and stole His body while they were asleep. They assured them that if the governor ever heard about it, they would persuade him and keep them free from blame.

And those accepted the money, and did as they were coached. In fact, this story was widely circulated among the Jews; and still is, to this day.

To the disciples, the ladies’ words seemed like fantasies, and they refused to believe them. However, just moments before, Mary Magdalene had rushed in and told Simon Peter and John,

“The Lord’s body has been removed from the tomb! We don’t know where they’ve put Him.”

So Peter and John started out for the gravesite. The two were running together; but John, being faster, outran Peter and reached the tomb first. John didn't go in, but bent down and looked inside. He could see the strips of linen lying there.

Peter, running up behind him, got there; and went right on inside. He saw the linen strips lying there, as well as the other cloth, which had been wrapped around Jesus' face. Peter saw this other cloth wasn't lying with the linen strips, but alone, folded neatly and in a separate place.

Then John, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. And he saw, and believed. (They hadn't yet understood from Scripture that He must rise from the dead.) Then they returned to that place which they had for themselves. Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, stood there outside the tomb, crying. And she, in tears, stooped over and looked into the tomb. She saw two angels, in white clothing, sitting where the body had lain; one at the head and one at the foot. And one asked her,

"Lady, why are you crying?" She answered,

"My Lord has been taken away; I don't know where they put Him." Having said this, she turned around and noticed Jesus standing there. But she didn't realize It was Jesus. Then He asked her,

"Lady, why are you crying?" She, supposing Him to be a gardener, said,

"Sir, if you carried Him away, tell me where to, and I will get Him." Then Jesus greeted her,

"Mary! Be rejoicing." And she turned to Him; and exclaimed,

"Rabboni!" (That's Hebrew, means: "Teacher") And she rushed to Him, and fell at, and grabbed, His feet. But Jesus told her,

"Don't be holding Me, for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. And don't be afraid. Go now and give this message to My brothers: 'I am ascending to My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God.' And for them to go on to Galilee. They will see Me there."

Mary, then, went back to the disciples, bearing the news.

"I have seen the Lord", and that He had told her these things.

That same afternoon, two of them were going to Emmaus, a village some seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking and debating with each other about all that had taken place.

As they walked along discussing this, Jesus Himself joined them; and fell in alongside them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. And He asked them,

"What are these matters you're discussing between yourselves, as you walk along?" They stopped; and stood still, with sad faces. One, named Cleopas, in response, asked,

"Have You been in Jerusalem, yet You alone don't know what happened there in the past few days? He asked,

"What happened?"

"About what happened to Jesus of Nazareth, Who proved to be a prophet, mighty in word and deed in the sight of God and all the people. How the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be sentenced to death; and had Him crucified. We had so hoped that He was the One destined to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides this, today makes the third day since all this occurred.

"Moreover, certain of the ladies with us had gone early to the tomb, but didn't find His body. Then they came back and astonished us by claiming to have seen a vision of angels who announced to them that He is alive. Further, some of our companions

went to the tomb, and found it just as the ladies described it; but they didn't see Him." Then He said to them,

"O dim ones! You're so slow of heart to believe what the Prophets said. Didn't the Christ have to first suffer these things; and, only after, to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses, and with all the Prophets, He explained to them everything in the Scriptures which referred to Himself.

When they neared the village that was their destination, He seemed to intend to journey on farther. But they strongly insisted,

"Remain with us. It's getting towards evening, and the day is almost over." So He went in to stay with them.

When they reclined for supper, He took a bread loaf. After giving thanks, He broke the loaf and handed them a portion of bread. Immediately their eyes were fully opened, and they recognized Him. And immediately He vanished from their sight. Then they exclaimed to each other,

"Weren't our hearts ablaze within us as He was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?"

They got up at once, and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and the others together, who told them,

"Yes, it's true! The Lord has indeed risen; and has appeared to Peter."

Then those two related to them their experience on the way to Emmaus; and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Late into the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were still talking about these things. Then, although the doors there were locked for fear of the Judeans, Jesus appeared there; and stood in their midst, and greeted them,

"Peace to you all." They were shocked and frightened, because they thought they were seeing a spirit. But He said to them,

"Why are you disturbed? Why does doubt arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and feet. See, It's Me. Feel Me. Look at Me. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bones like you see I have." After saying this He showed them both of His hands, and His side. But for sheer joy they still couldn't believe it, and were so surprised. So He asked them,

"Do you have something here to eat?" They handed Him a piece of broiled fish; and He took it and ate as they watched. The disciples, then, rejoiced over seeing the Lord.

But Thomas, known as 'the Twin', one of the original twelve, hadn't been there with them when Jesus appeared. When the other disciples told him,

"We have seen the Lord", he declared,

"Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and my hand into His side, I simply will never believe it."

A week later, the disciples were indoors again; this time Thomas was with them. Again, though the doors were locked, Jesus appeared; and stood in their midst, and said,

"Peace to you all." Then He addressed Thomas,

"See My hands? Put your finger right here. Reach with your hand, and put it into My side. And stop doubting; but believe." Thomas exclaimed,

"My Lord! My God!" Then Jesus told him,

“You’ve believed because you’ve seen Me? Happy are those who haven’t seen; and yet, believe.”

The eleven disciples went on to Galilee, to the mount where Jesus had pre-arranged to meet them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted.

To these men, Jesus showed Himself to be alive after His suffering by many convincing proofs. Over a period of forty days, He appeared to them; and spoke to them about things concerning the Kingdom of God.

“These are My words I spoke to you while I was still with you: That everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets and Psalms, must be fulfilled.” Then He opened their minds to comprehend the Scriptures, and said,

“Thus it is written that the Christ had to suffer, and rise again from the dead. And, in His name, repentance and the forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.

“Look, you all have witnessed these things. And I am sending upon you what My Father promised, which you heard of from Me. But don’t leave Jerusalem just yet. Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from the Highest. For indeed, John baptized with water; but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Those gathered with Him wanted to know,

“Lord, are You going to restore the Kingdom to Israel at this time?”

“It’s not for you to know the times or epochs which the Father has reserved to His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the farthest parts of the earth.

“All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Me. So you, go and make disciples from all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all I have commanded you; and look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

After saying these things, He led them out near Bethany, to a mount called Olivet. Which is about a Sabbath day’s walk from Jerusalem. Then He raised His arms and blessed them. As He was looking at, and blessing, them, He parted from them. And He was taken up, through a cloud, which obscured their view of Him.

Even as He was ascending, they kept gazing into the sky until, look, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and stated,

“You men of Galilee, why are you standing, looking into the sky? This same Jesus, Who is being taken from you into Heaven, will return in the same manner as you have just watched His ascent into Heaven.”

Then they went on back to Jerusalem, filled with joy. And they were continually in the temple, praising God.

There were many other things Jesus did, that if they were all recorded ... well, I suppose even the whole world wouldn’t have space enough for the books which would be written.

Index

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>	<u>page</u>
	1:1			1
		3:1-2		1
3:1-6	1:2-6	3:3-6	1:19-24	1
3:7-10		3:7-14		1
3:11-12	1:7-8	3:15-18	1:,15,25-28	2
3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-23a	1:29-34	2
4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13		3
4:12,17	1:14-15	3:19-20;4:14a	4:1-4	3
		4:14b-30		4
4:13-16		4:31a		4
4:18-22	1:16-20			4
	1:21-28	4:31b-37		5
8:14-17	1:29-34	4:38-41		5
4:23-24	1:35-39	4:42-44		5
8:2-4	1:40-45	5:12-16		5
9:1-8	2:1-12	5:17-26		6
		5:1-11		6
9:9-13	2:13-17	5:27-32		7
9:14-17	2:18-22	5:33-39		7
12:1-8	2:23-28	6:1-5		7
12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-11		8
12:15-21;4:25	3:7-12	6:17-19		8
10:2-4	3:16-19a	6:12-16		8
5:1-12		6:20-26		9
		14:34-35		9
5:13-16	9:49-50	11:33-36		9
5:17-22				9
5:23-26		12:58-59		10
5:27-48;18:8-9	9:43-48	6:27-30,32-36		10
6:1-8,16-18				11
18:19-20				11
6:19-34		12:22-34;16:13		11
7:1-6		6:37,41-42		12
7:12		6:31,38		12
7:13-20, 12:33-35		6:43-45		12
7:21-27		6:46-49		12
7:28-29				12
8:1,5-13		7:1-10		13
		7:11-17		13
11:2-3		7:18-21		13
11:4-19		7:22-35;16:16-17		14
11:20-30		10:13-15,21-22		14
		7:36-50		15
		8:1-3		15
12:22-26	3:19b-26	11:14-18		15
12:27-32, 36-37	3:27-30	11:19-23;12:10		16
12:46-50	3:31-35	8:19-21		16
13:1-11	4:1-11	8:4-10		16
13:12-23	4:12-25	8:11-18;10:23-24		17
	4:26-29			17
13:31-33	4:30-32	13:18-21		17
13:24-30				18
13:34-35	4:33-34			18
13:36-43				18
13:44				18
13:45-52				18

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>	<u>page</u>
8:18,23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25		19
8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26-39		19
9:18-24	5:21-43	8:40-56		20
9:25-38				21
13:53-58	6:1-6			21
10:1,5-16	6:7-11;3:13-15	9:1-5;10:3-12,16		22
10:24-25,40-42		6:40		22
11:1	6:12-13	9:6		22
14:1-2	6:14-16	9:7-9		22
14:3-12	6:17-29			23
14:13-14	6:31-34	9:10-11	6:1-2,5	23
14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:6-13	24
14:22-29	6:45-50		6:14-20	24
14:30-36	6:51-56		6:21	25
15:1-16	7:1-18	6:39		25
15:17-20	7:19-23			26
15:21-28	7:24-30			26
15:29-31	7:31-37			26
15:32-39	8:1-10			27
12:38;16:1-12	8:11-21			27
	8:22-26			27
16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21		28
16:21-28;10:39	8:31-38;9:1	9:22-27;17:33		28
17:1-13	9:2-13	9:28-36		29
17:14-17	9:14-23	9:37-41		29
17:18-23	9:24-32	9:42-45		30
17:24-27				30
18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48		30
18:6-7,10-11,14	9:38-42	9:49-50;17:1-2		31
18:15-18,21-35		17:3-4		31
		9:51-56;10:1-2		33
8:19-22		9:57-62		33
		17:11-19		33
		10:17-20		33
		10:38-42		33
		10:25-37		34
		11:27-28		34
12:39-41,43-45		11:24-26		34
12:42		11:29-32;12:54-57		35
23:25-26		11:37-41,53-54		35
		17:20-22		35
10:26-33		12:1-9		35
		12:13-21		35
10:34-36		12:49-53		36
		13:1-9		36
		13:10-17		36
		13:22-28		36
		14:1-24		37
		13:29-33		37
10:37-38		14:25-33		38
18:12-13		15:1-10		38
		15:11-32		38
		17:5-10		39
		16:1-12		39
		16:14-15,19-31		40
6:9-15	11:25-26	11:1-4		40
7:7-9		11:5-8		40
7:10-11		11:9-13		41

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>	<u>page</u>
		18:1-14		41
19:1-4	10:1-4	12:35-38		41
19:5-12	10:5-12	16:18		42
19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17		42
19:16-26	10:17-27	18:18-27		42
19:27-30	10:28-31	18:28-30		43
20:1-16				43
20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34		43
20:20-28	10:35-45	22:24-27		44
20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43		44
		19:1-10		45
25:14-30		19:11-27	11:45-47	45
			11:48-50,53	46
			11:55-57	47
26:6-13	14:3-9		12:1-8	47
			12:9-12	47
21:1-3	11:1-3	19:28-31		47
21:4-9	11:4-10	19:32-38	12:13-15	48
		19:39-44	12:19	48
21:10-11,14-16	11:11			48
21:18-19a	11:12-13			48
21:12-13,17	11:14-18	19:45-48;21:37-38		49
21:19b-22	11:19-24			49
21:23-29	11:27-33	20:1-8		49
21:30-32				50
21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19		50
22:1-6				50
22:7-14				51
22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26		51
22:23-31	12:18-27	20:27-37		51
22:32-46	12:28-34	11:43,46		52
23:1-12	12:35-40	20:38-46		52
		11:42;44-45,47-52		53
23:13-24,27-39		13:34-35;20:47		53
24:1-2	12:41-44;13:1-2	21:1-6		54
24:3-22	13:3-20	21:7-24		55
10:17-22		12:11-12;17:31-32		55
24:23-42	13:21-33	21:25-35		56
25:31-33		17:23-30,34-37		56
24:43-51	13:34-37	12:39-48		57
25:1-4,34-46		21:36		57
25:5-13				58
26:1-5	14:1-2			58
26:14-16	14:10-11	22:1-16		58
26:17-20	14:12-17	22:28-30		58
26:21-29	14:18-25	22:17-23,31-38		59
26:30-36	14:26-32	22:39-40a		59
26:37-46	14:33-42	22:40b-46		60
26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53		60
26:57-70	14:53-68	22:54-57,63-65	18:12-25	61
26:71-75	14:69-72	22:58-62	18:26-27	62
27:3-10				62
27:1	15:1	22:66-71		62
27:2		23:1	18:28-29	62
27:11-14	15:2-5,10	23:2-5	18:30-38	63
		23:6-12		63
27:18		23:13-16,22b	19:1	63
27:15-17,19			19:4-15	64

<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>	<u>page</u>
27:20-25	15:6-9,11-14	23:17-22a,23	18:39-40	64
27:26	15:15	23:24-25	19:2-3,16	65
27:27-31	15:16-20		19:17	65
27:32-35,37-38	15:21-27	23:26-34,38	19:18-24	65
27:36,39-49	15:29-36	23:35-37,39-45	19:25-27	66
27:50-60	15:37-46	23:46-53	19:30-42	67
27:61-66	15:47	23:54-56		68
28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-8		69
28:11-15				69
		24:9-11	20:1-2	69
28:9-10			20:3-18	70
		24:13-23		70
		24:24-35		71
		24:36-43	20:19-20,24-28	71
28:16-17			20:29	72
28:18-20	Acts 1:3-12	24:44-53		72
			21:25	72

These parts of the Gospels are not included in this work:

Matthew chapters 1 and 2.

Luke chapters 1 and 2 and 3:23b-38.

John 1:1-18, 35 thru 3:36. 4:5 thru 5:47.

6:3-4,22 thru 11:44. 11:51-52, 54.

12:16-18, 20 thru 18:11. 19:28-31.

20:21-23, 30 thru 21:24

*It is recommended that you read these in your favorite translation,
for a more complete understanding of the story.*