

NOTES  
ON THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

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PART 1  
Matthew — Acts



GENE CUNNINGHAM

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*"Endure hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."*  
(2 Timothy 2:3)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are so thankful for the contributions of these faithful saints and fellow-servants, for their dedication and commitment to this project!



## DEDICATION

*“This will be written for the generation to come,  
that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord.”*  
Psalm 102:18

While it is my hope and prayer that these notes will be helpful to all current students of the Word of God, I send them forth with a special dedication to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are yet to come on the scene of world history (Rev. 7:1–8). They will be the heroes of the faith in the coming time of Tribulation following the soon coming Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

To these brothers and sisters of the future, I want you to know you have been thought of, prayed for, and loved—before you even knew your mission. We of the Church Age salute you for the sufferings you will endure and the victories you will win. We bid you to be strong in the Lord, for your victory is sure in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the labor put into these notes by many hands and through many prayers, be a help to you as you boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a dark and dangerous time!

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled by means the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ* (John 3:16).

It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth, man is blind to the things of God. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again"* (John 3:6–7).

2. *We must be filled by means of the Spirit* (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

3. *We must approach in faith* (Hebrews 11:6).

Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

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## **PREFACE**

While I was teaching in Myanmar/Burma in March 2019, some of my long-term, advanced students suggested that I go through the New Testament and provide basic notes, which they could then be able print as a study Bible. They specifically asked that I focus on issues that are a major area of confusion in the churches where they work. Therefore, the following commentary will focus on these five primary areas:

1. What is the nature of God's grace and how is it received?
2. What is God's plan of salvation and the clear message of the Gospel?
3. What is the Bible's teaching on the security and assurance of the believer?
4. How is the believer to live the Christian life and be effective in witness/service?
5. What does prophecy say about the last days and the order of end-times events?

## **PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

These notes are purposely brief in nature. This work is not intended to be a complete commentary. All through the work I have kept in mind those who live in remote areas of our world, who labor to both understand and to teach others the Word of God. They do not have access to Bible school or seminary training. Neither are they able to afford the vast array of books available to pastors and teachers who live in more advanced countries.

I encourage all who utilize these notes to study them with an open Bible. Pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21) as you study. Read the context of the passage carefully. Look up and compare the references that are provided. Above all, let the Word of God, and not these notes, guide your insight into God's Word. As I always tell my students: "Never take my word for anything; search the Scriptures and prove what is true" (Acts 17:10–12; 1 John 4:1).



**The Gospel According to**  
***Matthew***



## INTRODUCTION

The book of Matthew is the most Jewish of the Gospels. Its theme is the presentation of the King and the offer of His kingdom, and His rejection by the Nation of Israel as a whole. The result was His crucifixion and resurrection.

The book begins, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*” (Matt. 1:1). It reaches its climax with the crucifixion of Jesus, under the sign posted by Pilate, “*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews*” (Matt. 27:37). The conclusion of the book is the commissioning of the apostles to carry the message of the Gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18–20).

Matthew has been called “the Gospel of Judgment” because of Jesus’ condemnation for their unbelief (Matt. 8:12; 23:13–39) and His prophecies of future judgment (Matthew 24–25). However, Israel’s rejection of the Savior opened the door for the formation of the Church, fulfilling the prophecy of Genesis 9:26–27, and the grafting in of the Gentiles into the root of Israel (Rom. 1:16, 11:24–28) until the time of the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18) and the restoration of Israel through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Matthew was completed by the year 60 A.D. This was just six years before the beginning of the Jewish-Roman war that resulted in the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the nation of Israel. This Gospel was a final warning to Israel of God’s impending wrath for their unbelief.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

The miraculous conception of Jesus by the virgin Mary was a fulfillment of prophecy.

### **The Genealogy of Jesus**

Matthew 1:1–17 (Luke 3:23–38; Ruth 4:18–22)

**1:1 “Jesus Christ”** (Messiah). This genealogy shows “Jesus” (meaning “the salvation of the Lord”) to be the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–17) and also of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; 22:14–18).

**1:3–16 “Tamar ... Rahab ... Ruth ... the wife of Uriah ... Mary.”** It was not customary to mention women in ancient Jewish lineages. These five women show the power of God’s grace to transform lives. Though Mary was a pure virgin, each of the other women was compromised by either sinful conduct or nationality. Yet God’s grace transforms the most defiled, making them heroes of the faith.

**1:6 “David ... begot Solomon.”** It is here that the lineages of Matthew and of Luke separate. Matthew follows the lineage of Joseph through Rehoboam, which includes Jeconiah (Matt. 1:11). It was prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer. 22:24–30; Jer. 36:29–31) that none of Jeconiah’s (Also called “Jeconiah,” “Coniah,” and “Jehoiachin”) descendants would sit on the throne of David, due to his evil reign (2 Kings 24:8–9; 2 Chron. 36:9–10). While Matthew follows the line of Joseph—Jesus’ legal right to the throne, Luke follows the line of Mary through Nathan (Luke 3:31)—Jesus’ physical link to David. This is why Luke writes, “(as was supposed) the son of Joseph,” (Luke 3:23), since Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.

**1:16 “of whom was born Jesus.”** The word “whom” is feminine, referring to Mary. Matthew is careful to protect Jesus from any physical link to Joseph (note: “before they came together,” v. 18). The virgin birth is essential to the story of the Person and work of Christ.

### **The Supernatural Conception and Birth of Jesus Christ**

Matthew 1:18–25 (Luke 1:26–38; 2:1–21)

**1:19 “Joseph her husband.”** From the point of engagement/betrothal on, the Jews considered a couple to be bound to each other legally. Jacob considered Rachel his wife, even before they came together.

**1:20 “conceived ... of the Holy Spirit.”** The conception and birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary was essential for Him to be born without a sin nature and able, therefore, to be the Savior of the world. In other words, He was not born under the sin of Adam. See Genesis 5:3 and Romans 5:12.

**1:21–23 “Jesus ... Immanuel.”** Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14 to show that this virgin-born son was “God with us.” The name “Immanuel” reveals His identity as God in the flesh, and “Jesus” reveals His purpose—to bring the salvation of God to mankind.

**1:24–25 “Joseph ... did not know her.”** Mary remained a virgin until the birth of Jesus, after which she and Joseph had other children (Matt. 13:55–56).

**1:25 “And he called His name Jesus.”** In obedience to God’s command (v. 21), Joseph gave Him the name “Jesus,” which is the equivalent of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” It means both “the Lord is salvation” and “salvation is of the Lord.” Here, at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel, he makes clear that “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32) and also that “there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). It is important to see that Mary referred to Jesus as “God my Savior” (Luke 1:47). In Roman Catholic teaching, Mary is said to be sinless. Here, she acknowledges her need of a Savior, just like all other men.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 2**

The wise men from the East come to worship; Herod plots to kill Jesus.

### **The Coming of the Wise Men**

Matthew 2:1–12

**2:1–6 “*In Bethlehem.*”** The location of Jesus’ birth was crucial for the fulfillment of the prophecy from Micah 5:2, which is quoted in v. 6. This small village was known as “*the city of David*” (Luke 2:4, 11).

**2:2 “*King of the Jews.*”** The story of Jesus’ life begins and ends with this title (Matt. 27:37). “*His star in the East.*” Remember that the wise men came from the East, where they saw His star. These wise men were no doubt the descendants of those wise men of Babylon over whom Daniel was placed (Dan. 2:48). His prophecy of the final days of Israel (Dan. 9:24–27) would have been known to them. They would have been watching and waiting for the sign of this star. See Numbers 24:17.

**2:3–4 “*When Herod ... had gathered all the chief priests and scribes.*”** Here, we see the beginning of the alliance of the Jewish religious leaders with the Roman authorities against the Lord Jesus. Herod was not a Jew, but an Edomite (Gen. 36:1, 8; Mal. 1:2–3; Rom. 9:13) ruling under the power of Rome.

**2:10 “*When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.*”** The reappearance of the star, and its movement directly over the house (no longer a stable), shows that this “*star*” was miraculous—possibly even an angel lighting the way.

**2:11 “*Gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*”** From the days of the early church, these have been recognized as symbolic of Jesus’ deity/royalty (gold), His absolute purity (frankincense), and His substitutionary death (myrrh). Where frankincense was used for fragrance, myrrh was used for embalming the dead. These gifts would have provided for their flight to and stay in Egypt.

**2:12 “*Being divinely warned in a dream.*”** Not all dreams are messages from God. Here, God used dreams to protect Jesus (Matt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22).

### **The Plot to Kill the Christ-Child**

Matthew 2:13–23

**2:15 “*Out of Egypt I called My Son.*”** This prophecy of Hosea 11:1 is true both of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and of the deliverance of the Christ-Child through Egypt. In the Old Testament, prophecies often have a dual fulfillment.

**2:17, 23 “*Then was fulfilled ... that it might be fulfilled.*”** Matthew takes great care to show that every aspect of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection is a direct fulfillment of the ancient prophecies concerning Him. Sixteen times, from Matthew 1:22–27:35, he speaks of the fulfillment of prophecy. In His first coming, Jesus fulfilled over 330 prophecies of the Old Testament. God’s Word cannot fail!

**2:18 “*A voice was heard in Ramah.*”** Matthew quotes Jeremiah 31:15, speaking of the wailing when Israel was exiled to Babylon. Again, Old Testament prophecies often have a near and a far fulfillment. Usually, the far fulfillment is the greater.

**2:23 “*And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.*”** Matthew claims this was a fulfillment of many “*prophets,*” who said, “*He shall be called a Nazarene.*” No such prophecy can be found in the Old Testament. However, several of the prophets call Him “*Branch*” (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zec. 3:8; 6:12). The root of the word Nazareth is *Netzer*, which means “branch,” and is also related to Hebrew words meaning “consecrated” (a Nazarite), “Sufferer,” and “Despised.” See John 1:46.

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 3**

The ministry of John identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior.

**The Baptism of Jesus**

Matthew 3:1–17 (Mark 1:1–11; Luke 3:1–22; John 1:29–34)

**3:1 “*John the Baptist.*”** John was the older cousin of Jesus. See Luke 1:5–45. John was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 11:9, 11).

**3:2, 6 “*Repent ... baptized ... confessing their sins.*”** John’s ministry was unique in Israel, in that he called on Jews to repent and be baptized. These were the same requirements formerly used to bring proselyte Gentiles into Judaism. John was declaring that Jews were no better than Gentiles before God. They needed to repent—that is, change their mind about their standing before God—and confess that they, like the Gentiles, were sinners. Most Jews believed that their lineage from Abraham saved them (v. 9).

**3:2 “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*”** It was common knowledge that the “*kingdom of heaven*” could not come until the appearance of the Messiah. It was the last promise of the Old Testament (Mal. 3:1–2; 4:1–2).

**3:3 “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness.*”** The prophecy of Isaiah 40:1–8 anticipates the ministry and message of John.

**3:6 “*Baptized.*”** The baptism of John is one of seven mentioned in the New Testament. As careful study shows, the word baptize (*baptizo*) does not mean to sprinkle or immerse in water, but rather to identify the recipient with another. Three of these baptisms utilize water; four do not.

**Baptism without Water**

1. The baptism of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1–2). Here, Israel was identified with Moses as God’s deliverer from Egypt.
2. The baptism of the cross (Luke 12:50). Here Jesus, the Savior, was identified with sinners.
3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). At the moment of salvation, the believer is identified with Christ and imputed with His righteousness. (Gen. 15:6; Psalm 32:1–2).
4. The baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11–12). This refers to the judgment of all those who do not believe. They are the chaff burned “*with unquenchable fire.*”

**Baptism with Water**

1. The baptism of John (Matt. 3:11a). This was a call to Israel to publicly confess that they were sinners (Mark 1:4–5), and also a means of identifying Jesus as the true Messiah (John 1:29–34).
2. The baptism of Jesus by John (Matt. 3:13–17; John 1:29–34). Jesus is identified as the Savior of the world.
3. The baptism of Christian believers (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 16:33). Here, new believers confess their identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

**Baptism plays no part in our salvation!** It has value only after one has believed and entered eternal life, as the first step in discipleship (Matt. 28:19).

**3:7 “*Brood of vipers.*”** John knew the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to the baptism was an indication of their hypocrisy. Jesus used the same terms to refer to them in Matthew 23:13–33. “*The wrath to come.*” This is a common theme running through Matthew. He sets before them, in vv. 8–12, only two options: repentance and faith, or the wrath of God.

## MATTHEW 3:11–4:11

**3:11 “*He who is coming after me.*”** John’s message was focused on “*prepar[ing] the way of the LORD*” (Isa. 40:3). In Isaiah, the word “*LORD*” is Jehovah. John did not offer salvation himself, but pointed people to Jesus, who would “*save [deliver] His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). “***He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***” The promise of the Holy Spirit means the bringing of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–28).

**3:12 “*Unquenchable fire.*”** It is clear in this verse that this is the fire of everlasting judgment. These are the only two options facing all men of every nation.

**3:13 “*Jesus came from Galilee ... to be baptized.*”** The baptism of Jesus by John was different than that of any other man or woman. It was “*to fulfill all righteousness*” (v. 15). First, the coming of the Spirit in the form of a dove revealed Him to be the Son of God. See John 1:32–34. Second, it identified Jesus with the repentant and believing remnant of Israel as their Savior. Finally, it put the seal of God upon the ministry of John, confirming that he was a true and faithful prophet.

**3:17 “*This is My beloved Son.*”** This confirms Jesus as the Son spoken of in Psalm 2:7 and Proverbs 30:4. See also Luke 4:18–19, Jesus’ first public statement, where He quotes Isaiah 61:1–2, which speaks of the Spirit, the LORD (the Father), and Himself, as the first clear presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 4

This covers the temptation and triumph of Jesus over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

### **The Temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness**

Matthew 4:1–11 (Luke 4:1–13)

**4:1 “*Jesus was led ... by the Spirit ... to be tempted by the devil.*”** The word “*tempted*” can be translated either “*tested*” or “*tempted*.” God cannot be tempted with evil (James 1:13). Jesus, as man, could be “*tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin*” (Heb. 2:17–18; 4:14–16; 7:25–26). The Spirit will lead us into testing (James 1:2–4, 12), but not into temptation (Matt. 6:13).

**4:3 “*If You are the Son of God.*”** Literally, Satan said, “***Since*** You are the Son of God.” Satan knew who Jesus was and knew that only He could turn stones into bread. If Satan could cause Jesus to sin, the plan of salvation would fail.

**4:4 “*Man shall not live by bread alone.*”** Here, Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. This, along with “*It is written,*” makes it clear that Jesus’ victory—both here and throughout His life—would be based on obedience to the written Word of God. The Living Word (John 1:1) was a perfect reflection of the written Word.

**4:5–6 “*The devil ... said ... it is written.*”** Even the devil can use Scripture, taken out of context, to try to deceive man and accomplish his will. Satan has been deceiving mankind from the very beginning (Gen. 3).

**4:7 “*You shall not tempt the Lord your God*”** (Deut. 6:16). In times of trial and temptation, we are to trust God, but never to test Him. He always proves Himself faithful to those who trust and seek after Him (Heb. 11:6).

**4:10 “*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*”** (Deut. 6:13; 10:12). Jesus defeated the devil by using God’s Word at every temptation. This is the example of how we are to be victorious also.

**4:11 “*Then the devil left Him.*”** James gives us the promise, “*Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). These three temptations illustrate the three signs of loving the world (1 John 2:15–17). “***Angels came and ministered to Him.***” Angels are also servants to those who believe in Jesus, though we may never see them (Heb. 1:14; 13:1–2).

### Jesus Begins His Ministry in Capernaum

Matthew 4:12–25 (Mark 1:14–39; Luke 4:14–44)

**4:12–13** “*Jesus heard ... He departed ... and dwelt in Capernaum.*” The arrest of John was the beginning of persecution by the religious and political leaders. Capernaum was known for the great signs Jesus did there and for their unbelief (Matt. 11:23–24).

**4:15–16** “*Light has dawned.*” This quote is from Isaiah 9:1–2 and foretells of Jesus as “*the light of the world*” (John 1:4–5, 9; 8:12). This prophecy also anticipates Jesus’ ministry to the Gentiles.

**4:17** “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” Jesus is the fulfillment of John’s message (Matt. 3:2, 11). The King is announcing the coming of His kingdom. Again, this repentance was a confession of sinfulness and a turning in faith to the only One who could give righteousness (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 5:17–18). The “*kingdom*” here refers to the rule of God, brought to Earth through Jesus Christ, and exemplified in His people (Matt. 6:10).

**4:19–20** “*Follow Me.*” This was a typical call of a rabbi to those chosen to be his disciples. It would take three years of following Him—learning from Him—before the disciples were ready to become “*fishers of men.*” (see The Great Commission in Matt. 28:18–20). Note the immediate response of Peter, Andrew, James, and John in v. 20.

**4:23** “*Jesus went about ... teaching ... preaching ... and healing.*” This is the guide for all true ministry. We first teach those who believe (Matt. 5:1–2), then we preach (evangelize) to those who do not yet know Him (Matt. 4:17), and then we meet physical needs as we are able (Matt. 4:24). The spiritual needs of men always come before the physical needs, but we do not ignore the needs of the body (James 2:14–16).

**4:25** “*Great multitudes followed Him.*” Jesus’ popularity with the common people was the cause of the envy and hatred of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 5

The Sermon on the Mount: Jesus presents the law of His kingdom.

### The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1–12 (Luke 6:20–26)

**5:1** “*The multitudes.*” This is also mentioned in Matthew 4:25 and in 7:28, where the Greek word for “*multitudes*” is the same word but translated “*the people.*” “*His disciples came to Him.*” Although Jesus addressed His teaching to His disciples, who had already believed in Him, the crowd was also listening. “*He was seated.*” At that time, it was typical for rabbis to sit down to teach.

**5:2** “*Then He ... taught them.*” Here, the Lord who wrote the Law at Sinai (Exod. 31:18) expounds its true meaning (see additional note in Matt. 5:17). Only those who are “*born again* [from above]” (John 3:3) and empowered by the Holy Spirit are able to obey it (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 5:16, 18).

**Note:** In vv. 3–11 we see a series of steps in the spiritual development of the disciple.

**5:3** “*Blessed are the poor in spirit.*” This statement sets the tone for all of the Beatitudes. In Greek, there are two words for “*poor.*” One means “to have very little, to be in need.” Matthew uses the second word, meaning “absolutely destitute.” To be “*poor in spirit*” means spiritually destitute—to come to God with absolutely nothing to offer (Luke 18:13–14), seeking His supply for our spiritual need. This is genuine humility (1 Pet. 5:5–6).

## MATTHEW 5:4–17

**5:4–11 “Blessed.”** Each of the other seven blessings flow out of the first. Those who come to God destitute of soul receive His grace by faith alone and, by spiritual growth, will develop the following characteristics. These beatitudes show us the blessedness of those who “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 3:18). The word “*blessed*” means to share God’s happiness or joy. “*Those who mourn.*” When we recognize our spiritual poverty (v. 3), we mourn our spiritual lack and seek the provisions of God’s grace.

**5:5 “The meek.”** In the original Greek language, meekness meant to be in total submission to a higher command. It is the mourning of v. 4 that leads us to surrender completely to God’s Word and will. “*They shall inherit.*” Inheritance is not equal to entering eternal life. Salvation is a free gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9). Inheritance is for those who are “*sons of God*” (Gal. 3:26, 29; 4:6–7). All believers share in the inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4–5), but those who grow and serve have a greater portion (Col. 3:24; Heb. 6:12; see also Rom. 8:16–17).

**5:6 “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”** The surrender of our will to God (v. 5) will inevitably lead us to a spiritual hunger/thirst to know God through His Word. The righteousness we receive by faith in Christ, we now desire to live out in our lives (Phil. 2:3–13; 1 Thess. 1:3–10; Titus 2:11–14; 2 Pet. 1:5–7).

**5:7 “The merciful.”** As we grow, our first evidence of conformity to Christ is that we show mercy to others (Mal. 6:8; Matt. 9:13; 12:7). In essence, mercy withholds judgment that is due. We show this mercy by not being judgmental toward others (Matt. 7:1–5).

**5:8 “The pure in heart.”** We purify the heart by daily confession of our sins (1 John 1:9), and by seeking the cleansing power of God’s Word (Eph. 5:26). The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to sanctify (purify) the believer from the inside out (John 17:17; 1 Thess. 4:3a; 5:23). This process of inner purification will continue throughout the life of the believer (Prov. 4:18; 2 Pet. 3:18).

**5:9 “The peacemakers.”** The disciple who grows to this point becomes a living testimony to the power of God to save and to transform one’s life. Another way to say “peacemaker” is to say one who is a “minister of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:17–21). By consistent spiritual growth, we become His true ambassadors, and can now effectively bring others to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**5:10 “Persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”** Those who live Christ-like lives will be persecuted as He was (John 15:20; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:13–14).

**5:12 “Great is your reward in heaven.”** Jesus speaks often of gaining eternal reward for faithful obedience (Matt. 5:46; 6:1–2, 4, 6, 20).

### **Believers Are to be Salt and Light** Matthew 5:13–16 (Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34–35)

**5:13–16 “You are the salt ... [the] light.”** The lives of believers ought to have a flavor that draws the spiritually hungry and also reflects the light of Christ to the world (John 1:4–5; 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:8; 1 John 1:7).

### **Jesus Reveals the True Meaning of the Law and Prophets and the Nature of True Righteousness** Matthew 5:17–48

**5:17 “I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”** Jesus Christ will ultimately fulfill all Old Testament prophecy. He fulfilled the Law by obeying it perfectly. By His substitutionary death on the cross, He removes our sin and gives us His own righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26; 4:5; 5:18–19; 8:4).

**5:20 “Your righteousness.”** The scribes and Pharisees had only self-righteousness. All human good, apart from God, is “filthy rags” and “whitewashed tombs” (Isa. 64:6; Matt. 23:27). The righteousness of God comes only through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–22; 4:3; 1 Cor. 1:30).

### **Murder Begins in the Heart**

Matthew 5:21–22

**5:21–22 “But I say to you.”** Jesus uses this phrase nine times in Matthew chapter 5. He contrasts His true teaching with the distorted teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. They followed the oral tradition rather than Moses (Matt. 15:2–6; Mark 7:2–13). He speaks as the Author of the Law, which caused amazement in the multitude (Matt. 7:28–29). “*Whoever murders ... whoever says, ‘You fool.’*” Jesus is showing here that hatred is equal to murder. Apart from salvation through faith in Him, we are all in danger of hell-fire (James 4:7–12).

### **Peacemakers Seek Reconciliation**

Matthew 5:23–26

**5:24 “Be reconciled.”** This is what peacemakers do even at their own sacrifice (Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:14–21; 1 Pet. 3:10–12). God desires mercy more than sacrifice (Matt. 5:7; 9:13; 12:7; Luke 6:35–38; James 2:12–13; 3:17).

### **Adultery Begins in the Heart**

Matthew 5:27–30

**5:27–28 “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her.”** Here, Jesus shows that true spirituality is a matter of the inner condition of the heart—not just of outward conduct.

**5:29–30 “If your right eye causes you to sin.”** Jesus is using hyperbole, or a figure of speech, to illustrate His point. See Proverbs 23:2. What is the point? If we removed each member of the body that commits sin, we would have to kill the entire body. As believers in Christ, we have a new birth where the “old man” is put to death, that the “new man” might live (Rom. 6:6; 8:13; 1 Cor. 15:22, 36; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).

### **Marriage Is Not to Be Violated**

Matthew 5:31–32 (Matt. 19:9; Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18)

**5:31–32 “Except sexual immorality.”** The ideal of the marriage bond is that nothing short of unfaithfulness should break it. Even then, forgiveness and restoration are possible. Marriage is a reflection of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22–33).

### **Oath Taking Is Forbidden**

Matthew 5:33–37 (James 5:12)

**5:34 “Do not swear at all.”** The taking of oaths and vows, or the use of God’s name, should not be used to give our words validity. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15; James 5:12).

**5:38 “An eye for an eye.”** This was known as the *Lex Talionis* (law of retaliation) and was given to civil authorities to execute justice (Exod. 21:1, 23–25; Lev. 24:19–20; Deut. 19:18–21). This was never for the gratification of personal vengeance.

### **The Law of Love**

Matthew 5:38–48 (Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 13:1–13)

**5:39 “Turn the other [cheek] to him also.”** Jesus is not forbidding defending oneself. Rather, He is teaching restraint and longsuffering when wronged. We only have two cheeks!

## MATTHEW 5:44–6:24

**5:44 “Love your enemies.”** The law of love is the foundation of all spiritual power. Love for God cannot fail to result in love for all for whom Christ died (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37–40; 1 John 3:11–14; 4:7–11).

**5:45–48 “That you may be sons of your Father ... therefore you shall be perfect.”** We only become “sons of God” through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:14–15; Gal. 4:4–7; 1 John 3:1). We are only “perfect” when we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. The word “perfect” is also used in the New Testament for maturity or spiritual completeness (2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:12–15; Col. 4:12; James 1:4; 1 Pet. 5:10).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 6

True righteousness is hidden in the heart and brings blessings in time and rewards in eternity.

### **Spiritual Giving, Spiritual Praying, Spiritual Fasting**

Matthew 6:1–18 (2 Cor. 8:1–9; 9:6–11; Luke 11:1–4; Psalm 69:10)

**6:1 “Do not do your ... deeds ... to be seen.”** Three outward acts of service to God—giving, praying, and fasting—are not to be for public display. Wrong motives rob us of eternal reward. See 1 Peter 3:4.

**6:2, 5 “Do not sound a trumpet ... as the hypocrites do.”** Jesus reserved the word “hypocrite” for unbelievers who practiced outward shows of piety, but without any inner reality. He uses it in His fearful condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:13–33).

**6:2, 5, 16 “They have their reward.”** The word translated “have” literally means “to be paid in full.” If the inner motive of the act is to be seen, that is all the reward to be gained.

**6:4, 6 “Your Father who sees in secret.”** Jesus introduced the idea of God as the Father of those who believe. See Matthew 5:45. To Jews who would not even speak the Name of God, this was a revolutionary idea. God looks not just at the act, but at the motive (heart).

**6:9–13 “In this manner, therefore, pray.”** Jesus gives this prayer as a model (also in Luke 11:1–4), not just something to repeat over and over (Matt. 6:7). Prayer should glorify God, seek His will, trust Him to provide our needs, forgive our sins, and deliver us from evil. See the contrast in Luke 18:10–14.

**6:14–15 “If you forgive.”** We cannot ask God to forgive us when we refuse to forgive others. This is the same as asking God to purify us while we are engaged in sin.

**6:16 “When you fast.”** Jesus assumed His followers would fast. It was a means of humbling oneself (Psalm 69:10) and expressed the craving of the soul for God over the need of the body for food (Neh. 1:4; Ezra 8:23; Acts 13:2; 2 Cor. 6:3–5).

### **True Spirituality of the Heart Lays up Treasure in Heaven**

Matthew 6:19–24

**6:20 “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”** All that is done in faith and obedience in this life will be rewarded in eternity (Gen. 15:1; Psalm 19:11; Mark 9:41; 1 Cor. 3:8; James 1:12; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; Rev. 22:12).

**6:21 “Where your treasure is.”** We keep watch over what we value. If we live for Jesus Christ and eternity, we will be careful to guard our thoughts (Prov. 4:23) and conduct for His glory (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:6–8).

**6:24 “You cannot serve God and mammon.”** From vv. 21–34, Jesus is demonstrating the contrast between living for time versus living for eternity. Money (“mammon”) is the means to food, clothing, shelter, and other concerns of the body. Faith brings rest from anxiety and worry (Matt. 11:28–30).

### **True Spirituality Brings Rest from Worry**

Matthew 6:25–34 (Luke 12:22–31)

**6:33 “Seek first the kingdom of God.”** We enter God’s kingdom when we receive His righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus (Col. 1:12–14; James 2:5; 1 John 5:13). Then, kingdom life is ours when we live according to His will (Matt. 6:10; Rom. 14:17). When our spiritual priorities are right, God will provide all other needs. This is the faith-rest life of Hebrews 4:1–16 (Matt. 11:28–30).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 7**

This chapter deals with the outward fruits of our faith.

### **We Are Not to Judge Others**

Matthew 7:1–6 (Luke 6:37–42)

**7:1 “Judge not.”** Only Jesus Christ is fit to judge (John 5:22; James 4:11–12; 5:9). We will each be judged by how strict or how merciful we are to others (James 2:13). The Pharisee judged the publican, but the publican judged only himself (Luke 18:10–14).

**7:6 “Do not give what is holy to the dogs ... swine.”** Dogs and swine represent those who hate Jesus Christ and persecute His people. Notice how Jesus was silent before His enemies. He did not try to answer these “dogs.” (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 27:14; Mark 14:60–61; 15:4–5; Luke 23:9).

### **The Power of Persistent Prayer**

Matthew 7:7–11 (Luke 11:9–13; 18:1–8)

**7:7 “Ask ... seek ... knock.”** Our prayers should be dependent, specific, and persistent. Jesus illustrates this by the parable in Luke 18:1–8. The promise of answered prayer applies to all that is in accordance with God’s will (John 15:7; 16:23; 1 John 5:14–15).

### **The Law of Love is the Golden Rule**

Matthew 7:12–14

**7:12 “This is the Law and the Prophets.”** This has been called the “Golden Rule” and comes from Leviticus 19:18. Jesus stressed that love for God and for others was the true goal and meaning of “*the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 22:36–40).

### **The Narrow Way is the Way of Faith and the Fruit of Obedience**

Matthew 7:13–27 (Matt. 12:33; Luke 6:43–45; 13:24–27)

**7:13–27 “Enter by the narrow gate.”** This section sets before all men two ways. The narrow way is the way of faith, fruitfulness, and security. In contrast, the broad path is built on lies, evil deeds, and final destruction.

**7:16 “You will know them by their fruits.”** This verse is often misquoted to mean we can judge who is a true believer by evaluating their life. Jesus says here that false prophets (false teachers) will always teach error and live selfish and self-serving lives (2 Pet. 2:1–3). Like wolves, they feed off of the sheep. See Ezekiel 34. For outward fruits of our faith see Galatians 5:22–23.

**7:21–23 “Lord, Lord ... I never knew you.”** The will and work of God is to believe on His Son, Jesus Christ (John 6:29; Matt. 12:50; Heb. 11:6). In the final judgment, to be known by Him as one of His flock will mean everything!

## MATTHEW 7:24–8:17

### The Wise Man of Faith and the Foolish Unbeliever

Matthew 7:24–29 (Luke 6:47–49)

**7:24–27 “A wise man ... a foolish man.”** The foundation rock is Jesus Himself (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11). The life built by faith and obedience will stand for all eternity (1 Cor. 3:12–15; 1 John 2:17). The fool builds life apart from Jesus Christ, and his life ends in destruction (Phil. 3:18–9; 2 Thess. 1:8–9; 2:8). *“Truly, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge [wisdom]”* (Prov. 1:7; 9:10).

**7:29 “He taught them as one having authority.”** Jesus spoke as the Giver and Author of the Law. See Mark 1:22 and John 7:46. He alone could interpret it correctly. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is rebuking and correcting many false teachings of the rabbis that were current at the time.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 8

Jesus demonstrates His authority over illness, nature, and demons.

### Jesus’ Compassion for Those Who Suffer

Matthew 8:1–17 (Mark 1:29–31, 40–45; Luke 4:38–39; 5:12–16; 7:1–10)

**8:2 “A leper ... worshiped Him, saying, Lord ...”** In the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus paraphrased Deuteronomy 6:13, *“You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve”* (Matt. 4:10). By accepting this leper’s worship, Jesus confirms that He is God in the flesh.

**8:3 “I am willing; be cleansed.”** Leprosy was a picture of the defilement of sin, and the wages of death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus’ healing of the leper shows His power over sin and death.

**8:5 “Jesus ... entered Capernaum.”** In this city, Jesus began His public ministry (Matt. 4:12–17), did most of His miracles, and was met with the most unbelief (Matt. 11:23). **“A centurion came to Him.”** The centurion was commander of one hundred Roman soldiers. Luke records that he sent servants to Jesus (Luke 7:2–6). These servants represented the centurion; there is no contradiction in the stories.

**8:9 “I also am a man under authority.”** The centurion recognizes that just as his authority came from Rome, so the authority of Jesus came from Heaven.

**8:10 “He marveled ... ‘I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.’”** The only other time Jesus “marveled” was regarding the unbelief of His own people (Mark 6:6). The only other time He spoke of “great faith” was to the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:28. Both were Gentiles, which leads to what Jesus says in vv. 11–12.

**8:11 “Many will come from east and west and sit down ... in the kingdom.”** Jesus is referring to a prophecy in Psalm 107:1–3. It speaks of multitudes of believing Gentiles entering into His kingdom.

**8:12 “Sons of the kingdom will be cast out.”** The phrase “sons of the kingdom” was a term the Jews used of themselves, based on their lineage from Abraham (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8). Jesus is saying that believing Gentiles will enter the kingdom, but unbelieving Jews will be cast out. **“Outer darkness ... weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** These phrases were well known to the Jews of Jesus’ time, being used by the rabbis for the torments of Hell. See Luke 13:27–30, where Jesus is speaking about unbelievers.

**8:17 “He Himself took our infirmities.”** Quoted from Isaiah 53:4, all sickness is a result of the entrance of sin into the world. By dying on the cross for our sins and rising again, Jesus proved His power over all the effects of the fall of Adam.

**The Cost of Discipleship**

Matthew 8:18–22 (Luke 9:57–62; 14:25–33)

**8:20** *“Foxes have holes ... but the Son of Man.”* The *“Son of Man”* is a title used in Messianic prophecies (Dan. 7:13–14). Jesus’ earthly life was marked by poverty and rejection. He was truly the outcast Savior (Jer. 14:8–9). Those who choose the path of discipleship will likewise suffer (Matt. 16:24–27; 2 Tim. 3:12.)

**Jesus’ Power over Nature**

Matthew 8:23–27 (Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25)

**8:26** *“Why are you fearful?”* Fear and faith cannot coexist. Faith conquers fear, which is Satan’s most powerful tool (Heb. 2:14–15). The most repeated command in all the Bible is *“Fear not.”*

**Jesus’ Power over Evil Spirits**

Matthew 8:28–34 (Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39)

**8:29** *“Jesus, You Son of God.”* The demons know who Jesus is, and they know He will ultimately cast them into the Lake of Fire.

**8:32** *“The herd of swine ... ran violently.”* Demonic possession can cause insanity, extreme violence, and even suicide—in both men and beasts. The story in Mark 5:1–6 focuses on only one of the men who worshiped Jesus.

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 9**

Jesus’ power to heal is based on His authority to forgive sins.

**Jesus Forgives and Heals the Paralyzed Man**

Matthew 9:1–8 (Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26)

**9:2** *“Son ... your sins are forgiven.”* The scribes rightly knew that God alone could forgive sin (Luke 5:21). They refused to accept that Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus’ power over sickness was due to His victory over sin.

**The Call of Matthew—Levi, the Author of This Gospel**

Matthew 9:9–13 (Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32)

**9:9** *“A man named Matthew.”* Here, we meet the author of this Gospel. As a tax collector, he would be hated by the Jews as a traitor working for Rome.

**9:10** *“As Jesus sat ... in the house.”* Most likely, this was Matthew’s house. The guests would be Matthew’s friends. Tax collectors and sinners were considered one and the same group.

**9:13** *“I desire mercy and not sacrifice.”* This quote from Hosea 6:6 is used again in Matthew 12:7. The Pharisees were meticulous about observing the Law and offering sacrifices and tithes over the smallest things (Matt. 23:23), yet their hearts were dark and hard. Those who think they are righteous have no need of a Savior, just as those who are healthy will not seek a physician. Jesus had compassion, both on the sick and the sinful, but could not help the self-righteous.

## MATTHEW 9:14–10:4

### **Jesus Questioned about Fasting**

Matthew 9:14–17 (Mark 2:18–22; Luke 5:33–39)

**9:14–17** *“We ... fast ... but Your disciples do not fast.”* Fasting was most often a sign of sorrow, or of repentance (Esth. 4:3; Psalm 35:13; 69:10). Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah by using the term *“bridegroom,”* as did John (John 3:29). Jesus came to bring the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6; 12:24). Any attempt to force this *“new wine”* into the *“old wineskins”* of the Old Covenant would destroy both.

### **Jesus’ Power over Death**

Matthew 9:18–26 (Mark 5:21–43; Luke 8:40–56)

**9:22** *“Be of good cheer ... your faith has made you well.”* Much greater than physical healing is the healing of the soul. This can be done only by faith in Jesus—the Great Physician.

### **Jesus Heals the Blind**

Matthew 9:27–31 (Matt. 11:5; Mark 8:22–25; Luke 4:18; 7:21)

**9:29** *“According to your faith.”* God values faith above all other virtues. This is because faith is an expression of our total helplessness and reliance upon His grace alone. Any attempt to add our works to His grace is an act of unbelief.

**9:30** *“See that no one knows.”* See Matthew 8:4. Jesus did not want people seeking Him only for physical healing. Rather, He wanted people seeking Him for cleansing from sin.

### **The Pharisees Accuse Jesus of Working Miracles by Satan’s Power**

Matthew 9:32–34

**9:34** *“The ruler of the demons.”* They are referring to Satan, also known as *“Beelzebub.”* See Matthew 10:25 and Luke 11:15. They are accusing Jesus of being in league or association with the devil.

### **Jesus Shows Compassion on the Multitudes**

Matthew 9:35–38 (Luke 10:1–3)

**9:35** *“Teaching ... preaching ... and healing.”* As in Matthew 4:23, these are the activities of true ministry, in their proper order.

**9:38** *“Pray the Lord of the harvest.”* God the Father is referred to here, although the Holy Spirit, who both guides the messenger of the Gospel and convicts the hearts of men (John 16:7–13), could also be included.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 10**

Jesus gives power, instruction, and authority to the twelve disciples.

### **The Mission of the Twelve**

Matthew 10:1–15 (Mark 3:13–19; 6:7–13; Luke 6:12–16; 9:1–6)

**10:1** *“He ... called His twelve disciples.”* Jesus had just asked the disciples to pray for workers in God’s harvest field. It is possible that these twelve, excepting Judas, were the ones who were praying.

**10:2–4** *“The names of the twelve.”* Peter is always named first in every list. Here, they are named in pairs, probably the way that they were sent out. See Luke 10:1–2.

**Instructed for Ministry and Warned of Persecution**

Matthew 10:5–42 (Mark 6:7–13; 13:9–13; Luke 9:1–6; 21:12–17)

**10:5–42 “Jesus ... commanded them.”** The commands for this missionary effort were:

1. They were to go only to Israel (vv. 5–6).
2. They were to proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven, and thus the King, were at hand (v. 7).
3. They were to offer freely what they had been given in grace (v. 8).
4. They were not to take provisions (vv. 9–10).
5. They were to bring either peace or judgment, based on the response of the people (vv. 11–15).
6. They were to expect and endure persecution (vv. 16–25).
7. They were to be bold and fearless in proclaiming the truth (vv. 26–31).
8. They were to be willing to take up the cross (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) of discipleship, looking for their reward in eternity (vv. 32–42).

**Note:** There is much here that ministers/pastors and missionaries today should carefully consider.

**10:42 “Shall by no means lose his reward.”** Though serving the Lord here is met with unbelief and persecution, we have the assurance of eternal reward for all faithful service (1 Cor. 3:8; Heb. 10:35).

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 11**

Jesus declares blessing on all who believe in Him and calls for judgment on all who reject Him.

**John’s Question to Jesus, and the Lord’s Praise of John**

Matthew 11:1–19 (Luke 7:18–35)

**11:1 “Jesus ... departed ... to teach and to preach.”** Like John, the disciples go before Him to prepare for His coming.

**11:2 “John ... heard in prison ... ‘Are You the Coming One?’”** In the loneliness of prison, John begins to question if Jesus is the promised Messiah.

**11:4–19 “Go ... tell John.”** Jesus reassures John that He is the Messiah—based on His works (Matt. 11:5; Isa. 29:18–19; 35:4–6; 61:1–3). John, no doubt, expected Jesus to execute judgment (Joel 2:1–2, 30–32; Obad. 17–18; Zec. 14:1–15; Mal. 3:2–18), not realizing these were Second Coming prophecies.

**11:10 “This is he of whom it is written.”** Jesus said that John fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 3:1, as well as Isaiah 40:1–8. Jesus declares him to be the greatest man ever “*born of women*,” yet not as great as the “*least in the kingdom of heaven*.”

**11:12 “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence.”** John’s ministry resulted in both violent opposition as well as “*great multitudes*” seeking to hear Jesus (Matt. 5:1; 8:1, 18; 9:8, 36).

**11:14 “If you are willing ... he is Elijah.”** Had Israel accepted Jesus as Messiah, John would have fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy (Mal. 4:5; Luke 1:17). Since they rejected Him, Elijah will come yet before His Second Coming (Rev. 11:3–12).

**11:18–19 “John came ... the Son of man came.”** Jesus shows, by the contrast of Himself with John, that neither the strict conduct of John, nor the joyful conduct of Jesus, was accepted by the religious leaders. The Jewish religious leaders accused both John and Jesus of demon possession (Matt. 9:34; 11:18). “*Wisdom is justified by her children*.” Those who responded to John’s message and trusted in Jesus Christ, vindicated the

## **MATTHEW 11:20–12:14**

wisdom of God in providing salvation by grace through faith. By believing, they showed themselves to be children of God's wisdom.

### **Jesus Declares Judgment on the Unrepentant Cities** Matthew 11:20–24 (Luke 10:13–16; also Gen. 19:12–14)

**11:20** *“Cities ... most of His mighty works ... they did not repent.”* Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were close together. In spite of seeing and hearing of His mighty miracles, they largely rejected His claim as Messiah/Savior. Their unbelief, in the face of greater evidence, would bring greater judgment.

**11:22–23** *“Tyre and Sidon ... Sodom.”* It was in the region of Tyre and Sidon that Jesus commended the Canaanite woman for her great faith (Matt. 15:28). His point is that greater judgment will be given where greater privilege and light has been given (Luke 12:48).

### **God Gives Grace and Rest to the Humble; Jesus Calls All to Himself** Matthew 11:25–30 (Luke 10:21–22)

**11:25** *“I thank You, Father.”* Jesus declares that God reveals His truth to those of child-like faith (Matt. 18:1–5). Those who assume they are wise are blinded (Rom. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:18–31).

**11:27** *“To whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”* As in Matthew 5:3–10, God reveals Himself to the humble in heart. Jesus declares, in John 14:6–7, that no one can come to the Father but through simple faith in Him. In the following verses, 28–30, it is clear that Jesus invites all to find rest of soul in Him.

**11:28–30** *“Come to Me ... I will give you rest.”* There are two invitations here and two kinds of rest. The first (v. 28) is to come to Jesus in faith to find eternal rest from the burdens of sin and death. The second (v. 29) then, after our salvation, is to take up the yoke of discipleship—to learn from Him (Eph. 4:20–24) and to find daily rest in His service (Heb. 4:8–11). This promise of “rest” points us directly to the “Sabbath” questions of Matthew 12:1–8.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 12**

The Pharisees, jealous of the multitudes following Jesus, increase their attacks on Him.

### **Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath** Matthew 12:1–14 (Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6; Luke 6:1–11)

**12:1–2** *“On the Sabbath.”* The Pharisees had added many rules and regulations for Sabbath observance that were not part of Moses' Law. According to the teaching of the rabbis, the disciples broke two Sabbath laws: First of harvesting, and second of threshing—both of which were considered labor. In their view, these offenses required that sacrifice for cleansing be offered.

**12:3–8** *“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* Jesus responds to the attack of the Pharisees with four arguments: David and his men ate consecrated bread and were guiltless because they were about the service of the Lord (1 Sam. 21:6). Also, David was the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 16:13). Second, even the priests in the Temple worked on the Sabbath, but also were in service to the Lord. Yet, He Himself was greater than the Temple. Third, quoting Hosea 6:6, God declares that He desires mercy more than sacrifices. Finally, Jesus declares Himself *“Lord ... of the Sabbath,”* a direct claim to be God in the flesh.

**12:9–14** *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”* Since the Pharisees considered healing a work, it was not to be done on the Sabbath. They were more interested in keeping rules and regulations than in helping the needy.

**12:12** *“How much more value ... is a man than a sheep?”* Jesus reveals their hypocrisy. They would deliver a sheep, but not a man!

**12:14** *“Then the Pharisees ... plotted ... how they might destroy Him.”* The opposition of the Pharisees now hardens into the plot to kill Jesus.

### **The Ministry of Jesus Fulfilled Prophecy** Matthew 12:15–21

**12:17–21** *“That it might be fulfilled.”* Matthew repeatedly shows Jesus’ words and works to be a fulfillment of prophecy, here from Isaiah 42:1–4. This passage includes His ministry to Gentiles and His graciousness and gentleness to the weak and wounded.

### **The Unpardonable Sin of the Pharisees** Matthew 12:22–32 (Mark 3:20–30)

**12:23** *“Could this be the Son of David?”* This title spoke of the coming King from the lineage of David, who would fulfill the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–17; Matt. 9:27; 21:9).

**12:24–37** *“Blasphemy against the Spirit.”* The Pharisees repeatedly rejected Jesus’ claims to be the Messiah/Savior. Their unbelief brought about the increasing hardening of the heart (Rom. 1:18–32; Eph. 4:17–19) that led to accusing Jesus of being an agent of the devil. It is possible for anyone to harden his heart to the point where God seals him in that hardness (Rom. 9:18). Once this point is reached, there is no chance of repentance or faith. The unforgivable sin is continued refusal to believe in Jesus Christ (Matt. 21:41; John 3:16–19, 36).

**12:29** *“Then he will plunder his house.”* By Jesus’ words and works, He was binding Satan and setting free his slaves.

**12:30** *“He who does not gather with Me.”* Either we receive Jesus, or we reject Him. There is no middle ground. Either we work with Him, or against Him. This is true of all mankind.

**12:31** *“Blasphemy against the Spirit.”* This refers to persistent unbelief in the face of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11; Heb. 3:7–15).

### **Every Tree Is Known by Its Fruit** Matthew 12:33–37 (Matt. 7:15–20; Luke 6:43–45)

**12:33** *“A tree is known by its fruit.”* We identify a tree by the kind of fruit it produces (James 3:12).

**12:34** *“Brood of vipers!”* This accusation links them to their father, Satan (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9). *“For out of the ... heart the mouth speaks.”* Our words reveal the condition of our heart.

**12:37** *“For by your words you will be justified ... condemned.”* With our mouth we express our faith or unbelief (Luke 19:22; Rom. 10:8–13).

### **The Sign of Jonah: Jesus Predicts His Resurrection** Matthew 12:38–42 (Luke 11:29–32; John 2:18–22)

**12:38–40** *“The sign of the prophet Jonah.”* Jesus predicts His burial and resurrection. He also affirms that the story of Jonah actually happened.

## **MATTHEW 12:41–13:17**

**12:41–42 “*Greater than Jonah ... Solomon.*”** The witness of Jesus’ words and works was greater than all others combined.

### **Reforming the Life Without Renewing the Soul Leads to a Worse End**

Matthew 12:43–45 (Luke 11:24–26; see 2 Pet. 2:18–22)

**12:43–45 “*The last state ... is worse than the first.*”** Moral reform without regeneration (new birth) leaves a vacuum that even greater evil can fill. Jesus came into a dark world with the light of God (John 1:4–5, 9–11; 8:12). Many of His generation rejoiced in His mighty works but would not receive Him as Savior. The spiritual vacuum of the nation after His crucifixion would be filled with even worse evil.

### **The True Family of Jesus Is Those Who Believe**

Matthew 12:46–50 (Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21)

**12:48–50 “*Who is My mother ... whoever does the will of My Father.*”** Jesus declares that the spiritual bond between Him and those who believe in Him is greater than flesh and blood. It is the Father’s will that we believe in Jesus Christ as Savior (Matt. 18:14; John 6:29, 40).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 13**

In the face of growing hostility and unbelief, Jesus begins teaching in parables about the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven.

### **The Parable of the Sower**

Matthew 13:1–9 (Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8)

**13:3 “*He spoke ... to them in parables.*”** A parable is a story from daily life containing spiritual lessons. A parable generally has one main truth that is being stressed.

**13:3–9 “*Behold, a sower went out to sow.*”** This parable is explained in vv. 18–23. The ultimate lesson is that we all, as disciples, ought to be like the good soil and bear much fruit.

**13:9 “*He who has ears.*”** We all have physical ears, but Jesus is speaking of spiritual ears of faith—humble and willing to listen to spiritual teaching.

### **The Purpose of the Parables**

Matthew 13:10–17 (Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10)

**13:10–17 “*It has been given to you.*”** The Spirit of God reveals the truth of His Word to those who come in faith. They cannot be understood by human intellect (1 Cor. 2:9–16). These parables were designed to conceal truth from unbelievers, but to reveal it to His disciples (Isa. 6:9–10).

**13:12 “*Whoever has ... does not have.*”** Faith will always multiply and increase; unbelief will always diminish and lose, even though truth was given.

**13:17 “*Many prophets and righteous men desired.*”** With the coming of Jesus, the desire of the prophets was fulfilled. We experience things they could only hope for (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

**Parable of the Sower Explained**

Matthew 13:18–23 (Mark 4:13–20; Luke 8:11–15)

**13:23** *“He who received seed on the good ground.”* God’s Word can only be received by simple childlike faith (Matt. 18:1–4; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:17; John 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:12–14; Col. 2:6). Those who receive it will bear fruit to varying degrees. Let us strive to bring forth *“much fruit”* (John 15:2–5) by abiding in Him!

**The Parable of the Tares**

Matthew 13:24–30

**13:24–30** *“His enemy ... sowed tares.”* This parable is explained in vv. 36–43. Jesus is showing that between His First and Second Coming, it will be difficult to distinguish His true followers from false teachers and false disciples. Remember that when Jesus taught this, Judas, a tare, was present (John 6:63–64, 70–71; 13:10–11).

**13:30** *“Let both grow together until the harvest.”* The harvest refers to the judgment at Jesus’ Second Coming. See v. 42 with Revelation 14:14–20; 19:11–21. John the Baptist warned of the same judgment (Matt. 3:11–12).

**The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

Matthew 13:31–32 (Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19)

**13:31–33** *“Like a mustard seed ... like leaven.”* Though Jesus began with only eleven true disciples, His kingdom would spread throughout the world. This Gospel ends in Matthew 28:18–20 with the commission to go into all the world. The Book of Acts shows the growth of the kingdom in the early Church. (Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:32; 8:4–6).

**The Parable of the Leaven**

Matthew 13:33–35 (Luke 13:20–21)

**13:34–35** *“Things ... kept secret from the foundation of the world.”* Jesus introduced new revelation never before revealed. These are called “mysteries” and were further developed by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 11:25; 16:25–26; Eph. 3:3–12; Col. 1:26–27; 1 Tim. 3:16).

**Jesus Explains the Parable of the Tares**

Matthew 13:36–43

**13:38** *“Sons of the kingdom.”* The Jews assumed they were *“sons of the kingdom”* by relationship to Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Jesus told them that even so they would be cast into Hell for their unbelief (Matt. 8:12). Here, Jesus uses the term for those who have received Him by faith.

**Parables of the Value of the Kingdom**

Matthew 13:44–46

**13:44–46** *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure ... one pearl of great price.”* Nothing on Earth is worth sacrificing the kingdom of God for (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36). The decision to follow Christ often means willing to let go of this life (Phil. 1:21; 3:7).

**The Parable of the Dragnet**

Matthew 13:47–50

**13:47–50** *“Like a dragnet ... cast into the sea.”* The work of disciples is to gather as many as possible to hear the gospel message. At the end of the age, when Jesus returns, His angels will separate the wicked (unbelievers)

## **MATTHEW 13:52–14:22**

from the just (believers) (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 14:14–20). Note that in Revelation 14, Jesus harvests the believers; the angels harvest the unbelievers.

### **The Wise Scribe (Teacher)**

Matthew 13:51–52

**13:52** *“Treasure ... new and old.”* Every scribe (teacher) who is well instructed about the kingdom is able to present treasures of truth, bringing together the old (Old Testament) and the new (New Testament).

### **Jesus Rejected in Nazareth**

Matthew 13:53–58 (Mark 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–30)

**13:55–56** *“His brothers ... His sisters.”* Mary was a virgin until the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:24–25). After that, Jesus’ half-brothers and half-sisters were born (Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19).

**13:57** *“They were offended at Him.”* The wisdom of Jesus, along with His miracles (v. 54), should have convinced them of His identity as the promised Messiah. Instead, because of their familiarity with His family, they rejected Him. Familiarity tends to result in contempt.

**13:58** *“Because of their unbelief.”* Jesus did not “cast [His] pearls before swine.” See Matthew 7:6.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 14**

Herod’s fear; the death of John; the feeding of five thousand; Jesus walks on water.

### **John the Baptist Beheaded by Herod**

Matthew 14:1–12 (Mark 6:14–29; Luke 9:7–9)

**14:1–2** *“Herod ... heard ... about Jesus.”* This was one of the three sons of Herod the Great. His guilty conscience feared that John had been raised from the dead.

**14:3–12** **The death of John.** *“It is not lawful for you to have her”* (v. 4). Herod (son of Herod the Great) and Herodias (granddaughter of Herod the Great) both left previous marriages to be united. This was an act of incest (Lev. 18:8–18). John was put to death for faithfully rebuking Herod.

### **The Feeding of Five Thousand**

Matthew 14:13–21 (Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

**14:13–21** **The feeding of the “multitudes.”** This miracle is the only one recorded in all four Gospels (Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6). Here, we see that the ministry of Jesus was motivated by love and compassion, accomplished by divine power, made use of little to do great work, and was above and beyond the need. All of us, like the small boy (John 6:9) have something to surrender to the Lord that He is able to multiply for His glory.

### **Jesus Walks on the Sea**

Matthew 14:22–33 (Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21)

**14:22–33** **Jesus walks on the water.** As was His custom, Jesus retired alone to pray. See Mark 1:35. In the fourth watch of the night (v. 25, 3–6 a.m.), Jesus demonstrates His power over nature. Only God could do this. Peter was at first bold, then fearful, because he took his eyes off the Lord. Great faith never loses sight of Jesus Christ as the Master over all of life’s problems. Fear always leads to doubt (1 Tim. 2:8).

**14:27 “Be of good cheer! It is I.”** Jesus is literally saying, “*I AM*,” the name of God (Exod. 3:14). In John 8:24, Jesus said, “*If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*” See again the note on Matthew 1:21–23.

**The Healing Power of Jesus**  
Matthew 14:34–36 (Mark 6:53–56)

**14:34–36 “Begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment.”** These people had no doubt heard of the faith of the woman recorded in Matthew 9:20–21. Our faith is great only when we trust in the greatness of the Savior (Matt. 8:10).

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 15**

Jesus rebukes the religious leaders but shows compassion on the common people.

**Defilement Comes from Within**  
Matthew 15:1–20 (Mark 7:1–23)

**15:1–2 “Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders.”** The hatred of the religious leaders intensifies through the book of Matthew. The rabbis had taken laws that applied to the priesthood (Lev. 22:1–16) and applied them to everyone. See also Mark 7:2–4.

**15:3 “You also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition.”** Jewish culture was built around oral interpretations of the Law of Moses that sadly had become more binding than Scripture itself. The Word of God must never be replaced by any culture or tradition (Isa. 40:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:24–25).

**15:4–6 “Honor your father and your mother.”** This honor included caring for aged parents. But Jewish tradition said that if you dedicate your wealth to the Temple, you are exempt from the need to care for your parents. See Mark 7:9–13. It was common to falsely pledge to give to the Temple, but then to keep it all.

**15:7–9 “Hypocrites! ... Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”** See Isaiah 29:13. The use of the word “hypocrite” was one of Jesus’ greatest rebukes for religious pretense. See Matthew 23:13–39. It is a dangerous thing when the teachings of men overrule the Scriptures!

**15:10–11 “What comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.”** The mouth speaks from what is in the heart (vv. 18–20; James 3:1–12).

**15:12–14 “The Pharisees were offended.”** Here, we see the weakness of the disciples. They still feared the Pharisees.

**15:15–20 “Out of the heart.”** The Pharisees were concerned with outward appearance (Matt. 6:1–2; Luke 11:39–44). Jesus always put the emphasis on the inner spiritual reality, not the external ritual. See Romans 6:17; Ephesians 3:16–17; Hebrews 10:22.

**The Faith of a Gentile Woman**  
Matthew 15:21–28 (Mark 7:24–30)

**15:22 “O Lord, Son of David!”** This Gentile woman acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah/Savior.

**15:23–24 “I was not sent except to the lost sheep ... of Israel.”** It was only right that the Jews should be first to receive the Gospel (Rom. 1:16) as both the Scriptures and the Savior had come through them. Only after Israel rejected Jesus did He give the great commission to His disciples (Matt. 28:18–20).

## **MATTHEW 15:25–16:13**

**15:25–27** “*Children’s bread ... little dogs.*” The Jews often referred to Gentiles as “dogs.” Here, Jesus uses a word that means “little puppies.” He is testing both her faith and her humility. Great faith always involves great humility (Matt. 8:8–10; 18:1–4; 1 Pet. 5:5).

**15:28** “*Great is your faith!*” Jesus said this only twice, both times to Gentiles (Matt. 8:10).

### **Jesus Heals the Multitudes**

Matthew 15:29–31 (Mark 7:31–37)

**15:29–31** “*They glorified the God of Israel.*” Jesus is still in Gentile country (Mark 7:31). Where most of the Jews rejected Him, these Gentiles gladly received Him in simple faith.

### **Jesus Feeds Four Thousand**

Matthew 15:32–39 (Mark 8:1–10)

**15:32–39** “*I have compassion on the multitude.*” Jesus cares not only for the souls of men, but also for their daily needs (Matt. 6:11). In spite of seeing these miracles, the disciples still did not fully understand His power or His purpose. See Matthew 16:9–11.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 16**

Jesus rebukes religious evil, is identified by Peter, predicts His death and resurrection, and calls the disciples to full surrender.

### **Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees for Their Unbelief**

Matthew 16:1–12 (Mark 8:11–13; Luke 12:54–56)

**16:1** “*The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and [tested] Him.*” These two groups were normally enemies. Their hatred for Jesus brought them together. While Pharisees were fanatical about the Law, Sadducees were from the Priesthood, denied the future resurrection of the body, and were dedicated to wealth and luxury. Here, like the devil in Matthew 4, they are coming to tempt Jesus.

**16:3** “*You cannot discern the signs of the times.*” They rejected John’s fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 40:3–5; Matt. 3:3; 11:10), Jesus’ fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1 (Matt. 11:3), and many other prophecies which they knew. Jesus calls them “*hypocrites*.” See Matthew 23:13–29.

**16:4** “*He left them and departed.*” The word “*left*” used here means “to forsake, to abandon.” Jesus has turned His back on the religious leaders of Israel!

**16:6** “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.*” Leaven is often used to indicate the power of evil teaching to spread. The doctrine of these groups was a mixture of legalism, religious pretense, worldliness, and hypocrisy.

### **Peter’s Confession of Jesus Christ**

Matthew 16:13–20 (Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–20)

**16:13** “*Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?*” Jesus makes a contrast between who He truly is, and what men say. The very fact that most identified Him as a prophet from the past revealed their refusal to admit that He was the promised Savior or Messiah.

**16:16** *“You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”* Peter acknowledges that Jesus is both man and God, the human Messiah, and the divine Son of God. This goes back to His virgin birth and the name *“Immanuel”* (Matt. 1:23).

**16:18** *“On this rock I will build My church.”* The *“rock”* is an Old Testament title for the Messiah (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:8; Deut. 32:4; Psalm 18:2; 1 Cor. 10:4). The Church will be built on the confession of Jesus as Savior (Rom. 9:33; 10:9–13; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). Jesus speaks of the Church as a future company that is distinct and separate from Israel. *“The gates of Hades [Hell] shall not prevail against it.”* This refers to the power of Satan over men through death (Heb. 2:14–15). Jesus would conquer death and Hell (1 Cor. 15:54–57; Rom. 8:37).

**16:19** *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”* Peter would open the door to the kingdom for the Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2), and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10). The verb tenses show that Peter will carry out what has been decided in Heaven—not the other way around. He would be guided from Heaven.

**16:20** *“He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one.”* This restriction was only until the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross and His resurrection was accomplished. Then they were to tell the world (Matt. 28:18–20).

#### **Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection**

Matthew 16:21–23 (Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:21–22)

**16:21** *“He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer ... and be killed, and be raised the third day.”* Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection were necessary to fulfill prophecy and to provide eternal life to all who believe (Isa. 53; Acts 2:22–35; 1 Cor. 15:3–4). It was in Jerusalem that Jesus was finally and formally rejected by Israel (Matt. 26:65–68; 27:25).

**16:23** *“Get behind Me, Satan!”* The word *“Satan”* means “opponent or adversary.” Peter, in trying to protect Jesus, was acting in opposition to the plan of God. Here, Peter was doing the devil’s bidding.

#### **Disciples Must Take up Their Cross**

Matthew 16:24–28 (Mark 8:34–38; Luke 9:23–27)

**16:24** *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself.”* Jesus sets three conditions for discipleship: First, self-denial—the surrender of our life to His cause. Second, to take up the cross of sacrifice and service. Third, the continual following of Jesus’ plan and purpose. These are not conditions for salvation, which is faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16, 36). Discipleship comes after we are saved by grace. While salvation is free, discipleship is costly.

**16:27** *“Then He will reward each according to his works.”* Where eternal life is a free gift (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9), eternal rewards are for faithful service to the Lord (Matt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18–20; Mark 10:29–31; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; Rev. 22:12).

**16:28** *“Assuredly I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”* Jesus is referring to the coming transfiguration (Matt. 17:1–8; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:27). Only Peter, James, and John witnessed this preview of Jesus’ glory in His kingdom.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 17**

The transfiguration of Jesus; the disciples' lack of faith; Jesus again predicts His death and resurrection.

### **Jesus' Kingdom Glory Revealed**

Matthew 17:1–13 (Mark 9:1–13; Luke 9:27–36; 2 Pet. 1:16–18)

**17:1–2** *"After six days Jesus ... was transfigured before them."* The transfiguration of Jesus fulfilled His words in Matthew 16:28. His transfiguration was a confirmation of:

1. His coming kingdom, in which Old Testament saints and New Testament believers would be together with Him,
2. His identity as the Son of God,
3. Israel's rejection of Jesus and His resulting rejection of the nation,
4. The fulfillment by John the Baptist of Malachi 4:5–6. Since John was unable to *"turn the hearts"* of Israel back to God, the kingdom would be postponed, and both Moses and Elijah would come at a later time (Rev. 11:3–12),
5. Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah). See Malachi 4:4–5 and Matthew 5:17,
6. John, as the forerunner of Jesus, whose birth, ministry, and death were a preview of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Luke 1:17), and
7. Israel's rejection that would bring a curse and judgment upon the land (Mal. 4:6, the Tribulation Period). See Revelation chapters 6–19.

**17:5** *"This is My beloved Son."* These words come from Psalm 2:7. The words, *"in whom I am well pleased,"* relate to Isaiah 42:1, and *"Hear Him!"* to Deuteronomy 18:15. All these are Messianic prophecies.

**17:9** *"Tell ... no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead."* See Matthew 16:20–21.

**17:12** *"Elijah has come already."* The coming of John the Baptist was in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). If Israel had accepted Jesus, this would have fulfilled the prophecy (Mal. 4:5–6). Since they rejected Him, Elijah will come in the future (Rev. 11:3–10).

### **The Infinite Power of Faith**

Matthew 17:14–21 (Mark 9:14–29; Luke 9:37–43)

**17:15–16** *"Lord, have mercy ... Your disciples ... could not cure him."* Jesus had given power to the disciples to cast out demons (Matt. 10:1; Luke 10:17).

**17:17** *"O faithless and perverse generation."* Here, Jesus rebukes not only unbelieving Israel, but also His disciples for their lack of faith.

**17:20** *"Because of your unbelief."* When believers doubt God's power, they are no more effective than unbelievers. *"As a mustard seed."* The power of faith is not in its own greatness, but rather in the object of that faith—the Lord Jesus Christ. If we doubt Him, we are powerless.

**17:21** *"Except by prayer and fasting."* If we neglect daily spiritual disciplines in our lives, the result will always be a lack of power and effectiveness in our service to Him. James 2:14–24 describes not an unbeliever, but rather a believer who, due to lack of faith, is ineffective in good works (Titus 3:14).

### Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

Matthew 17:22–23 (Mark 9:30–32; Luke 9:43–45)

**17:22** *“The Son of Man is about to be betrayed.”* Jesus again predicts His death, burial, and resurrection. The sorrow of the disciples shows that they believed He would be killed but they did not grasp the promise of His resurrection. See Mark 9:30–32 and Luke 9:44–45.

### If Our Lives Offend, We Hinder Our Ministry

Matthew 17:24–27

**17:24** *“Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?”* This was a voluntary tax to support the Temple. However, the Temple was only a shadow of the true temple in Jesus’ body (John 2:19; Heb. 4:14–16; 10:19–22).

**17:27** *“Nevertheless, lest we offend them.”* Even though Jesus was the King as well as the fulfillment of the Temple, and Peter was a son of the King, Jesus works a miracle to pay the tax to remove any cause for offense from His ministry. See 2 Corinthians 6:3–10. However, sometimes offense is necessary (Matt. 11:6; 15:12).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 18

The power of child-like humility/faith—and forgiveness.

### Become as Little Children

Matthew 18:1–14 (Mark 9:33–50; Luke 9:46–50)

**18:1** *“Who then is greatest ...?”* This was one of the disciples’ favorite topics for discussion. They argued over this as they entered the Upper Room (Luke 22:24).

**18:3** *“Unless you are converted and become as little children.”* The word “*converted*” means “to turn around” or “to change direction.” It effectively defines what “repent” means—to turn from pride and self-sufficiency to humble dependence. This was the meaning of John’s call to repentance.

**18:4** *“Whoever humbles himself ... is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* Verses 3 and 4 make it clear that child-like humility is essential both to enter the kingdom, and to become great in it. The first refers to new birth, the second to spiritual growth and service. This humility is seen in Matthew 5:3. See also 1 Pet. 5:5–6 and Luke 17:10.

**18:7** *“Woe to the world because of offenses.”* Three kinds of offense or stumbling are noted: of one believer against another (v. 6), of the world against believers (v. 7), and of the believer against himself (vv. 8–9). All are caused because of the lack of humility.

**18:8** *“If your hand ... causes you to sin, cut it off.”* Jesus is using strong figurative language. If we cut off each member when it causes us to sin, we would soon be dead. In practical terms, we “cut off” those members by considering them to be dead—crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:1–14; Eph. 4:17, 20–32).

**18:11** *“For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.”* Jesus Christ came to save, not to judge (John 3:16–17; Luke 9:56; 19:10). Simple faith in Him is the way of salvation (John 1:12; 3:36; 6:40; 20:31).

**18:14** *“It is not the will of your Father ... that one of these little ones should perish.”* “*These little ones*” refers to all who come to Him in simple, humble faith. Jesus Christ desires the eternal salvation of all men (Rom. 3:21–24; 1 Tim. 2:4–6; 4:10; 2 Pet. 3:9).

## MATTHEW 18:15–19:10

### Offending and Forgiving

Matthew 18:15–35

**18:15** *“If your brother sins against you.”* Jesus turns from warning us not to offend, to teaching us how to deal with those who offend or sin against us. *“Go and tell him ... between you and him alone.”* Sin should always be dealt with privately, if possible. The more sin is publicized, the more sins it creates in response.

**18:17** *“If He refuses ... tell it to the church.”* Three steps for addressing sin are given here: first, it is private; then, with faithful witnesses, and finally, before the church. The offender is given the opportunity to correct himself privately before it is made public (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1–2). *“Let him be to you like a heathen.”* Rebellious believers who will not submit to church discipline are to be shunned by the church, so as to bring them to correction (1 Cor. 5:1–13; 6:1–8; 2 Thess. 3:11–15).

**18:18–20** *“Whatever you bind on earth ... where two or three are gathered.”* This refers to the witnesses in vv. 15–16, or the decisions of the church body. *“In My name”* means according to His Word and the guidance of His Spirit (Matt. 16:19; John 20:21–23; 1 Cor. 5:4).

**18:21** *“How often shall ... I forgive him?”* The Jewish rabbis taught that sin should only be forgiven three times (see Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6). Peter is going far beyond what he had been taught. But Jesus teaches us to forgive always, as He does.

**18:23–34** *“The kingdom of heaven is like ...”* Jesus tells a parable to illustrate how God has forgiven us an impossible amount, and we, out of gratitude, should also forgive others (Matt. 7:1–5; Luke 7:40–50).

**18:35** *“So My heavenly Father also will do.”* God holds us accountable for both the grace we have received and the truth we have learned (Matt. 12:36; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 19

Jesus corrects Jewish misconception about various topics.

### Teaching on Marriage and Divorce

Matthew 19:1–12 (Mark 10:1–12)

**19:3** *“The Pharisees also came ... testing Him.”* As in Matthew 16:1, their question is not genuine. Perhaps they hoped he would side with John the Baptist, who was killed for this question (Matt. 14:3–10). *“For just any reason.”* Hillel, one of Israel’s famous rabbis, taught that a man could divorce his wife for any displeasure he found in her.

**19:4** *“Have you not read?”* This was an insult to the Pharisees, who considered themselves experts in all the Scripture. Jesus refers to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, based on God’s original order in creation.

**19:6** *“They are no longer two.”* The union of marriage is not only physical, but spiritual (1 Cor. 6:16; 7:2; Eph. 5:25–32).

**19:8** *“Moses ... permitted you to divorce.”* Here, Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 24:1–4. See Matthew 5:31–32 and Luke 16:18. *“The hardness of your hearts.”* See Malachi 2:14–16 and Hebrews 3:15.

**19:10** *“It is better not to marry.”* See Proverbs 21:19, but also 1 Corinthians 7:1–6. Marriage is designed to be a life-long commitment between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:5; Gen. 2:24). It is better not to marry than to make a mockery of marriage.

**19:12** *“There are eunuchs ... born ... made ... made themselves.”* Jesus describes those born sexually incapable, those who are castrated, and those who remain single or celibate for the sake of serving God’s kingdom. Paul was such a person (1 Cor. 7:7–8, 32–35). *“He who is able ... let him accept it.”* The decision to remain celibate must be personal and not imposed on anyone.

**Jesus’ Love for Little Children**  
Matthew 19:13–15 (Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17)

**19:13** *“The disciples rebuked them.”* They rebuked the parents for bringing their children, probably assuming Jesus was weary, or that they were unimportant.

**19:14** *“Of such is the kingdom.”* As in Matthew 18:1–4, Jesus declares that child-like faith and humility is the only way to enter His kingdom.

**Jesus Teaches that No One Can Enter Eternal Life through Works**  
Matthew 19:16–26 (Mark 10:17–27; Luke 18:18–27)

**19:16** *“What good thing shall I do?”* This ruler believed he could work his way into Heaven. This was the common belief in Jesus’ time.

**19:17** *“Why do you call Me good?”* In essence, Jesus is asking the ruler if he believed in His true identity as God. *“Keep the commandments.”* If anyone could keep all the Law of Moses, they would enter into the kingdom, because they would be perfect. Only Jesus kept the whole Law (Matt. 5:17). The Law was not given to save us, but to point us to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:10–14, 19–25).

**19:20** *“What do I still lack?”* This man knew that in all his goodness, he still lacked something. As a young man, Paul was just like this, yet he left it all for Christ’s sake (Phil. 3:1–11).

**19:21** *“If you want to be perfect.”* Jesus is not teaching salvation by a work. Rather, He is touching on the one thing keeping the young ruler from trusting and following Him. See Romans 3:21–24 and Ephesians 2:8–9. If he truly fulfilled *“love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt. 19:19; Lev. 19:18), he would gladly give his wealth to the poor. *“You will have treasure in heaven.”* See Matthew 6:19–21.

**19:25** *“Who then can be saved?”* The disciples realize that no one could possibly earn eternal life. Jesus confirms this conclusion (v. 26), by saying that salvation is impossible for men, as only God can give eternal life to those who believe (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8–9). See Job 38–39 and Jeremiah 32:17–22.

**Jesus Assures the Disciples of Their Eternal Reward**  
Matthew 19:27–30 (Mark 10:28–31; Luke 18:28–30)

**19:27** *“We have left all ... what shall we have?”* Peter’s question is natural, as they had done what Jesus commanded (Matt. 4:18–22; 16:24–27).

**19:28** *“In the regeneration.”* Jesus is referring to His coming kingdom reign on the New Earth (Isa. 11:6–9; Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 21:1–5).

**19:29** *“Shall receive a hundredfold ... and inherit everlasting life.”* You must be a son (heir) before you can inherit. Inheritance and salvation are not the same thing. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who believe (John 3:16; 10:28; Rom. 6:23). Inheritance is the reward the sons of God receive for their faithful service to Christ (Psalm 19:11; 58:11; Matt. 5:11–12; Luke 14:12–14; Gal. 3:26; 4:1–7; Heb. 10:35; Rev. 22:12).

## MATTHEW 19:30–20:19

**19:30** *“Many who are first will be last.”* In His kingdom, Jesus will rule righteously (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). Many who promote themselves in this life will be demoted (1 Corinthians 3:8–15). Many who are cast aside in this world will be *“first”* in the kingdom.

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 20

Jesus illustrates *“the first shall be last”* and again predicts His coming death and resurrection.

### **The Parable of the Landowner and the Workers**

Matthew 20:1–16

**20:1** *“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner.”* Parables use examples from daily life to teach a spiritual lesson.

**20:2** *“He ... agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day.”* This was the typical daily wage in Jesus’ time. The workers agreed to this payment.

**20:4** *“Whatever is right I will give you.”* Here, the workers trust the landowner’s fairness. There is faith involved in this agreement.

**20:6** *“And about the eleventh hour.”* Since the typical workday was twelve hours, this is one hour before quitting time. Again, the promise is that they will receive *“whatever is right”* (v.4).

**20:8** *“Beginning with the last to the first.”* Here, Jesus may be referring to Israel as those who had borne the heat of the day. The last workers could illustrate the Gentiles, who were now flocking into the kingdom.

**20:9** *“They each received a denarius.”* What the early workers had agreed to (v. 2) was also given to the late workers. The salvation God promised to Israel throughout the ages, is equally given to believing Gentiles (Rom. 2:28–3:2; 9:4–5; Eph. 2:11–13).

**20:10–11** *“They supposed ... they complained [murmured].”* Human judgment can never understand the greatness of God’s grace. We can never assume that God “owes” us anything. His grace will always surpass human reason. See 1 Corinthians 2:11–16.

**20:15** *“Is your eye evil because I am good?”* The self-righteous are always offended by the grace God shows to sinners (Mark 2:14–17; Luke 7:36–50; 19:1–10).

**20:16** *“So the last will be first, and the first last.”* The Church, which came *“last,”* will receive its rewards *“first”* (1 Cor. 3:10–15), following the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), and also be given a greater position in the kingdom than Israel, reigning with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:9–10; 20:6).

### **Jesus Warns Again of His Coming Death and Resurrection**

Matthew 20:17–19 (Mark 10:32–34; Luke 18:31–34)

**20:18–19** *“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem ... to scourge and to crucify ... and ... rise again.”* This is the third time Jesus tells the disciples He will be crucified (Matt. 16:21; 17: 22–23).

### Greatness in the Kingdom Comes from Suffering and Serving

Matthew 20:21–28 (Mark 10:35–45)

**20:21** *“One on Your right hand and the other on the left.”* In the Gospel of Mark, it is James and John who ask this question. Here, their mother is asking. This is a request for the two highest positions in the kingdom. See Luke 22:24.

**20:22** *“Are you able to drink the cup ... be baptized?”* Jesus is referring to His crucifixion, where He will be identified with sinners and “become sin for us” (2 Cor. 5:21; Luke 12:50 and notes on Matthew 3:6 regarding baptism). All of the disciples, except John, were martyred for their faith.

**20:26** *“Whoever desires to become great ... let him be your servant.”* This is another way of explaining, *“the first shall be last.”* Greatness in God’s kingdom means being the best servant (Matt. 18:1–4; Phil. 2:5–11). King Rehoboam was given this counsel but rejected it (1 Kings 12:6–8).

**20:28** *“The Son of Man ... to give His life a ransom.”* Jesus not only foretold His death but explained its purpose. His death was to pay the debt of our sin, and to purchase eternal life for us (Isa. 53; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:3–6). The word “ransom” was used for purchasing a slave in order to set them free (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Tim. 2:6; 2 Pet. 2:1).

### Healing of the Blind

Matthew 20:29–34 (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)

**20:30** *“Behold, two blind men.”* While Matthew mentions two blind men, in Mark and Luke, only one blind man is mentioned (Bartimaeus). *“O Lord, Son of David.”* They believed in Him as the promised Savior and Messiah (2 Sam. 7:12–17; Isa. 11:1–5, 10–11; 12:1–6).

**20:34** *“Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes.”* Jesus’ power to heal revealed both His love for men, and His identity as the Savior (Isa. 61:1–3).

## MATTHEW CHAPTER 21

The King comes to Jerusalem, purifies the Temple, is rejected by the leaders, and warns of coming judgment.

### The King Presents Himself

Matthew 21:1–11 (Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–44; John 12:12–19)

**21:2–3** *“The Lord has need of them.”* The owner was a follower of Jesus. It is possible Jesus had arranged to have the animals ready.

**21:4–9** *“That it might be fulfilled.”* One of Matthew’s goals is to show how Jesus fulfilled prophecy (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35).

**21:5** *“Your King is coming ... sitting on a donkey.”* This prophecy is in Zechariah 9:9. Still, overall, the people rejected Him.

**21:9** *“Hosanna to the Son of David!”* The word “Hosanna” means “Lord, save now.” See Psalm 118:25–28. In this Psalm, the Messiah is identified as God. Until this time, Jesus avoided public attention (Matt. 8:4; 9:30; 12:16; 17:9).

**21:11** *“Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.”* This multitude still does not recognize Him as the Messiah.

## MATTHEW 21:13–42

### Jesus Purifies the Temple

Matthew 21:12–17 (Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–22)

**21:13** *“My house shall be called a house of prayer.”* Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. The Temple leaders would reject the animals of the poor for sacrifice, then sell others to them at twice the normal price.

**21:15–16** *“The chief priests and scribes ... were indignant.”* The leaders of the nation officially reject Jesus as the Messiah. *“Out of the mouth of babes.”* See Psalm 8:2 and Luke 19:39–40.

### The Cursing of the Fig Tree

Matthew 21:18–22 (Mark 11:12–14, 20–24)

**21:19** *“He came ... and found nothing ... but leaves.”* The fig tree is symbolic of Israel. Both the vine and the fig represent either God’s blessing or cursing on Israel based on their obedience or disobedience (1 Kings 4:25; Psalm 105:33; Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 5:17; Micah 4:4). Jesus came to His people expecting fruit but found only empty promises (John 1:10–11; see note on Matt. 24:32).

**21:21** *“If you have faith.”* The fig tree illustrates two great truths: First, Israel will suffer the curse of their unbelief, beginning in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Second, the disciples are to learn the power of faith for effective prayer (Matt. 7:7–11; 17:19–20; Luke 17:6).

### Jesus’ Authority Challenged Again

Matthew 21:23–27 (Mark 11:27–33; Luke 19:47–48; 20:1–8)

**21:23** *“The chief priests and the elders ... confronted Him ... who gave You this authority?”* Jesus refuses to answer their challenge. They have no right to question Him. Rather, He puts them on the spot with another question. Their inability to answer shows them to be unfit as spiritual leaders. John the Baptist told these very leaders that Jesus was greater than he (Matt. 3:11–15).

### Two Parables Showing Israel’s Rebellion

Matthew 21:28–46 (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19)

**21:28–31** *“A man had two sons ... Which of the two did the will of his father?”* As v. 31 shows, this parable illustrates the difference between the religious leaders and the people they considered to be sinners. The sinners repented when John came, but the leaders did not (Luke 3:1–14; 7:29–30, 37–50).

**21:32** *“You did not believe ... tax collectors and harlots believed.”* Jesus makes clear that it is faith that God accepts. Believing sinners are acceptable to God; unbelieving religious leaders are not!

**21:33** *“A certain landowner ... planted a vineyard.”* The landowner represents God, and the vineyard is Israel. (Psalm 80:8–16; Isa. 5:1–7). The servants of the owner represent the prophets, and the vinedressers represent the religious leaders of Israel (1 Thess. 2:14–15).

**21:37** *“Last of all he sent his son.”* This represents the coming of Jesus Christ (John 1:14; 3:16; Heb. 1:1–3).

**21:41** *“He will destroy those wicked men.”* Jesus trapped the religious leaders into passing sentence upon themselves (Matt. 12:37).

**21:42** *“Have you never read ... the stone which the builders rejected.”* Once again, Jesus insults their lack of biblical knowledge. The “stone” is the same as the “rock” in Matthew 16:18. Jesus Christ is the “cornerstone” (Psalm 118:22–23), and He is also the “foundation” (1 Cor. 3:10–11) of all spiritual life.

**21:43** *“The kingdom of God will be taken from you.”* During the Church Age, from Pentecost to the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), possession of the kingdom would belong to the Church (Rom. 11:25; 1 Pet. 2:4–10).

**21:44** *“Whoever falls on this stone.”* To fall on Christ in faith breaks our pride, but to be “fallen on” by Him in judgment is to be destroyed (Isa. 8:14–15; Dan. 2:44–45).

**21:45** *“The chief priests and Pharisees ... perceived that He was speaking of them.”* They realized that they were the wicked vinedressers in the parable. For this, they wanted to kill Him but feared the multitudes.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 22**

The parable of the Wedding Feast brings increased opposition.

### **The Wedding Feast**

Matthew 22:1–14 (Luke 14:15–24)

**22:2** *“A certain king ... arranged a marriage for his son.”* God the Father is the king, and Jesus Christ is His son. The Jews rightly believed that the kingdom would begin with a wedding feast (Matt. 8:11–12; Luke 13:28–29).

**22:3** *“Sent out his servants.”* These represent the prophets sent to Israel (Matt. 23:34–35). *“Those who were invited.”* All Israel was invited to join the wedding feast in the kingdom (John 3:29). *“They were not willing to come.”* This reveals the hardness of heart of most Jews at that time. See Matthew 23:37.

**22:4** *“I have prepared my dinner.”* The word used here means the “early meal,” for those who arrived before the main feast. Israel could have been feasting with Christ before the coming of the kingdom. This was the purpose of the ministry of John the Baptist.

**22:7** *“The king ... was furious.”* Here, Jesus describes the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:1–2; Luke 21:20–24).

**22:8** *“Those who were invited were not worthy.”* By their unbelief, they (unbelieving Israel) disqualified themselves from attending (Acts 13:38–41, 46).

**22:10** *“Those servants went out into the highways.”* This verse anticipates the ministry of the apostles, who were to “Go ... and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). *“Both bad and good.”* This refers to both Gentiles and Jews. Most Jews did not believe Gentiles could enter the kingdom.

**22:11** *“A man ... who did not have on a wedding garment.”* The wedding garment was provided by the king for his guests. Here, it represents our robes of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13–14).

**22:12–13** *“Cast him into outer darkness.”* This is the fate of all who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ (Matt. 8:12; 25:30). The Jewish rabbis used “outer darkness” to refer to Hell (Matt. 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46). It is most interesting that before Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples, he sent Judas away, “and it was night” (John 13:26–30).

**22:14** *“For many are called ... few are chosen.”* The invitation to enter eternal life is given to all, but only “few” receive it by faith.

## MATTHEW 22:15–44

### **The Increasing Opposition of the Religious Leaders**

Matthew 22:15–40 (Mark 12:13–34; Luke 20:20–40)

**22:15–16** *“Then the Pharisees ... the Herodians.”* These two groups were enemies. The Pharisees were devoted to the Law of Moses; the Herodians were supporters of Roman domination over Israel.

**22:17** *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”* They hoped to trap Jesus (v. 15). If He said “Yes,” He would side with the Herodians. If He said “No,” He would side with the Pharisees. Either way, the other side could attack Him.

**22:21** *“Render to Caesar ... and to God.”* The tax money bore the image of Caesar (vv. 19–21). Humans bear the image of God (Gen. 1:26; James 3:9). God has claim to our souls, but the government only to taxes.

**22:23** *“The same day the Sadducees.”* All the religious groups are now out to attack Jesus. This group denied the existence of angels and the resurrection of the body (Acts 23:8; 1 Cor. 15:12–58).

**22:24** *“Moses said ... if a man dies.”* This law, called levirate marriage, was based on Deuteronomy 25:5–10, but was not compulsory. This was the basis for the marriage of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 3–4). It was designed to provide a home and protection for the widow.

**22:29** *“You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.”* This was a powerful rebuke by Jesus. Because they were ignorant of the Word of God, they were ignorant of His power to raise the dead.

**22:32** *“I am the God of Abraham.”* The sacred Name of God given to Moses was *Yahweh/Jehovah*, translated, *“I AM”* (Exod. 3:14). This reveals not only God’s power, but also that He is self-existent. As the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” He is saying that they were very much alive, therefore, proving the resurrection. Those who trust in Jesus Christ will never die (John 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47).

**22:33** *“The multitudes ... were astonished.”* No one had ever taught that the patriarchs of Israel were still very much alive.

**22:36** *“Which is the great commandment?”* The Jews believed that there was one good work that could save them, but that it was hidden from them. See Matthew 19:16. Jesus showed them that only love, which comes from faith, can fulfill the Law (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:6)

**22:37–40** *“You shall love the Lord your God ... and ... your neighbor.”* Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:4–5 and Leviticus 19:18. In the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1–17), the first five relate to love of God, the last five to love of our neighbor. No one can fulfill these commands except through faith and new birth.

### **Jesus Asks His Own Question**

Matthew 22:41–46 (Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44)

**22:42** *“Christ? ... whose Son is He?”* After answering three of their questions, Jesus asks them His own. There were many false views about the Christ/Messiah at this time. *“The Son of David.”* This statement was certainly true (Matt. 1:1; 21:9). However, they believed He would be merely a man. Jesus wants to prove that He is God in the flesh.

**22:44** *“The LORD said to my Lord.”* David wrote this in Psalm 110:1. It looks forward to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 7:56; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 10:11–14).

**22:45 “If David ... calls Him ‘Lord.’”** Apart from recognizing the deity of Jesus Christ, they could not answer this question. He is both “Son of God” and “Son of David.”

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 23**

Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees and predicts the fall of Jerusalem.

### **Jesus Warns against Religious Hypocrisy**

Matthew 23:1–12 (Mark 12:38–40; Luke 20:45–47)

**23:2 “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”** Jesus recognizes their official position as teachers of the Law. This would change with the tearing of the veil in the Temple (Matt. 27:50–51) and Pentecost (Acts 2).

**23:3 “They say, and do not do.”** Instead of using the Law to bring people to faith (Gal. 3:21–25), they used it to dominate the people.

**23:5 “They do to be seen by men.”** This goes back to what Jesus warned about in Matthew 6:1–8, 16–18. They sought for recognition (v. 5), honor (v. 6), and titles (v. 7). Too many church leaders today are just like them!

**23:8 “One is your Teacher, the Christ.”** Here, Jesus identifies Himself as the Christ or Messiah. He alone is worthy of all honor and praise (Eph. 3:21; Phil. 2:10–11; 2 Tim. 4:18; James 2:1).

**23:11–12 “He who humbles himself will be exalted.”** As Jesus taught the disciples in Matthew 18:1–4, greatness in His kingdom will be the reward of those who humble themselves as servants (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 9:23; Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).

### **Jesus Declares Seven Woes on the Scribes and Pharisees**

Matthew 23:13–39

**23:13 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”** The word “*woe*” is a warning of severe judgment to come. See Isaiah 5:8–23 and Habakkuk 2:5–20. In Jesus’ mind, “hypocrite” describes the evil of religious unbelievers (Job 13:16; Isa. 9:17; Matt. 7:5; 15:7–9; 22:18–20). **“You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.”** These religious leaders encouraged hypocrisy in their followers, and persecuted true believers.

**23:14 “Devour widows’ houses.”** As many do today, they would use the grief of widows to promise prayers for the dead in return for offerings.

**23:15 “To win one proselyte.”** Religious leaders made great efforts to convert Gentiles to Judaism, but instead of teaching them the truth of God’s Word, they loaded them down with religious duties.

**23:16–22 “Whoever swears by the temple.”** This section reveals how twisted the values of the scribes and Pharisees were. They valued gold and gifts more than the Temple, which was a picture of Jesus Christ (John 2:19; Heb. 10:19–20). See also Matthew 5:33–37 and James 5:12.

**23:23 “Justice and mercy and faith.”** These hypocrites were incredibly careful about outward shows of piety, but not concerned with true inward transformation. See Genesis 18:19, Deuteronomy 10:12, and Micah 6:8.

**23:24 “Strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.”** Both of these animals were declared unclean for eating in the Law (Lev. 11:4, 20, 41–47; Deut. 14:7, 19). His point is that they focus on small things and ignore the big issues of spiritual life.

## **MATTHEW 23:26–24:8**

**23:26** *“First cleanse the inside of the cup.”* Jesus is saying that regeneration, or new birth, must come before good works (Eph. 2:8–10; 2 Tim. 2:19–22; Titus 2:11–15).

**23:27** *“Whitewashed tombs.”* Again, the leaders’ concern was for outward beauty, not their inward corruption. Note that from vv. 25 to 28, Jesus contrasts the inner versus the outer four times.

**23:31** *“You are sons of those who murdered the prophets.”* Jesus is saying that they share the same attitude, actions, and guilt of their forefathers (Acts 7:51–53; 1 Thess. 2:14–16).

**23:34** *“I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes.”* Jesus is identifying Himself as the God of the Old Testament.

**23:35** *“The blood of righteous Abel to ... Zechariah.”* Cain’s death is recorded in Genesis 4:8; he was the first martyr. The murder of Zechariah is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22, which is the last book of the Hebrew Bible. Jesus is citing the first to the last who died for their faith. See Luke 11:51, Acts 7:51–53, and 2 Timothy 3:12.

**23:36** *“Upon this generation.”* He is predicting the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the destruction of the nation. The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25) will give further detail.

**23:37** *“How often I wanted to gather your children.”* Throughout the entire history of Israel in the Old Testament, this was God’s desire.

**23:38** *“Your house is left to you desolate.”* The “house” can refer to the Temple, or the entire nation. Both will be utterly destroyed.

**23:39** *“Blessed is He who comes.”* This is from Psalm 118:26, which anticipates Jesus’ Second Coming. These same words were spoken by the multitude at Jesus’ triumphal entry (John 12:13). It is interesting that the verse in the middle of whole Bible is Psalm 118:8, *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”* This is the central theme of the Word of God.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 24**

The Olivet Discourse (chapters 24–25) predicts the destruction of Israel in 70 A.D. and the coming Tribulation Period. The Church is not in view here, as the mystery of the Church Age was not yet revealed (Rom. 16:25–27; Eph. 3:1–13).

### **The Coming Judgment on Israel**

Matthew 24:1–31 (Mark 13:1–27; Luke 21:5–28)

**24:1** *“Then Jesus ... departed from the temple.”* Jesus leaves the Temple for the last time, fulfilling the vision of Ezekiel about the glory of God departing (Ezek. 10:18–19; 11:22–23).

**24:3** *“Tell us, when ... and what.”* Jesus does not specify the time of the destruction of the Temple, but rather expounds on the coming Tribulation—the *“time of Jacob’s trouble”* (Jer. 30:7).

**24:4–7** *“Take heed that no one deceives you.”* The two great dangers facing believers in the End Times are deception from *“false christs”* (Matt. 24:24) and fear from the increasing judgments (Rev. 6:1–8).

**24:8** *“The beginning of sorrows.”* The word *“sorrows”* means “birth pangs.” While these conditions mean judgment for the unbelieving world, they are evidence to believers of Jesus’ soon return (Titus 2:12–13; 2 Pet. 3:8–13).

**24:9–31 “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation.”** Here, Jesus gives an outline of the Tribulation Period. This seven-year period will begin with “tribulation” (v. 9). At the 3 ½ year mark—halfway through—Antichrist will enter the Temple (v. 15). This will usher in the “great tribulation” (v. 21), which will end with the Second Coming of Christ (vv. 29–31).

**24:13 “He who endures to the end.”** The “end” here and in v. 14 refers to “the end of the age” (v. 3). This is not teaching perseverance in the faith for salvation, but the final deliverance of believers when Jesus Christ returns (Matt. 10:22).

**24:14 “This gospel ... to all the nations.”** The Tribulation will be a time of great evangelistic success (Rev. 6:9–17; 11:3–12; 14:6–7). The “gospel of the kingdom” will go back to John the Baptist’s message (Matt. 3:2), declaring that the King is coming.

**24:15 “The abomination of desolation.”** This refers to Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9:27) where the Antichrist will enter the Temple and proclaim himself to be God (Dan. 11:31; 12:11; 2 Thess. 2:3–4; Rev. 13:1–10).

**24:16 “Let those who are in Judea flee.”** Here, Jesus is warning that when they see the abomination of desolation in the Temple, they should flee to the “mountains,” as the Antichrist will seek to wipe out the Jewish nation (see vv. 17–20).

**24:21 “Great tribulation.”** This refers to the last half of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

**24:22 “Those days will be shortened.”** The return of Christ will bring deliverance for His people, and judgment to His enemies (Matt. 3:12; 13:30; 25:31–33; Rev. 19:11–21). **“For the elect’s sake.”** The term “elect” refers to those who believe in Jesus Christ, “the Elect One” (Isa. 42:1). Just as we share His Sonship, so also, we share His election (Eph. 1:4–6).

**24:24 “False christs and false prophets.”** The Tribulation will be a time of great deception for those who do not know God’s Word.

**24:27 “As the lightning comes.”** Jesus’ Second Coming will not be hidden, but instead, “every eye will see Him” (Zec. 9:14; Matt. 24:30–31; Luke 17:24; Rev. 1:7; 6:12–17).

**24:28 “Wherever the carcass is.”** The whole world will look like a battlefield covered with bodies when Christ comes.

**24:29 “The sun will be darkened.”** The Tribulation will end with great natural disturbances (Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:30–31; Rev. 6:12–14).

**24:30 “The sign of the Son of Man.”** The heavens will part, and Jesus will come in all His glory (Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 6:14–17; 19:11–16).

**24:31 “He will send His angels.”** The angels will gather all who believe in Him together to enter into His kingdom (Isa. 43:5–7).

**The Parables of the Fig Tree, the Days of  
Noah, and the Wise Servant**  
Matthew 24:32–51 (Mark 13:28–37; Luke 21:29–36)

**24:32 “The fig tree.”** Jesus refers to a specific fig tree—the one He cursed (Matt. 21:18–19). The fig tree is a symbol of Israel. When Israel began to blossom again as a nation (in 1948), the time of His coming would be near.

## **MATTHEW 24:34–25:14**

**24:34 “*This generation.*”** This refers to the generation that sees the return of Israel onto the world stage. God would only recover Israel out of the nations two times (Isa. 11:10–11). **“*All these things.*”** These are the events of Matthew 24–25.

**24:37 “*As the days of Noah.*”** This indicates a generation ripe for judgment (Gen. 6:5–6).

**24:38 “*Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.*”** They were living with no thought of the coming judgment of the world.

**24:39–41 “*The flood came and took them ... one will be taken.*”** This is not describing the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18). This refers to events in the Tribulation. The “taking” here is in judgment, as those taken by the flood.

**24:42–44 “*Watch therefore ... be ready.*”** Like Noah and his family, those living during the Tribulation are to always be ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

**24:45–51 “*A faithful and wise servant.*”** This refers to a believer who, like the wise builder (Matt. 7:24–25) builds his life on faith in Christ. The “*evil servant*” rejects Him and will suffer eternal judgment. **“*Hypocrites.*”** This is a term Jesus used for unbelievers. See also Matthew 23:13–29.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 25**

Three parables continue Jesus’ teaching on End-Time events.

### **The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

Matthew 25:1–13

**25:1 “*Ten virgins ... went out to meet the bridegroom.*”** These virgins do not represent the Church. The Church is the “*bride*” (John 3:29; Eph. 5:32; Rev. 19:7–8; 21:2, 9). These are believing Jews at the Second Coming of Christ. The term “virgin” was used in the Old Testament for all of Israel (Jer. 14:17; 31:4).

**25:2 “*Five ... were wise ... five were foolish.*”** As in Matthew 7:24–27, “*wise*” refers to a believer, “*foolish*,” to an unbeliever.

**25:4 “*The wise took oil.*”** Oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit, as in the practice of anointing (1 Sam. 10:1, 6; 2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

**25:6 “*Behold, the bridegroom is coming.*”** This is a picture of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. At that time, the Church will come with Him (Rev. 19:11–16), having already been raptured (1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 4:1).

**25:9 “*No, lest there should not be enough.*”** This is not selfishness but is stated to teach that spiritual preparation is personal and cannot be shared.

**25:10 “*Went in with him.*”** This is a picture of entrance into the kingdom following His return (Matt. 22:1–14; Rev. 19:7–8).

**25:12 “*I do not know you.*”** “*You*” refers to those who have never believed in Him.

### **The Parable of the Talents (Faithful and Unfaithful Servants)**

Matthew 25:14–30 (Luke 19:11–27)

**25:14 “*Called His own servants.*”** All Israel was called to be God’s servants (Isa. 41:8; 43:10; 44:1).

**25:15** *“To one he gave five talents.”* A denarius (Matt. 20:2) was one day’s wage. A talent was about six thousand denarii. Israel’s *“talents”* are recorded in Romans 9:4–5. *“Each according to his ability.”* God never asks more of any of us than we are capable of, yet He desires obedience (see Rom. 12:6–8).

**25:20–23** *“Enter into the joy of your lord [master].”* Because both servants were faithful with what they were given, both received the same reward.

**25:24** *“I knew you to be a hard man.”* Those who do not understand God’s grace, always consider Him to be hard.

**25:26** *“You wicked ... lazy servant.”* This represents those Jews who, though given great gifts from God, never come to Him in faith.

**25:28** *“Take the talent from him.”* Failure to receive God’s gifts by faith is to lose them forever. This very thing happened to Judas (Acts 1:16–26).

**25:30** *“Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.”* This unbeliever will not share in the eternal kingdom promised to Israel (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 49–50; 22:13).

### **The Judgment of Gentile Nations**

Matthew 25:31–46

**25:31** *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory.”* This is a reference to the Second Coming (Dan. 7:13–14; Rev. 19:11–21; 20:4–6).

**25:32** *“All the nations.”* *“Nations”* always refer to Gentiles. *“Sheep.”* These are believers from the nations. *“Goats.”* These are unbelievers from the nations.

**25:34** *“Inherit the kingdom.”* As in Matthew 5:5, this inheritance (reward) is for their works as believers. Entrance into the kingdom is by faith alone. Inheritance is in proportion to faithful works.

**25:37** *“Then the righteous will answer.”* Righteousness can be received only by faith in Christ (Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–26; 4:3–5).

**25:40** *“The least of these My brethren.”* This refers to believing Jews who will be severely persecuted during the Tribulation Period. As in World War II, many believing Gentiles will hide, feed, and care for Jewish people.

**25:41** *“Depart from Me, you cursed ones.”* These are unbelieving Gentiles who refused to act on behalf of the persecuted Jewish believers.

**25:46** *“Everlasting [eternal] punishment ... eternal life.”* The life for those who believe and the punishment for those who reject is everlasting or eternal (John 3:18, 36).

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 26**

Preparations for the Passover; the Lamb of God taken.

### **Religious Leaders Plot His Death; the Woman Prepares for His Burial**

Matthew 26:1–16 (Mark 14:1–11; Luke 22:1–6; John 11:45–57)

**26:2** *“After two days is the Passover.”* This feast celebrates Israel’s exodus from Egypt (read Exodus 12). It began the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matt. 26:17). See Leviticus 23 for the feasts of Israel. *“The Son of Man*

## MATTHEW 26:3–37

*will ... be crucified.*” The sacrifice of the Passover lamb pointed forward to the crucifixion of Jesus, the “*Lamb of God*” (John 1:29, 36).

**26:3** “*Then the chief priests ... plotted to take Jesus.*” Jesus defeated them in argument/theological discussion (Matt. 22:46), and they feared the people (Matt. 21:26, 46), so their only course of action was to use deception.

**26:7** “*A woman came to Him.*” From John 12:3, we know this was Mary, sister of Martha, who was the same woman who anointed Him at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 7:37–39; John 11:2). “*Very costly oil.*” It was worth one year’s wages for a worker (Mark 14:3–5; John 12:5).

**26:8** “*His disciples ... were indignant.*” This was primarily Judas (John 12:4–6).

**26:12** “*She did it for My burial.*” Mary seems to be the only one who understood Jesus’ warnings of His coming crucifixion (Matt. 16:21; 17:22; 20:18).

**26:13** “*Wherever this gospel is preached ... as a memorial to her.*” What we do for Christ will never be forgotten (Matt. 10:42; 1 John 2:17).

**26:15** “*Thirty pieces of silver.*” This fulfills the prophecy of Zechariah 11:12–13. This was the common price for a slave (Exod. 21:32). Mary’s devotion was costly (Matt. 26:7); Judas’ betrayal was cheap. See Mark 14:10–11 and Luke 22:3–6.

### Jesus Keeps the Passover

Matthew 26:17–35 (Mark 14:12–31; Luke 22:7–34; John 13:1–38)

**26:18** “*I will keep the Passover*” (Exod. 12:3–14). This was one of three mandatory feasts in Israel (Deut. 16:1–3, 16).

**26:21** “*One of you will betray Me.*” Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas never believed in Him and would betray Him (John 6:64, 70–71).

**26:25** “*Lord [Rabbi], is it I?*” While the other disciples asked first (see Mark 14:19), Jesus affirms that it is Judas. The departure of Judas from the Upper Room illustrates the parable in Matthew 22:11–14.

**26:26, 28** “*This is My body ... this is My blood of the new covenant.*” After Judas leaves the room (John 13:30), Jesus reveals that His death will bring into being the “*new covenant*” (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–27). This was the “*new wine*” that would replace the old covenant (Matt. 9:17; Heb. 8:7–13).

**26:31** “*I will strike the Shepherd.*” Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 to predict the disciples’ falling away.

**26:33** “*I will never ... stumble.*” Peter’s boast (vv. 33, 35) illustrates the truth of Proverbs 11:2; 16:18.

### Jesus’ Prayer and Arrest in Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36–56 (Mark 14:32–52; Luke 22:40–53; John 18:1–11)

**26:36** “*Jesus came ... to ... Gethsemane.*” Gethsemane is a garden about half a mile from Jerusalem. Its name means “oil press.” It is where olives were crushed to make olive oil. Here, Jesus, the Son of Man, was crushed in spirit before His crucifixion.

**26:37** “*He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee.*” Three times, Jesus singled out Peter, James, and John for special attention (Matt. 17:1; Luke 8:51). He was training them for leadership.

**26:38 “Stay here and watch with Me.”** Jesus asks these three to pray with and for Him (vv. 40–41).

**26:39 “Let this cup pass from Me.”** The “cup” is used in the Old Testament for God’s wrath poured out (Psalm 75:8; Isa. 51:17). He is speaking of the judgment of God for sin about to be poured out upon Him (Rom. 3:24–26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:9; 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:24).

**26:42 “Your will be done.”** Jesus shows us that the way to victory is by submission to the will of the Father (Matthew 6:10; John 6:38).

**26:49–50 “Rabbi ... friend.”** Only in Matthew does Judas call Jesus “*Rabbi*,” which means “Teacher” or “my great One.” Jesus calls Judas “*friend*,” just as the king in Matthew 22:12 called the intruder to the wedding feast. This shows that Jesus maintained love for Judas, even after his betrayal of Him (Mark 14:43–50; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:1–11).

**26:51 “One of those ... drew his sword.”** We know from John 18:10 that this was Peter.

**26:53 “Twelve legions of angels.”** In the Roman army, a legion was between 3,000 and 6,000 men. Jesus could have escaped the cross if He chose, but for our sakes, He endured the cross (Heb. 12:1–3).

**26:54, 56 “The Scriptures be fulfilled.”** This is one of Matthew’s favorite phrases (Matt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14–15, 35; 21:4; 24:33–34).

### Jesus before the High Priest

Matthew 26:57–75 (Mark 14:53–72; Luke 22:54–71; John 18:12–27)

**26:57 “Caiaphas the high priest.”** This man was son-in-law to Annas, who continued to corruptly act as high priest (Luke 3:2; John 18:13; Acts 4:6).

**26:59 “All the council sought false testimony.”** They knew already that they could not convict Him of sin (John 8:46; see note on Matt. 26:3).

**26:61 “This fellow said.”** This is a lie. The council twisted His words from John 2:19–21. To the Jews, to speak against the Temple was blasphemy and cause for death (Acts 6:13–14).

**26:63 “Jesus kept silent.”** Here, He was fulfilling Isaiah 53:7.

**26:63–64 “I put You under oath ... It is as you said.”** Jesus boldly declares that He is the promised Messiah/Christ, knowing it will result in His death. He also refers to prophecies in Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13–14, to prove His claim.

**26:65 “He has spoken blasphemy!”** The high priest realized that Jesus had claimed to be God by His quotes (Luke 22:69–70). The charge against Him in verses 63 and 64 was that He claimed to be the Christ (see 27:17, 22 where Pilate confirms His title).

**26:68 “Who ... struck You?”** Jesus was blindfolded (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:64).

**26:69–75 “Now Peter ... denied.”** The three denials by Peter fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy. There is comfort in this, for it shows that Jesus knows our failures before we commit them and still forgives us. See John 13:36–14:3.

**26:75 “He went out and wept bitterly.”** Though Judas regretted his betrayal (Matt. 27:3–5), he was still an unbeliever and did not turn to Jesus in faith. Peter, on the other hand, had grief from his temporary lack of faith that led to true repentance (2 Cor. 7:9–11).

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 27**

Jesus is condemned, crucified, and buried.

**Jesus Led to Pilate; Judas Hangs Himself**

Matthew 27:1–10

**27:1** “*All the chief priests and elders ... plotted ... to put Him to death.*” This is why they took Him to Pilate, because Rome prohibited the Jewish council from giving the death sentence (John 18:31).

**27:3** “*Then Judas ... was remorseful.*” The feeling of remorse is not the same as repentance. Both Judas and Peter betrayed Jesus. Peter repented; Judas did not.

**27:4** “*What is that to us?*” Israel’s religious leaders knew Jesus was innocent but wanted Him to be put to death. “*You see to it!*” See the same response by Pilate in v. 24.

**27:5** “*He [Judas] ... went and hanged himself.*” See Acts 1:16–20 for a more complete account.

**27:7–10** “*They consulted together and bought ... the potter’s field.*” This quote is recorded in Zechariah 11:12–13. Jeremiah possibly spoke this prophecy in connection with Jeremiah 19:1–6, and it was recorded by Zechariah.

**Jesus Condemned**

Matthew 27:11–26 (Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:1–25; John 18:28–40; 19:5–16)

**27:11** “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” Jesus was charged with claiming to be the “*Christ*” (see v. 22), therefore, also “the King of the Jews.” See 2 Samuel 7:12–13, Psalm 2:6, and Matthew 2:2. Jesus confirms that He is Israel’s promised King (Dan. 7:13–14; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3). It was for this that He was crucified (Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19).

**27:17** “*Barabbas or Jesus?*” Given the choice between Jesus, who had only done good, and Barabbas, a murderer, the religious leaders chose to set free the murderer (vv. 20–21; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18–19; John 18:40; Acts 3:14).

**27:18** “*Because of envy.*” Pilate knew the religious leaders were envious of Jesus. Envy or jealousy is the hatred of someone who has or does something you are unable to have or do (Mark 15:10; Acts 7:9; 13:45; 17:5; Gal. 5:26; Titus 3:3). It often leads to murder.

**27:22** “*Jesus who is called Christ?*” In this chapter, Jesus is identified as “*King of the Jews [Israel]*” (vv. 11, 29, 37, 42), “*Christ*” (vv. 17, 22), and “*Son of God*” (vv. 40, 54).

**27:24** “*This just Person.*” Both Pilate and Herod declared Jesus to be innocent (Luke 23:13–15). Even Pilate’s wife knew that Jesus was a “*just*” man. See v. 19. “*You see to it!*” (v. 4) Pilate declared himself to be free of the responsibility of shedding innocent blood by washing his hands.

**27:25** “*His blood be on us and on our children.*” With these words, they not only condemned Jesus to die, but also assured the later judgment in 70 A.D. by which the nation was destroyed. “*For by your words ... you will be condemned*” (Matt. 12:37).

### The Crucifixion of Jesus

Matthew 27:27–56 (Mark 15:16–41; Luke 23:26–49; John 19:1–4, 16–37)

**27:29 “A crown of thorns.”** The curse of sin was thorns, suffering, and death (Gen. 3:17–19). Jesus bore our debt and paid the penalty of our sins in full (John 19:30).

**27:32 “A man of Cyrene, Simon by name.”** This man had come all the way from North Africa to celebrate the Passover. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Rufus may be the same one mentioned in Romans 16:13 by Paul.

**27:34 “Sour wine mingled with gall.”** This was a drug given to victims of crucifixion to dull the pain. Jesus rejected it so He could pay the penalty of sin while fully aware. This also fulfilled Psalm 69:21.

**27:35 “Casting lots.”** Here, Psalm 22:18 is fulfilled.

**27:36 “They kept watch over Him.”** This fulfilled Psalm 22:16–17.

**27:37 “THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”** Pilate’s words were intentional, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19–22). This was the charge for which He was crucified.

**27:38 “Two robbers were crucified with Him.”** This fulfilled Isaiah 53:9 and 12. One believed in Him and was saved; the other rejected Him. These two men show the division of all mankind into those saved by faith, and those lost by unbelief (Luke 23:39–43).

**27:39–44 “Hurling abuse at Him.”** These insults were predicted in passages such as Psalm 22:7–8 and 109:25. **“You who destroy the temple.”** They are referring to His prophecy of His crucifixion and resurrection in John 2:19, which they distorted into an attack on the Temple. See note on Matthew 26:61.

**27:42 “Let Him now come down.”** Jesus had the power to avoid the cross—see note on Matthew 26:53, but because of His obedience to the Father (Matt. 26:39, 42) and His love for us, He bore our sins (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21).

**27:45 “From the sixth hour until the ninth hour.”** According to the common Jewish method of counting hours, the sixth hour is 12 noon, and the ninth hour is 3 p.m. Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), which was 9 a.m. In the Old Testament, the “morning and evening offering” of the lamb was at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. (Exod. 29:38–39; Num. 28:2–4). The very hours of the crucifixion fulfilled Scripture.

**27:46 “My God, My God.”** Psalm 22 begins with these words. The whole Psalm is about the crucifixion and anticipates the victory of the resurrection.

**27:48 “Sour wine.”** This was the cheap wine used by the soldiers and poor people. Jesus drank it, possibly to gain strength and moisture for His final cry of victory. See John 19:28–30.

**27:50 “Jesus cried out ... with a loud voice.”** Here was the victory cry, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30). The work of redemption was complete. He yielded up His spirit; the cross did not kill Him (John 10:17–18).

**27:51 “The veil of the temple ... was torn in two.”** This showed that the way to God was now open to everyone who came in faith (Heb. 4:16; 6:19; 10:19–22; 11:6). The fact that it was torn from top to bottom showed that this was the work of God, not man.

## **MATTHEW 27:52–28:9**

**27:52** *“The graves were opened.”* Only Matthew records this. These people, like Lazarus, were raised for a time but eventually died again. It was evidence of Jesus’ power over death (1 Cor. 15:20–22; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5).

**27:54** *“Truly this was the Son of God!”* Everything he witnessed convinced this Roman centurion that Jesus was indeed *“the Son of God”* (Matt. 14:33; Mark 15:39).

**27:55–56** *“Many women ... were there.”* The women who followed and served Jesus were some of His greatest and most faithful disciples (Mark 15:40–41; 16:1; Luke 8:2–3; 24:1, 10).

### **The Burial of Jesus**

Matthew 27:57–61 (Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56; John 19:38–42)

**27:57** *“A rich man from Arimathea ... Joseph.”* Joseph was a member of the Jewish council (Sanhedrin) who, like Nicodemus, had become a believer (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50). That he is described here as rich fulfills Isaiah 53:9.

### **The Tomb Guarded by Soldiers**

Matthew 27:62–66 (only Matthew records this fact)

**27:62** *“Chief priests and Pharisees.”* These two groups were usually hostile to each other, but they united in hatred of Jesus.

**27:63** *“After three days I will rise.”* They knew Jesus’ prophecy of His own resurrection but could not believe in the power of God. The chief priests, or Sadducees, denied that resurrection was possible (Matt. 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27).

**27:66** *“They went and made the grave secure.”* A group of Roman soldiers was sent to guard the tomb. *“Sealing the stone.”* This seal meant that anyone who tried to move the stone would be defying Rome and would be punished severely.

## **MATTHEW CHAPTER 28**

The resurrection, the conspiracy to hide it, and the Great Commission.

### **The Resurrection of Jesus**

Matthew 28:1–10 (Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

**28:1** *“After the Sabbath.”* The Sabbath was Saturday, so this would be early Sunday morning.

**28:2** *“An angel ... rolled back the stone.”* Jesus was already gone from the tomb when the angel rolled away the stone. He did it so the disciples could see that Jesus’ body was gone (Mark 16:5–6; Luke 24:3–6; John 20:3–9).

**28:3** *“His countenance [appearance] was like lightning.”* Angels reflect the glory of the Lord (Dan. 7:9; Matt. 17:2; Luke 2:9).

**28:6** *“He is risen, as He said.”* Jesus had repeatedly spoken of His resurrection (Matt. 12:40; 16:21; 17:9; 20:19).

**28:7** *“Go quickly and tell.”* The only right response to Jesus’ victory is first to believe it, then to tell others of it (vv. 9–10; Matt. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).

**28:9** *“Rejoice!”* To all who believe, the resurrection of Jesus is a continual source of both joy and the basis for telling others (2 Cor. 5:14–21).

### The Plot to Deny the Resurrection

Matthew 28:11–15

**28:11** *“The guard ... reported to the chief priests.”* These Roman soldiers told the religious leaders *“all ... that had happened.”* See v. 4. Yet they continued to deny both the truth about Jesus and the power of God.

**28:13** *“While we slept.”* Roman soldiers who slept while on guard duty were put to death. But they had no other excuse to offer. The priests promised to protect them from the penalty and paid them much money to lie about the circumstances of the empty tomb.

**28:15** *“Until this day.”* This refers to the time of Matthew’s writing, but many still believe this lie today.

### The Great Commission Given

Matthew 28:16–20 (Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8)

**28:18** *“All authority has been given to Me.”* Following His resurrection, Jesus is invested with all power to bring about His final world rule (Psalm 2:6–9, 8:5b–8, 110:1–7; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 2:7–9). This fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 7:9–14.

**28:19–20** *“Go ... make disciples ... teaching them.”* The command is *“make disciples.”* Going, baptizing, and teaching is how disciples are made. The use of baptism here confirms that these are new believers in Christ. No one is saved by baptism (Acts 8:36–37; 1 Cor. 1:17).

**28:19** *“In the name.”* The Jews often referred to God as “the Name,” which spoke of Jehovah, the *“I AM”* (Exod. 3:14). Here, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all identified as one God. We call this the Trinity.

**28:20** *“Observe all things.”* The mark of true discipleship is obedience. All who believe in Jesus are saved forever, but not all who believe become true disciples. In Matthew 11:28–30, we see that coming to Jesus in faith results in new birth and eternal salvation (Acts 16:31; 2 Cor. 5:17). Baptism is an outward act/evidence of obedience—a witness to the world that we belong to Jesus Christ. Taking up His “yoke” is an act of dedication to learn and obey His Word (Ezra 7:10; see also Luke 9:23, *“take up his cross”*). The life of a true disciple is allowing Him to live His life through us (Gal. 2:20) as we are conformed to His image (Rom 8:29) through obedience to His Word (John 13:17; 14:21; Acts 4:13; James 2:20, 26). Many who believe in Jesus Christ fail to go on to a life of discipleship (Gal. 1:6–11; 3:1–9; Heb. 5:12–14; James 4:1–6). *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* This ending of the book of Matthew reminds us of the faithfulness of our Lord to us through time. As *“He Himself has said”* in Hebrews 13:5b, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* These words should be a source of continuing comfort to each of us. Even though we may often fail, He will never fail us!

## CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Matthew is a book of rebuke against the rejection of Jesus the Messiah by His own people. It is also a call to discipleship, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus presents the standards of His kingdom. It is the most convicting of all the Gospels and ends with the Great Commission, which is a call to each and every believer to commit to a life of discipleship, and to playing our part in making others into disciples of Jesus. It confronts us with this closing thought to ponder, “Will I commit to and continue in the life of a disciple?” It reminds us of His words from John 8:31–32 *“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* In Jesus’ last words, *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age,”* we have the promise of His presence and power, to do all He has commanded us to do.



**The Gospel According to**  
***Mark***



## **INTRODUCTION**

It is important for us to understand that the authors of each of the Gospels had a particular audience in mind when they wrote. They therefore presented Jesus in a specific way that would appeal to that audience. Matthew wrote to a predominantly Jewish readership. He presents Jesus as the promised Messiah/King in the lineage of Abraham and David. Luke is focused more on the Greek-speaking world, specifically addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:1–4), and Jesus is presented as the Savior of all mankind, both Jew and Gentile. John has a wider focus than the rest of the Gospels, as he writes to the whole world, presenting Jesus as both Creator (John 1:1–4) and Savior (John 3:16–19).



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

## MARK CHAPTER 1

The ministry of John the Baptist; Jesus' ministry begins with the call of disciples and mighty works.

### **The Coming of John and the Baptism of Jesus**

Mark 1:1–11 (Matt. 3:1–17; Luke 3:1–22)

**1:1 “*The beginning of the gospel.*”** The Gospel is the “good news” about Jesus Christ and His work as Savior. **“*Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*”** The personal name “Jesus” means “Jehovah saves,” while the title “Christ” means “the anointed One, the Messiah.”

There are five great “beginnings” in the Bible:

1. The beginning of eternity past (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1),
2. The beginning of creation (Gen. 1:1; Matt. 19:4–5; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:10),
3. The beginning of Satan's fall (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8),
4. The beginning of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:1; Luke 1:2), and
5. The beginning of the Church Age (Acts 11:15; 1 John 2:7).

**1:2 “*As it is written in ... the prophets.*”** Here, Mark quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 to show that the coming of John the Baptist was a fulfillment of prophecy.

**1:3 “*Prepare the way of the Lord.*”** In Isaiah 40:3, the word “*LORD*” is used to translate “Jehovah.” This proves the deity of Jesus. The same is true of Paul's quote of Joel 2:32 in Romans 10:13.

**1:4 “*John came ... preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.*”** John came to prepare the way of Christ. This baptism signified inner repentance in anticipation of the forgiveness that Christ would bring. This baptism is not the same as Christian baptism, which follows faith in Christ. This is why Paul re-baptized the followers of John in Acts 19:4–5, into Christian baptism. Compare notes on Matthew 3:1–17.

**1:5 “*Confessing their sins.*”** This was the fruit of true repentance, which acknowledged their need of the Savior (Matt. 3:5–6).

**1:6 “*John was clothed with camel's hair.*”** The rugged appearance of John would convey that he came in the spirit of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:9–13; Luke 1:13–17).

**1:7 “*There comes One after me.*”** This was the central message of John the Baptist: that he was only the forerunner of the Savior. See Isaiah 40:1–8.

**1:8 “*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*”** This promise is repeated in all the Gospels (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Jesus declared in Acts 1:5 that this would soon be fulfilled, as it was at Pentecost (Acts 2). The baptism of the Holy Spirit marked the beginning of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–28; Joel 2:28–29). See also notes on Matthew 3:11–12.

**1:9 “*Jesus ... was baptized by John.*”** Jesus was not baptized for repentance, but to identify Him as the Messiah John proclaimed (John 1:29–34) and to identify with sinners, for whom He would die on the cross. See the seven baptisms listed in notes on Matthew 3:6.

**1:10 “*Immediately.*”** This word signified quick and obedient service. It is Mark's favorite word in describing the ministry of Jesus.

## MARK 1:11–34

**1:11 “*You are My beloved Son.*”** Three times, the Father declared His pleasure in the Son: here, at His baptism, at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7), and at the triumphal entry (John 12:28).

### Temptations and Early Ministry

Mark 1:12–45 (Matt. 4:1–22; Luke 4:1–15, 31–44)

**1:12 “*Immediately the Spirit drove Him.*”** The word “*drove*” means “to compel by force,” and is much stronger than that used by the other Gospel writers. The role of the Spirit in the life of Jesus shows how we need to be Spirit-filled (Eph. 5:18), led (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18), and empowered (Eph. 1:19; 3:7, 20; 1 Thess. 1:5).

**1:13 “*Tempted by Satan.*”** This verse is a summary of Matthew 4:1–11 and Luke 4:1–13. It shows that, from the beginning, Jesus faced not only human opposition, but the full force of the kingdom of Satan.

**1:14 “*Jesus came ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.*”** Again, “*gospel*” simply means “good news.” Jesus did not begin by predicting His death and resurrection, but rather offered to Israel the long-awaited promise of the kingdom, where the Messiah would rule on the Earth.

**1:15 “*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*”** It must have shocked the Jews to be called to repent, since they believed their heritage from Abraham entitled them to enter the kingdom (Matt. 3:9; John 8:33). Throughout the Bible, faith is the only way of salvation (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3–5; Gal. 3:8–9).

**1:16 “*Simon and Andrew.*”** They had already been disciples of John (John 1:35–42) and had already met Jesus after His baptism.

**1:17 “*I will make you ... fishers of men.*”** Jesus calls men to be His disciples, and the work of disciples is to make other disciples (Matt. 28:18–20).

**1:18 “*Immediately they left.*”** Mark again uses the key word “*immediately*” to show the humble obedience of Simon and Andrew.

**1:19–20 “*James ... and John ... went after Him.*”** One of the primary ideas in Mark is that, just as Jesus obeyed His heavenly Father, so we are to follow and obey Him.

**1:21 “*Immediately ... He entered the synagogue and taught.*”** Mark places great emphasis on the teaching ministry of Jesus.

**1:22 “*They were astonished at His teaching.*”** Where the scribes quoted older, famous rabbis, Jesus’ authority came from Himself. He spoke as the Author of the Scripture (Matt. 7:28–29).

**1:24 “*You are—the Holy One of God.*”** The demon knew Jesus’ identity, but Jesus silenced him. He did not want testimony from such a source.

**1:28 “*His fame spread throughout all the region.*”** It was the sudden popularity of Jesus that aroused the envy and hatred of the religious leaders (Matt. 27:18).

**1:29 “*They entered the house of Simon.*”** Jesus used the house of Simon Peter as His base for the ministry in Galilee.

**1:32–34 “*The whole city was gathered ... at the door.*”** The news of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law brought all the sick people together. Since the Sabbath ended at sundown, they were free to carry the sick and oppressed to Him. Yet, Jesus’ healing of Peter’s mother-in-law was on the Sabbath. This practice would become a point of great contention with the religious leaders (Matt. 12:10; Mark 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; John 5:9, 16).

**1:35** “*Having risen a long while before daylight, He went out ... and there He prayed.*” Here, Mark shows us the secret to Jesus’ power and effectiveness. His prayer life was an indication of His dependence upon the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, for both move us to communion with God.

**1:37–38** “*Everyone is looking for You ... for this purpose I have come.*” Jesus was not swayed by popularity; He was committed to God’s purpose for Him.

**1:40** “*A leper came to Him ... kneeling down.*” According to the Law recorded in Leviticus 13–14, lepers were considered to be unclean, and anyone who touched them would be unclean. Jesus, however, touches the man out of compassion, and he is made whole. This miracle shows not only Jesus’ power to heal, but also to cleanse.

**1:44** “*Say nothing to anyone.*” The reason for this command is seen in v. 45. While Jesus was willing to heal, as evidence of who He was (Isa. 61:1–3), He wanted people to come to Him for eternal salvation—not just for healing.

## **MARK CHAPTER 2**

Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum; the call of Matthew/Levi; increasing confrontations with religious leaders.

### **Jesus Demonstrates His Power to Forgive Sins**

Mark 2:1–12 (Matt. 9:2–8; Luke 5:17–26)

**2:3** “*He preached the word to them.*” The ministry of Jesus always stressed the importance of the Word of God. We cannot separate the written Word from the Living Word.

**2:5** “*Jesus saw their faith ... your sins are forgiven.*” The forgiveness of sin is based on two things: the work of Jesus on the cross to pay the debt of sin, and the faith of those who believe in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

**2:7** “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” These scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins, but they were wrong in rejecting the truth that Jesus is God in human flesh.

**2:10** “*The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.*” By commanding the man to rise up and walk, Jesus was giving absolute proof of His power to forgive sins. The title “*Son of Man*” is an Old Testament title for the Messiah (Dan. 7:13).

### **The Call of Matthew/Levi and the Increasing Attacks of the Pharisees**

Mark 2:13–28 (Matt. 9:9–17; Luke 5:27–6:5)

**2:14** “*He saw Levi ... and He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’*” Levi, also known to us as Matthew (Matt. 9:9; 10:3), is the author of the first Gospel.

**2:15** “*He was dining in Levi’s house.*” The house was filled with “*tax collectors and sinners.*” Because everyone hated tax collectors as traitors to Israel, only known sinners would associate with them.

**2:17** “*I did not come to call the righteous.*” Jesus did not mean that the scribes and Pharisees were righteous, but because they saw themselves as such, they saw no need for repentance. Those who know they are sinners come to Him for forgiveness. Repentance signifies that one has a change of mind about their need for Christ, so that they come to Him in faith.

**2:18** “*Why do ... Your disciples ... not fast?*” It was not fitting that the disciples fast while in the presence of the Savior. Fasting is personal and voluntary, not done for show (Matt. 6:16–18) and is designed as a discipline

## MARK 2:22–3:8

of setting aside the need for food to take time for Bible study and prayer. It teaches us to say “no” to the demands of the body and rely on the power of the Spirit.

**2:22 “No one puts new wine into old wineskins.”** Jesus used the practical customs of the day to reveal spiritual truth. The “*new wine*” represents the New Covenant, which cannot fit into the mold of the Old Covenant of the Law (Rom. 8:1–4; Gal. 3:10–18; Heb. 10:1–10).

**2:24 “Why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”** The Law of Moses permitted the poor and hungry to pluck grain from the fields of others (Deut. 23:24–25). The Law of Moses forbid work on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:8–11; 31:12–17). However, people still ate in their homes. These hypocrites were not arguing on the basis of Moses’ commands, but rather the oral tradition of the scribes, which perverted the Law into a system of slavery.

**2:25, 27 “Have you never read what David did when he was in need.”** Jesus is referring to 1 Samuel 21:1–6. The bread was set aside for the priests only (Lev. 24:5–9). The key phrase is “*when he was in need*.” Jesus wants to show that the laws of God do not violate the needs of men. **“The Sabbath was made for man.”** That is, it was a provision for all to have a day of rest.

**2:28 “The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”** This was an astounding claim, for only God could claim such authority. Jesus is claiming that He was the God who gave the Sabbath to man.

## MARK CHAPTER 3

Jesus again heals on the Sabbath, teaches the people, chooses the twelve disciples, and rebukes the Pharisees.

### **The Healing on the Sabbath and the Call of the Disciples**

Mark 3:1–19 (Matt. 10:1–4; 12:9–21; Luke 6:6–19).

**3:2 “They watched Him closely ... that they might accuse Him.”** The religious leaders, scribes, and Pharisees have no compassion for the crippled man. They only want to find cause to accuse Jesus. **“On the Sabbath.”** The Law of Moses did not forbid either medical practice or healing on the Sabbath. This was a rule of rabbinic tradition, which Jesus constantly opposed (Matt. 15:2–9; Mark 7:1–8). We have the same problem today when pastors and churches impose rules not recorded in Scripture.

**3:4 “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?”** Jesus’ question shows that to heal the man would be a good work, but to ignore his suffering, when Jesus had the power to heal, was an act of evil. The Pharisees had no interest in helping the man, but only in keeping their religious rules.

**3:5 “Being grieved by the hardness of their hearts.”** God is always grieved when men harden their hearts (Gen. 6:6; Psalm 95:10; Heb. 3:10). If one continues in this hardening, it is possible to go beyond the point of no return (vv. 28–29). Believers are to live so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

**3:6 “Pharisees ... plotted with the Herodians.”** While the scribes were teachers of the law, the Pharisees considered themselves as the true keepers of the law and loved outward show. Jesus called both “hypocrites” (Matt. 23:13–29). The Herodians were more of a political party, which supported the dynasty of Herod and compromise with Rome. The Pharisees and Herodians were bitter enemies.

**3:7 “But Jesus withdrew with His disciples.”** As the hatred of the leaders against Him grew, Jesus often would depart in order to postpone His arrest and crucifixion until exactly the right time.

**3:8 “A great multitude ... followed Him.”** The areas named here include everything from Galilee in the north to Edom, the birthplace of Herod, in the south of Judah.

**3:11 “*You are the Son of God.*”** Though the demons knew His identity, Jesus rebuked them because He wanted the people to come to faith through His teaching and works—not the hostile testimony of demons.

**3:14 “*Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out.*”** True disciples are known by three things:

1. They respond to Jesus’ call,
2. They are close to Him in intimate fellowship, and
3. They are sent out by His authority to reach others. See Matthew 28:18–20.

**3:15 “*To have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.*”** These twelve were set apart to be apostles. These mighty powers were called by Paul “*the signs of an apostle*” (2 Cor. 12:12). Christ and the apostles’ proof that they were from God was in the signs and miracles they performed (Heb. 2:3–4).

**3:16 “*Simon ... He gave the name Peter.*”** This new name means “rock” and designated Peter’s leadership of the apostolic band. In the Bible, the giving of a new name signifies a spiritual change in the person’s life, such as Abram (Gen. 17:3–5), Sarai (Gen. 17:15–16), Jacob (Gen. 32:28).

**3:21 “*His own people ... said, ‘He is out of His mind.’*”** This refers to members of Jesus’ family. Many of them did not believe in Him until after the resurrection (Mark 3:31–35; 6:1–4; John 7:5; Matt. 12:46–50; Luke 8:19–21).

**3:22 “*‘He has Beelzebub’ ... the ruler of demons.*”** This was a false god worshipped by the people of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–3). See Matthew 10:25. But the Jews used the term as a title for Satan. This accusation is called “the unpardonable sin” (vv. 28–29), because it shows their hearts were hardened beyond recovery. See Matthew 12:31, Ephesians 4:17–19, and 1 Timothy 4:1–2.

**3:23 “*How can Satan cast out Satan?*”** Jesus refutes their accusations by showing that no house or kingdom can stand if it is divided against itself.

**3:27 “*Unless He first binds the strong man.*”** Jesus had entered into the devil’s kingdom to bind him and set his captives free (Isa. 61:1–3; 1 John 3:8, 4:4; Heb. 2:14–18).

**3:29 “*He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit.*”** The Holy Spirit of God convicts all men of their need for Jesus Christ (John 16:7–11). When His conviction is repeatedly rejected, the heart becomes hardened to the point of no return. See v. 22 note above.

**3:31 “*His brothers and His mother.*”** Based on v. 21, they are still trying to take Him away, thinking He is crazy. See the note and passages at v. 21.

**3:33 “*Who is My mother, or My brothers?*”** Jesus wants to make clear that His spiritual family—those who believe in Him and obey Him—are closer than His own natural family. See v. 35.

## **MARK CHAPTER 4**

Jesus begins teaching in parables; calms the wind and waves.

### **Jesus Teaches the Multitude in Parables**

Mark 4:1–34 (Matt. 13:1–52; Luke 8:4–18; 13:18–19)

**4:2 “*He taught them many things in parables.*”** Parables are stories taken from daily life but are designed to reveal some deeper spiritual truth. They are also designed to conceal the truth from “*those who are outside*”

## MARK 4:3–38

(v. 11), probably the scribes and Pharisees here, but today, of those who refuse to believe. The word “parable” means “to cast or lay side-by-side,” so that the earthly example reveals a spiritual truth.

**4:3** *“A sower went out to sow.”* This parable is designed to show four possible responses to God’s Word. By application, we should ask what kind of hearer are we? See Matthew 13:3–9 and Luke 8:5–8. All who receive God’s Word by faith are born again (John 1:12; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:13–14), but not all believers bear the same amount of fruit.

**4:9** *“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* Those who are humble and hungry in spirit (Matt. 5:3, 6) will receive the message in faith. The full understanding comes through continued study and growth.

**4:11** *“The mystery of the kingdom of God.”* Jesus brings newly revealed truth to His disciples (see Matt. 13:11). Generally, “mystery” refers to the revelation of New Testament truth, not revealed in the Old Testament. See Romans 16:25–26 and Ephesians 3:1–7.

**4:12** *“Seeing they may see and not perceive.”* This quote, from Isaiah 6:9–10, anticipates that those who claim to have spiritual insight already are unteachable and unwilling to learn. For example, see Matthew 15:14; 23:16–26; John 9:40–41. This is very similar to Jesus saying that the righteous have no need of repentance (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). What He means is that those who claim to be righteous see no need of repentance, but those who know they are sinners do. See Luke 18:10–14.

**4:20** *“Those who hear ... and bear fruit.”* The goal of Bible teaching is not just to learn, but also to live by the truths we learn. As we live in fellowship with God (John 15:1–16; 1 John 1:1–7), the Spirit of God within us bears the fruit (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 5:9–10; Heb. 13:15; James 3:17–18).

**4:21** *“A lamp ... set on a lampstand.”* Just as a lamp reveals what is hidden in the darkness, so the Word of God reveals what is hidden in the heart.

**4:24** *“To you who hear, more will be given.”* Those who receive by faith what they are able to understand will receive greater spiritual insight and understanding. Every truth we learn opens the door to greater truth.

**4:27** *“He himself does not know how.”* This parable from vv. 26–29 occurs only in Mark’s Gospel. God’s Word, faithfully sown, will in time surely bring fruit (1 Cor. 3:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:23–25; 2 Pet. 3:18). We should not grow weary in serving God, for He is faithful to bring fruit.

**4:30–32** *“The kingdom of God ... is like a mustard seed.”* Though much smaller than the seeds of other grains, the mustard seed grows so large that birds make their nests in it. There was a fragrance in the mustard plant of the Middle East that attracted birds to use it for nesting. Even so, the kingdom began very small (Jesus and eleven disciples), but the fragrance of the Gospel has attracted multitudes to find shelter in it.

### The Wind and Waves Obey Jesus

Mark 4:35–41 (Luke 8:22–25)

**4:35** *“Let us cross over.”* Jesus does not call us to easy lives. If we follow Him, He will often lead us into the storms of life.

**4:38** *“He was ... asleep on a pillow.”* He was no doubt wearied from dealing with so many people. So often in our own storms, it seems that Jesus is sleeping. Yet, if we are with Him, we can be in no danger. *“Do You not care?”* Even David felt this same doubt (Psalm 44:23–24). It is part of our spiritual growth for God to let us pass through such times. (Rom. 5:3–5; James 1:2–4, 12).

**4:40 “How is it that you have no faith?”** Here, Jesus shows that fear and faith cannot exist together. Either one will prevail, or the other. David knew this and faced his fears with faith (Psalm 56:3).

**4:41 “Who can this be?”** The disciples are learning that Jesus is not only a true man, but He is also the God who controls nature. Only the Son of God could command the wind and waves (Mark 1:1, 27).

## **MARK CHAPTER 5**

Jesus displays His power over demons, disease, and death. The Gospel of Mark focuses on Jesus’ miracles more than any other Gospel.

### **Jesus’ Power Over Demons**

Mark 5:1–20 (Matt. 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39)

**5:1 “The country of the Gadarenes.”** This was a predominantly Gentile area on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. In this area were ten cities, thus it was called “*Decapolis*.” (v. 20). In Matthew 8:28, it is called “*the country of the Gergesenes*.”

**5:2 “There met Him ... a man.”** In the Matthew account, two men are mentioned (Matt. 8:28). Mark and Luke mention only this man, apparently the only one who believed in Jesus. “*An unclean spirit*.” He was demon possessed (v. 15). See Mark 1:23 and Luke 4:33. In Mark 5, Jesus comes into contact with three people declared “*unclean*” by the Law of Moses (Leviticus 11–18). This demon-possessed man, the woman with the issue of blood (see note on 5:25), and the dead girl (5:41). According to the Law, to touch any of them would make one unclean. Instead, by His power, Jesus cleanses each of them. The power of Jesus to cleanse from all defilement is being emphasized.

**5:3–5** Here, we see five evidences of demon possession: “*dwelling among the tombs*” (an affinity with death), “*chains had been pulled apart by him*” (supernatural strength), “*neither could anyone tame him*” (violent, uncontrolled nature), “*night and day ... crying out*” (a tormented soul), and “*cutting himself*” (self-destructive activity).

**5:6 “He ran and worshiped Him.”** This is the volitional action of the man himself, before the demon begins to speak. The first step in deliverance from demonic possession is the desire of the individual to be delivered by Jesus Christ.

**5:7 “He cried out with a loud voice.”** This is now the demon speaking, seeking to resist the man’s desire to come to Jesus. “*Jesus, Son of the Most High God.*” The demons know and fear the Lord Jesus. “*Do not torment me.*” Demons know they will one day be cast into judgment.

**5:9 “What is your name? ... ‘Legion.’”** A Roman legion was 6,000 soldiers! An army of demons were dwelling in this poor man.

**5:10 “He begged Him earnestly.”** Demons seem to be territorial and have a need to indwell men or creatures. When a demon is cast out, it is like being in a “waterless wasteland” for the demon (Luke 11:24).

**5:12 “Send us into the swine.”** If they cannot indwell the man, they desire to indwell the pigs rather than being dispossessed of a dwelling place. Swine were declared an unclean animal in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:7–8; Deut. 14:8).

**5:13 “Jesus gave them permission.”** The Lordship and authority of Jesus over all creation is being demonstrated here. The insanity they caused in the man now infected the pigs, “*the herd ... drowned in the sea.*” Even pigs can’t stand being possessed by demons!

## MARK 5:15–39

**5:15** *“Sitting and clothed and in his right mind.”* His deliverance from the demons had the effect of making him calm, modest, and sane. *“They were afraid.”* The power of Jesus to transform lives is more frightening to some people than demonic possession.

**5:17** *“They began to plead with Him to depart.”* When demons claim a territory, it has a darkening effect on the souls of all who dwell there—unless they have the light of Christ. See John 8:12 and 1 Peter 2:9. Many places in the world today prefer to have demon-possessed people in control rather than to permit the light of Christ to shine in the land (Psalm 107:10–11; Isa. 29:15; John 3:19).

**5:18** *“Begged Him that he might be with Him.”* What love and gratitude he must have felt for the One who delivered him!

**5:19–20** *“Tell them what great things the Lord has done for you.”* God’s plan for this man was that he be a witness among his own people. As a result, the man went throughout the *“Decapolis”* (ten cities) and proclaimed the love and power of Jesus to deliver. This man’s witness actually prepared for Jesus’ later ministry in the same area (Mark 7:31).

### Jesus Displays His Power Over Disease and Death

Mark 5:21–43 (Matt. 9:18–26; Luke 8:41–56)

**5:21** *“A great multitude gathered to Him.”* This was the multitude from around Capernaum (Mark 3:7, 20, 32; 4:1, 36). Although the multitude followed Him to see His mighty works, most people of this area rejected Him (Matt. 11:23–24; Luke 10:15–16).

**5:22–28** Both *“Jairus”* and the *“woman”* show that those who want to receive power and blessing from Christ must come to Him in faith. Jairus believed his daughter would live if Jesus would lay His hands on her. The woman believed that just to touch His garment was sufficient to heal her. All of God’s dealings with man are based on His unmerited grace and our unconditional faith, however frail.

**5:25** *“Flow of blood.”* This uncontrolled menstrual bleeding would have made this woman perpetually unclean according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 15:25–33). Again, the power of Jesus not only heals, but also purifies.

**5:28** *“I shall be made well.”* In the original Greek, she says, “I will be saved.” Though she likely meant “saved from my affliction,” in v. 34, Jesus says in the Greek, “your faith has saved you,” and refers to eternal salvation.

**5:35–36** *“Do not be afraid; only believe.”* Neither disease nor death present a problem to the power of Jesus. The answer to all our need is to overcome fear with faith in His mercy. Jesus’ words give the answer: *“Do not be afraid, only believe.”* Faith is an admission of personal helplessness and of total dependence upon the object of faith—the Lord Jesus Christ.

**5:37** *“Peter, James, and John.”* These three were permitted to accompany Him at this miraculous restoration of life, as well as at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1; Mark 9:2), and at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37; Mark 14:33). They were being trained for leadership.

**5:38** *“Those who wept and wailed loudly.”* These were most likely professional mourners who were paid to mourn the dead.

**5:39** *“The child is not dead, but sleeping.”* Sleep is often used as a picture of those who will be raised to new life (1 Thess. 4:13–14; 1 Cor. 11:30, 15:51). Jesus knew He would raise her up to life. See also Jesus’ words about Lazarus (John 11:4, 11).

**5:41** *“He took the child by the hand.”* According to the Law of Moses, anyone who touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean (Num. 19:11–13). However, such is the power of Jesus’ life, that His touch makes the dead to live, and the unclean to be pure.

**5:43** *“He commanded them strictly that no one should know it.”* Jesus knew the greater His fame grew, the more the religious leaders would try to kill Him. His time to go to the cross had not yet come. The multitude had seen many miracles, and still did not believe in Him.

## **MARK CHAPTER 6**

In this chapter, Jesus is rejected in Nazareth, sends out the twelve; John is beheaded; five thousand are fed; Jesus walks on water.

### **Jesus is Rejected in Nazareth**

Mark 6:1–6 (Matt. 13:53–58; Luke 4:16–30)

**6:1** *“His own country.”* This refers to the area around Nazareth—His hometown.

**6:2** *“Wisdom ... mighty works.”* They could not deny His power but rejected His identity as Messiah/Savior.

**6:3** *“Is this not the carpenter?”* Joseph had apparently died by this time. Jesus had taken over the work of Joseph. *“Brother of James ... Judas.”* After the virgin birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary had other children (Matt. 1:24–25). *“James”* and *“Judas”* did not believe until after the resurrection (John 7:5) when Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7). Then, His brothers believed in Him (Acts 1:14). James became the leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:6, 13; Gal. 1:19) and wrote the book of James. This Judas (not Judas Iscariot) wrote the book of Jude (Jude 1).

**6:4** *“A prophet is not without honor.”* This is because of familiarity and envy. To see one of their number exalted and honored can drive friends and family to hatred and violence (Luke 4:29).

**6:6** *“He marveled because of their unbelief.”* Only two things ever amazed Jesus. The first was the unbelief of His own people; the second was the faith of the Roman centurion (Matt. 8:10).

### **Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

Mark 6:7–13 (Matt. 10:1–42; Luke 9:1–6)

**6:7** *“He called the twelve ... and gave them power.”* An apostle must be personally called by Christ and vested with his own authority. True apostles could reproduce the signs Jesus did (Acts 2:43; Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12). In this sense, there are no true apostles today. In many countries, missionaries are called apostles, because they have been sent out to witness about Jesus Christ.

**6:8–9** *“Take nothing for the journey.”* The disciples were being trained to trust God to provide for them. See Matthew 10:5–13.

**6:10–11** *“Shake off the dust under your feet.”* Those who received the disciples would be blessed. For those who rejected them, this was a sign of their rejection by God. Like *“Sodom and Gomorrah,”* they would be held accountable and bear their judgment (Matt. 10:14–15).

**6:12** *“So they ... preached that people should repent.”* Repentance requires a change of mind, resulting in a change of action. Repentance was crucial in the message to the Jews (Matt. 3:2), because they thought that their relationship to Abraham earned them entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 3:9; John 8:39). They could not come to faith in Christ until they “changed their minds” about this issue.

## MARK 6:14–44

### John the Baptist Beheaded

Mark 6:14–29 (Matt. 14:1–12; Luke 9:7–9)

**6:14–29 “King Herod heard of Him.”** This section is a break from Mark’s story—a parenthesis to explain both Herod’s response to news of Jesus, and how he had murdered John the Baptist.

**6:14 “King Herod.”** This was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who sought to kill the Christ-child (Matt. 2:1–18).

**6:15 “It is Elijah.”** The multitudes had many theories about the identity of Jesus (see Matt. 16:14; Mark 8:28).

**6:18 “It is not lawful.”** Both “*Herod*” and “*Herodias*” had gotten divorced so that they could marry each other. Herodias had been married to Philip, Herod Antipas’ half-brother. This remarriage was wrong on many counts (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). Herod’s marriage to Herodias would have been considered an act of incest.

**6:22 “Herodias’ daughter.”** This was Salome. In response to her seductive dance, Herod promised her “*whatever you ask*.” At the urging of her mother Herodias, she asked for the head of John the Baptist.

### Jesus Feeds Over Five Thousand

Mark 6:30–44 (Matt. 14:13–21; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

**6:30 “The apostles gathered to Jesus.”** This is the first use of “*apostles*” in Mark. The word “apostle” was originally a military title speaking of one who was sent out and commissioned for a specific purpose. In the New Testament, it always has the idea of being sent out with full authority and power from Jesus Christ. “*And told Him all things*.” They gave a full report of their ministry.

**6:31 “Come aside ... and rest a while.”** Ministry to the needs of people is demanding and draining. Jesus recognized the disciples’ need for rest in quiet surroundings.

**6:34 “Jesus ... was moved with compassion.”** As in Matthew 9:36, the plight of the multitude moved Jesus not only to compassion, but to meet their needs by teaching them the Word of God.

**6:37 “You give them something to eat.”** Here, Jesus is teaching the disciples that they can meet the great needs of men only by relying on His divine supply. “*Two hundred denarii*.” This was the equivalent of two hundred days’ wages for a common laborer.

**6:38 “How many loaves to you have?”** The provision was so small and the needs so great! Jesus is teaching us that if we give the little we have into His hands, He is able to multiply it to be sufficient for the need.

**6:39–40 “On the green grass ... in ranks.”** These are statements of an eyewitness. The Gospel of Mark is actually a record of Peter’s experience as it was related to Mark.

**6:41 “He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves.”** In communion with the heavenly Father, Jesus multiplied the bread and fish to feed the multitude. As He kept breaking, the disciples kept serving until all were filled.

**6:43 “They took up twelve baskets.”** God’s grace is always extravagant, meeting the need and then some (2 Kings 4:1–7). The disciples could have carried what was left over for supplies on the road. Seeking and doing the will of God always insures provision for our own need (Matt. 6:33).

**6:44 “Five thousand men.”** This did not include women and children. The total number could have been as many as ten thousand. It is here that Jesus taught the multitude on “*the bread of life*” (John 6:22–71).

### Jesus Walks on Water and Heals Multitudes

Mark 6:45–56 (Matt. 14:22–36; John 6:15–21)

**6:46** *“He departed to the mountain to pray.”* The prayer life of Jesus is repeatedly emphasized in the Gospels. His deep communion with the Father was the secret to the power of His life (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16).

**6:48** *“About the fourth watch of the night.”* This was from 3 a.m. until 6 a.m. *“Walking on the sea.”* Jesus wanted to teach the disciples His power over nature. Mark does not record Peter walking to meet Jesus. See Matthew 14:29–33. *“Would have passed them by.”* He was awaiting their response in seeking Him. He did the same with the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:28).

**6:50** *“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.”* The phrase, *“It is I”* could be translated *“I AM,”* the name God revealed to Moses (Exod. 3:14). Jesus revealed His deity to them.

**6:52** *“Their heart was hardened.”* God often follows His deliverances with a test of faith. What the disciples saw in the feeding of the five thousand should have led them to recognize His power over all things. How often, like the disciples, we forget God’s past provisions and deliverances, and give in to fear. When we reject or deny the truth that God has revealed to us, we harden our heart against Him. It is good, when facing trials and afflictions, to remember the faithfulness of God to us in the past.

**6:56** *“That they might just touch the hem of His garment.”* Apparently, the faith of the woman in Mark 5:27–34 had become widely known (Matt. 14:34–36). The faith of one person often results in having an effect on a multitude of people.

## MARK CHAPTER 7

Increasing disputes with Jewish leaders; the Syro-Phoenician woman’s faith; healing the deaf and dumb man.

### Disputing with the Religious Leaders

Mark 7:1–23 (Matt. 15:1–15:20)

**7:1** *“The Pharisees and some of the scribes.”* Normally, these two groups were at odds with each other, but their hatred of Jesus united them. As it became clearer that Jesus opposed their man-made religion, their united attack on Him intensified. (Mark 3:6, 21–22). *“Having come from Jerusalem.”* They made a long journey just to seek fault and make false charges against Jesus.

**7:2–5** *“Defiled, that is, unwashed hands.”* These standards, explained in verses 3–4, were not part of the Law of Moses. Rather, they were oral traditions passed down by many rabbis of the past. These *“tradition[s] of the elders”* were commands added to the Law by zealous teachers, each thinking their greatness depended on how many regulations and rules they could add to Jewish religion. They are like many in Christianity today who impose rules and regulations of conduct not found in the Bible.

**7:6–8** *“Well did Isaiah prophecy of you hypocrites ... teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Jesus rebukes them by quoting Isaiah 29:13, a prophecy that foresaw their apostasy from pure faith and obedience to the Word of God. The term “hypocrite” was reserved by Jesus for the most corrupt of religious leaders. See Matthew 23:13–29. Many church leaders today, holding to man-made rules, fall into the same category.

**7:9–13** *“You reject the commandment of God.”* These religious leaders emphasized tradition but ignored God’s Word. Moses commanded us to honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12; 21:17; Deut. 5:16). The scribes taught that if a son declared his wealth to be a gift to God or dedicated for God’s use (the meaning of *“Corban”*),

## MARK 7:13–32

he did not need to care for his aged parents. The hypocrisy was that the dedicated wealth remained in the possession of the son.

**7:13 “*Making the word of God of no effect.*”** The oral law of the Jews was contrary to both the words and the intent of the Law of Moses. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus shows the true meaning and intent of the Mosaic Law. **“*Many such things you do.*”** The whole religion of the Pharisees and scribes was corrupted. This is why John the Baptist came, calling the nation to repentance from these “*dead works*” (Heb. 6:1; 9:14).

**7:14–16 “*Nothing that enters a man ... can defile him.*”** True spiritual defilement can only come from within, in “*the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12). This is why Isaiah said, “*Their heart is far from Me.*” (v. 6; Isa. 29:13). Paul later tells us (Rom. 14:17) that “*The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking [or food and drink] but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*”

**7:17–19 “*Are you thus without understanding also?*”** Jesus rebukes the disciples for not understanding His teaching. The phrase, “*purifying all foods*” seems to mean that the eating of foods declared “*unclean*” by Moses (Leviticus 11; Deut. 14:13–21) was not what defiled the eater, but rather the heart of disobedience to God’s commands.

**7:21–23 “*For from within, out of the heart ... these evil things ... defile a man.*”** Jesus lists the true sins of the heart that cause spiritual defilement before God. How many sermons have we heard today that scrutinize the practices of people who are never mentioned in Scripture, and yet how few ever preach on these things!

### The Faith of the Syro-Phoenician Woman

Mark 7:24–30 (Matt. 15:21–28)

**7:24 “*Tyre and Sidon.*”** This was Gentile country, the furthest Jesus ever travelled outside Israel. Jesus was seeking seclusion and rest for Him and the disciples, but **“*He could not be hidden.*”** The “*light of the world*” could not fail to shine out in the darkness (Matt. 5:14; John 8:12; 9:5; 12:36; 2 Cor. 4:6–7; Eph. 5:8–10; 1 John 1:7).

**7:26 “*The woman was ... a Syro-Phoenician by birth.*”** She was a Syrian, born in Phoenicia. This is the same area where Elijah went to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8–24).

**7:27 “*It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.*”** Jesus is not insulting this woman—He is testing her faith. The “*children*” refers to the Jews (Matt. 15:24), to whom the Gospel was to go first (Rom. 1:16). Although many Jews referred to Gentiles as “*dogs*” (1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Sam. 16:9), the term Jesus used was a term of affection, used for little household dogs. Likely, He was smiling when He said this.

**7:28 “*Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs ... eat from the children’s crumbs.*”** This woman understood Jesus’ words and responded in humble faith. She, like a little dog, did not want to take the children’s food, but only to receive a crumb from Him. Her use of the term “*Lord*” is significant. In Matthew 15:22, she calls Him “*Son of David*,” which shows that she recognized Him as the promised Messiah. Because of her “*great faith*” (Matt. 15:28), not only was her daughter delivered from the demon, but the woman also entered into the kingdom of God.

### Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man

Mark 7:31–37 (Matt. 15:29–31)

**7:32–35 “*Then they brought to Him one who was deaf.*”** This is one of two miracles recorded only in the Gospel of Mark. The other is in Mark 8:22–26.

**7:33–34** “*He took him aside ... He spat ... and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’ ... ‘be opened.’*” Jesus could have simply said, “*Be opened,*” and it would have been done. Perhaps His actions were a way of communicating to the deaf-mute what He was about to do. The word “*Ephphatha*” is Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, which Mark interprets for his Roman/Gentile readers.

**7:36** “*He commanded them ... tell no one.*” Jesus often gave this command because He knew the danger of publicity in a hostile world. Furthermore, miracles often drew crowds of people who only seek for signs—but not truth. Many missions and ministries today do all they can to publicize their work, where it would be better for them to be more covert in their actions.

**7:37** “*He has done all things well ... the deaf hear and the mute speak.*” These were the signs that were prophesied to accompany the coming of the Messiah (Isa. 35:4–6; 61:1–3). This Gentile multitude appears to be saying that He has fulfilled all that Scripture said the Messiah would do.

## **MARK CHAPTER 8**

Jesus feeds four thousand; warns against the Pharisees teaching; heals a blind man; is identified as the Christ/Messiah by Peter; foretells His death and resurrection.

### **Feeding the Four Thousand**

Mark 8:1–10 (Matt. 15:32–39)

**8:2** “*I have compassion on the multitude.*” As the “*good shepherd*” (John 10:11), the Lord Jesus cares for the needs of His flock. This multitude, on the east side of the Sea of Galilee, were a mixed group of both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus Christ loves and cares for all people and their needs (Matt. 9:36), but His greatest concern is for the eternal salvation of each one.

**8:4** “*How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?*” This question of doubt came from the disciples, who had recently witnessed His feeding of over 5,000 men, women, and children (Mark 6:30–44). This same mentality existed in the Exodus generation, even after they witnessed the plagues, the Passover, and the parting of the Red Sea (Exod. 14:11; 16:2–3).

**8:5** “*How many loaves do you have? ... Seven.*” It is worth pointing out that both times Jesus fed the multitude, He had seven pieces of food (“*five [loaves] and two fish*” (Mark 6:38). In Scripture, seven is used as a figure of divine completeness and fulfillment. Though the number “seven” is emphasized “*They also had a few small fish*” (v. 7).

**8:7** “*Having blessed them ... so they ate and were filled.*” What Jesus gives to each one of us has been blessed by Him for our use. What we choose to do with His gifts will demonstrate either our gratitude or ingratitude, our faith or unbelief.

**8:9** “*About four thousand.*” The parallel passage in Matthew 15:32–39 declares that this number did not include women and children.

**8:10** “*The region of Dalmanutha.*” Jesus and the disciples have now crossed over again to the west side of the Sea of Galilee, near Magdala, as indicated in Matthew 15:39, and near Bethsaida (v. 22).

### Jesus Warns the Disciples About False Teaching

Mark 8:11–21 (Matt. 16:5–12)

**8:12** *“Why does this generation seek a sign?”* Jesus’ miraculous works were not done as a spectacle, but to minister to people. Jesus declared that those who seek signs for their own sake were *“an evil and adulterous generation”* (Matt. 12:39; 16:4).

**8:15** *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees ... of Herod.”* Jesus is speaking of both religious and political corruption. Just as leaven permeates the dough, so false teaching can slowly come to influence even disciples (Matt. 16:12; 1 Cor. 5:6). The leaven of the Pharisees consisted of hypocrisy and negating the Word of God through tradition (Mark 7:3–13; Luke 12:1); the leaven of Herod was rationalism and secularism without faith. The leaven of Herod was the exaltation of human rule and law above that of God (compare Acts 4:19; 5:29). This evil corruption was infecting all of Israel at this time.

**8:17** *“Do you not yet perceive nor understand?”* Jesus rebukes the disciples, for after all they had witnessed, they still doubted His power to provide for them. We should each consider how this rebuke applies to our own lack of faith at times. *“Heart still hardened?”* The Gospel of Mark highlights the doubting and hardness of heart of “the Twelve” more than any other Gospel. This is possibly because Peter himself was relating these experiences to Mark to record.

### The Healing of the Blind Man at Bethsaida

Mark 8:22–26

**8:24** *“I see men like trees, walking.”* This incident is used by Mark to illustrate the disciples’ dullness of hearing (Heb. 5:11–14), and of their gradual perception of the true light of truth. Jesus could have just spoken the word, and the blind man would see (Mark 10:52). However, especially when dealing with the blind, Jesus would often touch their eyes (Matt. 9:29; 20:34). Restoring sight to the blind was one of the signs the prophets associated with the Messiah (Isa. 35:4–5; Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22). Yet the Pharisees, who kept asking for a sign (Mark 8:11), saw Him heal the blind (Luke 7:21; John 9:1–34) and still refused to believe in Him.

### Peter’s Confession and Jesus’ Prediction of His Death and Resurrection

Mark 8:27–33 (Matt. 16:13–23; Luke 9:18–22)

**8:27** *“Caesarea Philippi.”* This was located at the base of Mount Hermon, where Jewish legend held that the fallen angels had come to Earth to corrupt mankind (Gen. 6:1–2; 2 Pet. 2:4–5; Jude 6). This area was called “the gates of hell,” and many idolatrous carvings have been found in the rock walls there. *“Who do men say that I am?”* Both here and in Mark 6:14–18, we see that there were many popular ideas about Christ’s identity. Unbelieving men are happy to give Him any identity or title: “Prophet,” “Reformer,” “Teacher,” but refuse to acknowledge that He is indeed the promised Christ/Messiah, and that He is God who has come in human flesh (Phil. 2:5–9).

**8:29** *“Who do you say that I am?”* This is always the question that separates believers from unbelievers. *“You are the Christ.”* According to the Old Testament, there could be only one Christ/Messiah/Savior. Jesus had to fulfill all the Old Testament prophecies about Him: that He would be God and Man in one Person (Psalm 2:7–12; 110:1–4; Isa. 42:1–4), would die for all men, and be resurrected (Job 19:25–27; Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10–11). Jesus wanted the disciples to be able to link His identity to the prophecy He was about to make concerning His death and resurrection.

**8:31** *“And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must ... be killed, and ... after three days rise again.”* Jesus is now openly explaining to His disciples His mission of redemption. Many in Israel at the time had an idea of the Messiah as a conquering King—but not as a suffering Savior. *“By the elders and chief priests and scribes.”* This shows that He is referring to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court composed of 71 men.

**8:33 “Get behind Me Satan!”** One minute, Peter is “*blessed*” for his insight (Matt. 16:17) and the next, he is in line with Satan. No doubt Satan implanted this idea of resistance in Peter’s mind—a seeming concern for Jesus’ welfare—that would have thwarted God’s plan of redemption.

### The Demands of Discipleship

Mark 8:34–38 (Matt. 16:24–27; Luke 9:23–26)

**8:34 “Whoever desires to come after Me.”** The word “disciple” means both a learner and a follower. Jesus is challenging His disciples, who are already believers and learners, to take the next step of growth—fully committed discipleship.

### Discipleship (vv. 34–38)

1. Only those who have believed in Jesus Christ can be true disciples. Peter identifies Jesus as God in Matthew 16:16, where he says, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” Even though Judas was among the disciples, Scripture tells us that he never believed in Jesus’ true identity or mission (John 6:70–71; 13:10–11, 18–19).
2. The first requirement of discipleship is “*deny himself*.” This means the surrender of self-will and personal plans for life. Total, unconditional surrender is the daily concern of the disciple: “*Not as I will, but as You will ... Your will be done*” (Matt. 26:39, 42).
3. The second requirement is to “*take up his cross*.” This means a surrender to God’s plan for our life and a willingness to suffer to see that purpose through. It is a willingness to bear shame, reproach, and suffering for His sake (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:10–12; 1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1–2, 12–16).
4. Once this path of discipleship is understood and committed to, all that is left is to “*follow Me*.” Jesus Christ, now seated at the Father’s right hand, will guide and sustain us by the Holy Spirit He has given us (John 14:25–26; 15:26–27; 16:7–11). The literal rendering of Romans 8:14 is, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are [mature] sons of God.*”

**8:35 “Whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.”** Here, Jesus makes a contrast between those who choose to live for self and those who renounce self for His sake. Even though a believer, if one lives for self, in the end, his works will go up in smoke at the Bema/Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10–15). “*He himself will be saved, yet so as through fire*” (1 Cor. 3:15), but his life will have meant nothing—and like the world he loved, it will pass away (1 John 2:15–17). By contrast, the believer who lives for Christ and bears His reproach will receive great reward (Matt. 5:10–12; James 1:12).

**8:37 “What will a man give in exchange for his soul?”** The word “*soul*” is used here, in the typical idiom of the day, to mean “*life*.” The point is this: Is it worth living a self-centered life now, in exchange for the loss that will be suffered at the Bema Seat—the Judgment Seat of Christ? Loss of salvation is not the issue here, but the loss of potential eternal reward is!

**8:38 “When He comes in the glory of His Father.”** Jesus is focusing the disciples on His return and our accountability to Him. When He comes, many believers will be ashamed of their selfish lifestyle. Rather, we should live so as to be confident in His presence (1 John 2:28–3:3).

## **MARK CHAPTER 9**

The Transfiguration; demon-possessed boy; Jesus foretells His death and resurrection; principles of discipleship

### **The Transfiguration**

Mark 9:1–29 (Matt. 16:28–17:1–13; Luke 9:28–42)

**9:1** *“Till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”* Jesus is speaking of what Peter, James, and John were about to see in His transfiguration.

**9:2** *“Now after six days ... He was transfigured before them.”* This is the glory and power He spoke of in v. 1. Both John and Peter later referred to this occasion (John 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:16–18) as the impression it left on them remained many years later. The word “*transfigured*” means an outward transformation consistent with His own inner glory (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:16).

**9:4** *“And Elijah appeared to them with Moses.”* In Jewish thought, Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the prophets (Luke 24:27, 44). Also, both were included in prophecy relating to Jesus’ Second Coming (Mal. 4:4–6) in the last prophecy of the Old Testament. In Luke 9:31, we are told they spoke to Him of His coming death or “*decease* [departure].” The word Luke uses here is “*exodus*” in the original Greek text and includes the ideas of both death and resurrection.

**9:5** *“Let us make three tabernacles.”* In saying this, Peter was making Jesus, Moses, and Elijah equals, which shows that he did not understand the meaning of what he had just seen. He was possibly thinking of the prophecies that said the nations would celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem in the kingdom (Zech. 14:16).

**9:7** *“This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”* God the Father spoke to them, showing that Jesus is incomparable to all other men. He is the only begotten Son from Heaven. The cloud reminds us of God’s glory at Sinai (Exod. 19:9–11).

**9:9–10** *“Questioning what the rising from the dead meant.”* Though Jesus had told them plainly that He must die and rise again, the disciples still did not understand.

**9:11–12** *“Indeed, Elijah is coming first.”* The disciples were no doubt thinking of Malachi 4:5–6, and Jesus declares that Elijah must come before His Second Coming. The Jewish rabbis did not distinguish between the First and Second Coming of the Christ. This is why they asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah (John 1:21). *“The Son of man ... must suffer many things.”* Prophecies of the suffering Messiah (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53) did not reconcile in their minds with prophecies of His triumphant coming to rule the world (Psalms 2 and 110).

**9:13** *“Elijah has also come.”* Here, Jesus is referring to John (Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:13–17).

### **Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy**

Mark 9:14–29 (Matt. 17:14–21; Luke 9:37–42)

**9:14** *“He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them.”* The descent from the mountain and the contention over the demon-possessed boy, showed that until Jesus comes again, the world will be filled with the sorrow and suffering caused by the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12).

**9:17** *“Teacher, I brought You my son.”* The poor father had come seeking Jesus. Finding only the disciples, he sought to have them cast out the demon, but they could not. Jesus had previously given them power to do this (Mark 6:7–13; Luke 10:17). Their failure here was due to neglect of spiritual disciplines: prayer and fasting.

**9:19** *“O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you?”* Jesus identifies the powerlessness of the disciples due to their lack of faith. His question indicates that He will soon be gone, and then what will they do? Jesus is trying to teach them that faith is not a one-time event, but a lifestyle of spiritual discipline and fellowship with the Father (John 14:21–23; 15:5–17).

**9:22–23** *“If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.”* In response to the father’s plea, *“if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”* Jesus makes it clear the issue is not His power to heal, but rather the need of faith in the Father (Matt. 17:20).

**9:24** *“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”* This poor father’s cry expresses the need of all of us, to go *“from faith to faith”* (Rom. 1:17).

**9:29** *“Prayer and fasting.”* These represent continual dedication and discipline in the spiritual life, which the disciples apparently had neglected. Every gift and power that God gives to us requires continual nurturing and strengthening.

### Jesus Again Predicts His Death and Resurrection and Gives Instruction on Discipleship

Mark 9:30–50 (Matt. 17:22–23; Luke 9:43–50)

**9:30–32** *“The Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men.”* This is the second time Jesus spoke to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection (Mark 8:31).

**9:33** *“What was it you disputed among yourselves? ... who would be the greatest.”* The disciples desired spiritual greatness, but they did not understand that suffering must precede promotion—the cross comes before the crown (Matt. 20:28; Mark 8:34; 10:45). Jesus often spoke about eternal reward and promotion, which would be given to those who were faithful (Matt. 19:28–30; 25:21, 23).

**9:35** *“If anyone desires to be first.”* A desire for greatness in the kingdom is not in itself bad. However, to achieve this goal, one must seek to be the least, the last, and the servant of others (Matt. 20:26–27; Luke 22:26–27).

**9:36–37** *“Then He took a little child.”* In the ancient world, children were often neglected, abused, or ignored. Jesus always gave special attention to children as the weakest and most helpless among men (Matt. 18:1–5; 19:13–14; Mark 10:13–15). He used little children as an example of the humility required of disciples.

**9:38–40** *“Do not forbid him.”* John’s desire to hinder the work of this unknown disciple shows a concern for superiority and control. *“For he who is not against us is on our side.”* The fact that the disciple did his work in the name of Jesus shows that he gave glory to Christ.

**9:41** *“He will by no means lose his reward.”* The Lord declares that the smallest service in His name will be rewarded in the kingdom. The promise of eternal reward, above and beyond eternal life, was often taught by Jesus (Matt. 5:12; 6:4, 6, 18; 10:41–42; Luke 6:23, 35).

**9:42** *“One of these little ones who believe in Me.”* Jesus is speaking of little children who trust in Him. The gospel message is so simple that even a little child can understand it and believe in Him for eternal life. To offend one of these little believers will result in severe judgment. The *“millstone ... hung around his neck”* speaks of severe and final judgment of those who reject the Gospel.

**9:43–48** *“Cut it off ... pluck it out.”* Jesus is using extreme examples to show that, if it were possible for one to defeat sin by self-maiming, it would be better than to end up in Hell. However, the main point is that if we destroy every member that causes us to sin, we would destroy the whole body. Only faith in Christ is able to put us to death and raise us to new life (Rom. 6:3–6).

## MARK 9:44–10:9

**9:44, 46, 48** “Where *‘their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’*” Jesus is quoting Isaiah 66:24. The word translated “hell” in v. 43 is Gehenna, a valley on the south side of Jerusalem where human sacrifices were practiced in Old Testament times, in worship to the heathen gods, Baal and Molech. This valley, with its constantly ascending smoke, became a symbol of Hell (Jer. 7:31; 19:5–6; 32:35). The picture Jesus gives of the eternal state of the lost is most terrifying!

**9:49** “For everyone will be seasoned with fire ... seasoned with salt.” In ancient Israel, sacrifices offered to God included salt (Lev. 2:13). Salt gives flavor, it preserves, and it purifies. Salt represents the purifying effects of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Indeed, everyone will be seasoned with fire:

1. Believers suffer the fire of trials as an offering to God in this life (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:29–30; Heb. 13:5–6; James 1:2, 12; 1 Pet. 2:5; 4:12–13).
2. Our works will also be judged by fire at the Bema/“*Judgment Seat of Christ*” (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–11)—all of our “fire” will have only a purifying effect.
3. However, for the unsaved, it will be an eternal fire of judgment in Hell, where they will be preserved forever (see note in previous paragraph).

**9:50** “Have salt in yourselves ... peace with one another.” Those who believe in Jesus Christ should act as salt in society (Matt. 5:13; Luke 14:34–35), having a purifying and preservative effect. This requires that we show love to one another (John 13:34–35), even with fellow believers who differ with us on doctrine and practice.

## **MARK CHAPTER 10**

Jesus teaches on marriage and divorce; blesses the children; confronts the rich young ruler; predicts His death and resurrection; teaches the disciples to be servants; heals blind Bartimaeus.

### **Jesus Teaches on Marriage and Divorce**

Mark 10:1–12 (Matt. 5:31–32; 19:1–9; Luke 16:18)

**10:1** “As He was accustomed, He taught them again.” The most dominant aspect of Jesus’ ministry was teaching—not healing. This becomes most evident by reading red letter editions of the Gospels, which have the words of Jesus in red.

**10:2** “The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him.” Their question was not genuine. They were hoping that He might contradict Moses (Deut. 24:1–4) or rebuke Herod as John the Baptist had done (Mark 6:14–18). Jesus’ answer deals not only with the question itself, but also with their evil intent.

**10:4** “Moses permitted ... a certificate of divorce.” This still refers to Deuteronomy 24:1–4, under Jewish law, only a man could initiate a divorce. Moses protected the wives, because the husband had to write out his reasons for seeking divorce, and it had to be attested to by two or three witnesses—a principle that runs throughout Scripture (Exod. 20:16; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).

**10:5–6** “Because of the hardness of your heart.” Jesus declared that Moses’ provision was to limit and constrain the previous practice, whereby a man simply dismissed his wife and sent her away (Gen. 21:9–14). “But from the beginning of the creation.” Here, the Lord goes to the original intention of marriage in the plan of God (Gen. 2:21–25).

**10:8–9** “The two shall become one flesh ... what God has joined together.” God designed marriage to be a permanent union between the man and woman.

**10:11–12** *“Whoever divorces his wife ... commits adultery.”* Both divorce and adultery were violations of God’s original purpose for marriage. Jesus had already taught that adultery involved more than just physical unfaithfulness (Matt. 5:27–28). *“If a woman divorces her husband.”* This was included because Mark is writing to a Greco-Roman audience, where it was much easier for a woman to initiate the divorce.

### Jesus Teaches the Value of Little Children

Mark 10:13–16 (Matt. 19:13–15; Luke 18:15–17)

**10:13–14** *“Let the little children come to Me.”* Jesus *“was greatly displeased”* by the disciples’ attempt to block the mothers and children from coming to Him. Little children, still innocent and sensitive, respond quickly to the love of Jesus Christ. *“Of such is the kingdom of heaven.”* As in Matthew 18:3, our Lord declares that salvation is received in simple, humble, child-like faith. From this, it is clear that the gospel message should be presented to even small children from an early age, as they are able to receive it.

**10:15** *“Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child.”* Little children know that they are insignificant, helpless, and dependent. There is no other way to enter into God’s kingdom than to receive eternal life as a free, undeserved gift that we cannot earn or deserve in any way.

### Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

Mark 10:17–22 (Matt. 19:16–22; Luke 18:18–23)

**10:17** *“Good Teacher, what shall I do?”* Jesus had just made it clear that eternal life could only be received as a free gift (v. 15). Mark now contrasts the typical Jewish attitude that entrance into God’s kingdom must be earned (Gal. 3:10–14). *“That I may inherit eternal life.”* Eternal inheritance belongs only to those who are sons of God (Gal. 3:7–9, 16–18, 29; 4:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:4–5).

**10:18** *“No one is good but One, that is, God.”* Jesus is claiming to be God in the flesh and gives the young ruler a chance to affirm this truth. At the same time, He is declaring that the young ruler is not good and, therefore, cannot earn eternal life (Rom. 3:10–20).

**10:19** *“You know the commandments.”* Jesus is quoting the Law (Exod. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20), specifically the parts that speak of outward actions. He is not saying that doing these things will gain eternal life. Rather, He is seeking to show the young ruler that he also is a sinner (Rom. 3:23).

**10:20** *“Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”* This young man has a high opinion of himself, but Jesus is about to expose him as a lawbreaker and a liar.

**10:21** *“Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”* This man had zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:1–4), but nothing stops the love of Christ for those He came to save (Luke 19:10). *“One thing you lack.”* By demanding that he sell his possessions, Jesus is not saying this is how to be saved. Rather, He is indicating that this young man is breaking the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17) and, therefore, he has broken all the Law (James 2:8–13). His wealth was the barrier keeping him from coming to Jesus Christ in simple faith. The Apostle Paul learned the lesson Jesus is teaching here (Phil. 3:3–9, *“have no confidence in the flesh”*). Could this young ruler have been Saul of Tarsus?

**10:22** *“But he was sad ... for he had great possessions.”* What an amazing condition: rich yet sad! Nothing in this world can fill the empty soul of any man or woman or child except the reality of knowing Jesus Christ as personal Savior. No one can trust in Jesus Christ while, at the same time, trusting in either riches or good works.

**The Gift of Eternal Life Versus the Reward of Faithful Service**

Mark 10:23–31 (Matt. 19:23–30; Luke 18:24–30)

**Eternal Life is a Free Gift from God**

**10:23–27** *“With men it is impossible ... for with God all things are possible.”* Jesus declares that salvation is impossible for men to attain by any means other than faith. Faith is an acknowledgement of utter helplessness and, therefore, total dependence upon God, who alone can save us. By sending Christ to die for each of us on the cross, God the Father made the impossible possible, by simple, child-like faith. When Jesus said, *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,”* some suggest that this refers to a small gate in the wall of Jerusalem that a camel could only enter by crawling through. This is a statement of human arrogance, which declares again that if we try really hard, we can enter eternal life through our works. Jesus is referring to a literal needle—it would be absolutely impossible for a camel to crawl through its eye.

**Eternal Reward is Something Gained through Faithfulness**

**10:28** *“See, we have left all and followed You.”* Peter and the disciples had done what the young ruler was unable to do, because they had first believed in Jesus. Their faith gave them eternal life (Rom. 6:23), and their faithfulness as disciples had earned them eternal reward. These two things must not be confused!

**10:29** *“For My sake and the gospel’s.”* This again makes it clear that they first received the Gospel by faith, then they went out to serve the Lord they loved.

**10:30** *“Receive a hundredfold now in this time ... with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.”* God blesses faithful service in this life and will reward it in eternity. However, this service comes with the price of persecution, which in itself will also be rewarded (Matt. 5:10–12). A hundredfold is a ten-thousand-percent return.

**10:31** *“Many who are first will be last, and the last first.”* Those who are prominent and praised in this life will come behind those unknowns who suffer and serve without praise or publicity. See Jesus’ parable in Matthew 20:1–16.

**Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection a Third Time**

Mark 10:32–34 (Matt. 20:17–19; Luke 18:31–34)

**10:32** *“Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And ... afraid.”* Here, we see the fulfillment of Isaiah 50:7, *“For the Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I will not be disgraced; therefore I have set My face like a flint.”* In the context, Isaiah is speaking of the coming abuse at the crucifixion. His determination in the face of the hatred of the religious leaders amazed and frightened His disciples.

**10:33–34** *“The Son of Man will be delivered.”* In these two verses, Jesus predicts the betrayal by Judas (*“betrayed to the chief priests”*), the actions of the Jewish leaders (*“they will condemn Him to death”*), and the involvement of Pilate (*“deliver Him to the Gentiles”*), because only Rome could carry out the death sentence. Jesus then predicts His scourging and abuse by the soldiers, and His ultimate victory in the resurrection on the third day. See also Mark 8:31 and 9:31. Yet, the disciples still did not understand what He was telling them.

**Jesus Illustrates How the Last Will Be First, and the Least Will Be Greatest**

Mark 10:35–45 (Matt. 20:20–28)

**10:35–37** *“Then James and John ... came to Him ... said to Him, ‘Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.’”* In Matthew 20:20–21, we read that their mother made

this same request. There is no contradiction here, for if they urged her to make the request, she was representing them. Jesus willingly embraces the ultimate servanthood going to the cross, and James and John are seeking their own personal greatness and glory. The disciples thought that the kingdom was about to begin (Luke 19:11).

**10:38** *“Are you able to drink the cup ... and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”* Jesus referred to His crucifixion as both a cup of judgment to drink (Matt. 20:22; 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; John 18:11; 1 Cor. 11:25) and as a baptism (Luke 12:50). Both of these figures picture His submission to the will of the heavenly Father.

**10:39** *“You will indeed drink the cup that I drink.”* Here, Jesus was predicting the persecutions they both would face. See Acts 12:2; 1 Peter 4:12–13, and Revelation 1:9.

**10:43** *“Whoever desires to become great ... shall be your servant.”* This again explains why *“the last shall be first”* (v. 31; Mark 9:34–35). Greatness in the kingdom demands submission and service to fellow believers in this life.

**10:45** *“For even the Son of man [came] ... to give His life a ransom for many.”* The ransom was the price paid to free slaves (Matt. 20:28). Jesus Christ died on the cross for all mankind (Isa. 53:3–6, 10–12; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9, 14–15; 1 John 2:2), but only the *“many”* who believe in Him receive the benefits of the cross.

### Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

Mark 10:46–52 (Matt. 20:29–34; Luke 18:35–43)

**10:46** *“Blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus.”* The prefix *“Bar”* means “the son of.” *“Timaeus”* was his father’s name. In Matthew 20:30, two blind men are mentioned. Mark and Luke choose to highlight only one of them.

**10:47–48** *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* The title, *“Son of David,”* was used to refer to the promised Messiah (2 Sam. 7:8–16). This shows that this blind man had heard of Jesus and believed He was the Christ and Savior.

**10:51** *“Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”* The title, *“Rabboni,”* means “My Teacher,” and is a term of both great respect and also of deep affection.

**10:52** *“Your faith has made you well.”* This phrase often by Jesus, in the original Greek, actually means, “Your faith has saved you” (Matt. 9:22; Luke 17:19). Both his physical healing and eternal life were given to him in response to his faith.

## MARK CHAPTER 11

Jesus’ Triumphal entry; the withered fig tree; cleansing the temple; teaching on forgiveness, prayer, and His authority.

**Note:** From this point on, the Gospel of Mark focuses—fully one-third of the book—on the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection.

### Jesus’ Triumphal Entry

Mark 11:1–11 (Matt. 21:1–11; Luke 19:28–40; John 12:12–19)

**11:1** *“When they came near ... to Bethphage and Bethany.”* These villages are about two miles east of Jerusalem. From there, the road goes over the Mount of Olives and into Jerusalem.

## MARK 11:2–25

**11:2–6 “Go into the village.”** Jesus may have arranged in advance for the owner to have the donkey/colt (v. 1; Matt. 21:1) tied and ready on this day. Otherwise, this is evidence of Jesus’ omniscience, knowing in advance what would occur on this day. The fact that he told the disciples to tell the owner, **“The Lord has need of it,”** seems to indicate that this was pre-arranged.

**11:7–11 “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.”** The word “*hosanna*” means “Lord, save us now.” These words and events were foretold by the prophets (Psalm 118:25–26; Zech. 9:9). Though Matthew mentions both a donkey and her colt (Matt. 21:7), Mark and Luke mention only the colt. **“He went out to Bethany.”** Jesus may have stayed at the house of Martha and Mary, or some other disciple, in order to escape the crowds and the hostility of the rulers.

### The Fig Tree Cursed

Mark 11:12–14 (Matt. 21:18–19)

**11:12–14 “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.”** There is a lesson in Jesus’ actions, as seen later in vv. 20–24. Though Mark tells us “*for it was not the season for figs,*” the fact that the tree had leaves indicated that the early buds of the fruit, which are edible, should have been there. To have leaves without buds meant the tree was barren.

### The Cleansing of the Temple

Mark 11:15–19 (Matt. 21:12–17; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22)

**11:15 “Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold.”** Jesus was furious that the Temple, which was intended for prayer and worship, had become merely a business center.

**11:17 “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”** Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 to declare that they (v. 15) had perverted God’s purpose for the Temple. From a “*house of prayer,*” it had become a “*den of thieves,*” for the religious leaders overcharged for sacrificial animals, exchanged foreign money at a profit, and rejected the animals the poor had brought from their own flocks. Far too many of today’s churches and ministries have become merely money-making schemes!

**11:18 “The scribes and chief priests ... sought how they might destroy Him.”** The religious leaders feared His exposure of their greed and corruption, as well as His growing popularity with the people. During Passover, there would have been huge multitudes—not only from around Israel, but many foreign nations as well (Acts 2:5–11).

### The Lesson of the Fig Tree

Mark 11:20–26 (Matt. 21:20–22)

**11:22 “Have faith in God.”** The first lesson of Jesus’ power in cursing the fig tree is the power of faith. Faith’s power lies not in faith itself, but rather in the Object of our faith—the Lord God Almighty. True faith in God recognizes our helplessness but relies on His faithfulness. The fig tree—a symbol of Israel—would bear no fruit and, therefore, was cursed and withered “*immediately*” (Matt. 21:19), and “*from the roots*” (Mark 11:20), that is, from the leaders of Israel, who rejected Christ as King. For a later lesson from the fig tree, see the notes on Matthew 24:32–35, where Jesus says that the budding of the fig tree (Israel) will be a sign of His return.

**11:24 “Whatever things you ask ... believe that you receive them.”** True prayer in faith is made in Jesus’ name in obedience to His Word (John 14:13–15), and in keeping with His revealed will (1 John 5:14–15). Such a prayer will be heard and answered.

**11:25 “And whenever you stand praying ... forgive.”** Jesus often taught that praying, while refusing to forgive others, was a hindrance to effective prayer (Matt. 6:12–15; 1 Pet. 3:7).

**The Leaders Question Jesus' Authority**  
Mark 11:27–33 (Matt. 21:23–27; Luke 20:1–8)

**11:28** *“By what authority are You doing these things?”* These phony religious hypocrites have already said His authority came from Satan (Mark 3:22) and are determined to kill Him (Mark 11:18). This question is designed to give more reason to accuse Him.

**11:30** *“The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?”* By asking them this question, Jesus exposes their hypocrisy. Jesus said of John the Baptist that he was the greatest of the prophets (Matt. 11:9–11; Mark 1:7–8). Yet the religious leaders rejected his ministry, or they would have received Jesus as *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

**11:31** *“And they reasoned among themselves.”* They knew precisely what Jesus meant by His question. They could not say *“from heaven”* because this would convict them of rejecting God’s prophet. If they said, *“from earth,”* meaning of human origin, the people would revolt.

**11:33** *“We do not know ... Neither will I tell you.”* Those who reject the initial light of truth are unworthy of being given more light. God reveals Jesus Christ to those who begin by receiving the light of creation (Rom. 1:18–23), then conscience (Rom. 2:14–15), and finally His Word (Heb. 4:12–13). If we cannot receive the smallest flicker of light, how can we receive the full light of God (John 1:4–5, 9; 3:19–21)?

**MARK CHAPTER 12**

Jesus teaches in parables; the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes all question Him; Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of David; the widow’s two mites.

**The Parable of the Evil Vinedressers**  
Mark 12:1–12 (Matt. 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19)

**12:1** *“Then He began to speak to them in parables.”* The background for this parable is found in Isaiah 5:1–7. Jesus is speaking here to the chief priests, scribes, and elders from Mark 11:27. They are the “wicked vinedressers” in His parable. In Matthew’s account (Matt. 21:33–22:14), Jesus tells a second parable—the parable of the wedding feast.

**12:2–5** *“Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers.”* What occurs in the story in these verses is a summary of how the prophets were treated in Old Testament times by the forerunners of these very same religious leaders (Matt. 23:29–39).

**12:6** *“Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him.”* Here, Jesus represents Himself as the Beloved Son of the Father in Heaven, sent into certain death at the hands of the evil religious leaders.

**12:7** *“Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.”* Jesus, in a masterful way, reveals the inner thinking of Israel’s leaders. They do not want the promised King to be over them, because they craved complete power over the people. This is another illustration of the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15).

**12:8** *“They took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard.”* This action of casting him out shows their desire to completely disown him. The author of Hebrews uses this same figure/illustration to speak of our need to be willing to be disowned and rejected for identifying with Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:11–14).

**12:9** *“Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do?”* Jesus asks the religious leaders to form a conclusion from this story. In Matthew 21:41, we read their own conclusion, which matches what Jesus says. *“He will come and destroy the vinedressers.”* This is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, which would occur

## MARK 12:10–27

about 40 years later, in 70 A.D. ***“And give the vineyard to others.”*** This is a prophecy of the spiritual “inheritance” of Israel being given to the Gentiles in the coming Church—a new spiritual entity. This also fulfills the prophecy of Noah (Gen. 9:26–27) about Japheth (the Gentile nations) dwelling in the tents of Shem (Israel). Here, the Hebrew word “*dwelt*” is *shakan*, which means “to take up permanent residence.”

**12:10–11 *“Have you not even read the Scripture?”*** Jesus ridicules the ignorance of the religious leaders, who prided themselves on their assumed mastery of the Bible. ***“The stone which the builders rejected.”*** Jesus Himself was the cornerstone rejected by Israel’s foolish “builders” (Psalm 118:22–23; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7–8). He would also be the “stone ... cut out without hands” (Dan. 2:34–35) that would destroy all the kingdoms of this Earth.

**12:12 *“They knew He had spoken the parable against them.”*** In their spiritual blindness and hardness of heart, they were incapable of humbling themselves when confronted by the truth. Their impenitent hearts could only respond by seeking to destroy Him, fulfilling the very image in the parable of the wicked vine-dressers. The people of Jerusalem were beginning to realize the murderous intent of their religious leaders (John 7:25).

### The Pharisees and Herodians Unite Against Jesus

Mark 12:13–17 (Matt. 22:15–22; Luke 20:20–26)

**12:13 *“Then they sent to Him.”*** The chief priests, scribes, and elders (Mark 11:27) now plot to send the Pharisees and Herodians to question Him. The Pharisees were strict observers of every meticulous point in the law, while the Herodians were in support of Rome. They were natural enemies, but they united in hatred of Jesus. If Jesus said to pay the tax to Caesar, the Pharisees would accuse Him of being a traitor to Israel. If He said they should not pay, the Herodians could accuse Him of treason against Rome.

**12:15 *“Why do you test Me?”*** The Lord knew their question was not honest, but a plot to catch Him using His own words. ***“A denarius.”*** This was the typical wage for one day of work for a common laborer.

**12:16 *“Whose image and inscription is this?”*** This would have been the image of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), and the inscription would ascribe to him divine status. The Jews hated these coins because they violated both the first and second commandments (Exod. 20:1–6).

**12:17 *“Render to Caesar ... and to God.”*** Just as the coin bore the image of Caesar, man was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; James 3:9). Human obligations never overrule our responsibility to God (Acts 4:19; 5:29; Rom. 13:1–10). ***“They marveled at Him.”*** His divine wisdom and insight were too great to be trapped by their schemes.

### Now the Sadducees Join in Attacking Jesus

Mark 12:18–27 (Matt. 22:23–33; Luke 20:27–40)

**12:18–23 *“Then some Sadducees ... came to Him.”*** By comparing Mark 11:27, 12:13, and 12:18, we can see that the hatred of the religious leaders united all these groups—normally hostile to each other—in their united attacks against Jesus. The Sadducees were from the priestly families. They denied the eternal nature of the soul and the resurrection of the body. Their question is based on Moses’ provision for widows by the brother of the deceased husband (Gen. 38:6–11; Deut. 25:5–10; Ruth 4:1–10). Again, they thought they could put the Son of God in a theological bind, but His answer refuted both their deceptive trap and their faulty theology.

**12:27 *“He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.”*** Here, Jesus absolutely declares that believers live forever:

1. Jesus said the faulty thinking of the Sadducees was because “*you do not know the scriptures nor the power of God*” (v. 24). Lack of understanding God’s Word, and failure to believe it, deprives anyone from knowing God’s power.
2. Believers in eternity will be “*like the angels in heaven*” (v. 25), only in the sense that they will not marry.
3. Believers’ resurrection bodies will be like the resurrected body of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:1–7; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2–3).
4. Believers will be greater than angels, because we will judge them (1 Cor. 6:3) and will reign and rule with Christ (Rev. 20:6; 22:3–5).

### An Honest Scribe Questions Jesus

Mark 12:28–34 (Matt. 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28)

**12:28** “*Then one of the scribes ... asked Him, ‘Which is the first commandment of all?’*” This scribe asks Jesus to declare the most important of all the commandments. (The scribes recognized 613 commandments in the Old Testament).

**12:29** “*Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.*” This quote from Deuteronomy 6:4–5 formed a prayer that faithful Jews prayed daily. It is called “the Great Shema,” because the word “*hear*” in Hebrew is *shema*.

**12:30–31** “*You shall love the LORD your God ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Jesus responds by giving both the first and the second greatest commands (Deut. 6:4–5; 10:12; 30:6; Lev. 19:18). Because both these commands are fulfilled by love, Paul declares “*Love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Rom. 13:9–10; see Matt. 7:12).

**12:32–34** “*You are not far from the kingdom of God.*” Jesus recognized that this scribe was not an enemy and was truly seeking the truth. The scribe was not far from the kingdom for two reasons: first, because he was in the presence of the King; second, his genuine search for the truth needed only to recognize and believe in that King (Gal. 3:23–24).

### David’s Greater Son

Mark 12:35–40 (Matt. 22:41–46; Luke 20:41–47)

**12:35** “*The scribes say that the Christ [Messiah] is the Son of David.*” Jesus is not denying the truth that the Christ (He Himself) was the Son of David. He simply wants to prove that He is more than just a man, He is God in the flesh.

**12:36** “*The LORD said to my Lord.*” Here, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, a Messianic Psalm. In the Hebrew, “*The LORD*” is *Yahweh*, and “*my Lord*” is *Adonai*, another term for God. After repeated attacks from the religious leaders, Jesus asked them a question they could not answer; therefore, He silenced them.

**12:37** “*The common people heard Him gladly.*” Though His ministry created jealousy and hatred among the rulers, the simple people loved to hear His teaching.

**12:38–40** “*Beware of the scribes ... these will receive greater condemnation.*” The teachers of the Law failed to follow the diligent and humble example set by Ezra (Ezra 7:10). Instead, they sought glory from men and money for their services. Because of their greater calling, they would receive greater judgment (Matt. 23:12–29; James 3:1).

## MARK 12:41–13:4

### **An Example of True Giving**

Mark 12:41–44 (Luke 21:1–4)

**12:41** “*Now Jesus sat ... and saw how people put money into the treasury.*” From early times, a chest was kept in the Temple, where people could put their offerings (2 Kings 12:9–10).

**12:42** “*Then one poor widow ... threw in two mites.*” The monetary value of these coins was almost negligible, like a couple of pennies.

**12:44** “*She out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.*” God does not measure our giving or service by human standards. He measures them by the love and sacrifice involved in our giving.

## **MARK CHAPTER 13**

Jesus teaches on the signs of His Second Coming.

### **The Olivet Discourse**

Mark 13 (Matthew 24–25; Luke 21)

During His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke three great sermons, what we call discourses. Each of these was prophetic in nature, dealing with three different periods of time:

1. The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5–7; Luke 6:20–49  
This message deals with the coming kingdom on Earth, and the character and conditions that will be required by the King.
2. The Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21  
This message speaks of the turbulent conditions that will prevail just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He will establish His kingdom.
3. The Upper Room Discourse, John 13–17  
This message is dedicated to the coming Church Age, which would begin at Pentecost and continue until the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

The Olivet Discourse is directed to Israel and deals with five great truths the Jewish people need to know about the future of their nation:

### **The Coming Destruction of the Temple**

Mark 13:1–2 (Matt. 24:1–2; Luke 21:5–6)

**13:1–2** “*Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.*” This temple took 46 years to build (John 2:20) and was one of the greatest architectural feats of the ancient world. “*Not one stone shall be left upon another.*” Although the temple would be destroyed in 70 A.D., many walls and buildings remain. This is a prophecy of what will happen in the Tribulation, after the temple is rebuilt.

### **World Conditions Prior to Jesus’ Second Coming**

Mark 13:3–13 (Matt. 24:3–14; Luke 21:7–19)

**13:3** “*Peter, James, John, and Andrew.*” Only Mark gives us the names of these four disciples who questioned Jesus.

**13:4** “*Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign?*” Jesus does not tell them when, but He gives the signs of the times in which these events will occur.

**13:5 “Take heed that no one deceives you.”** The first warning is against religious deceivers. Many will come claiming to be the Christ. The “signs of the times” include religious deception (vv. 5–6), national and international wars (vv. 7–8a), “earthquakes,” “famines,” and many trials / “sorrows” (v. 8b). There will be persecutions against all believers and betrayal by loved ones (vv. 9–13).

**13:13 “He who endures to the end shall be saved.”** This verse is not conditioning our eternal salvation or our endurance. Rather, it is saying that those who endure through the Tribulation will be delivered to go into the kingdom (vv. 19–20).

### The Great Tribulation

Mark 13:14–23 (Matt. 24:15–28; Luke 21:20–24)

**13:14 “But when you see the abomination of desolation ... let those who are in Judea flee.”** This refers to the prophecy of Daniel regarding the Antichrist (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) standing in the rebuilt Temple and declaring himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:3–4). This will occur in the middle of the seven-year Tribulation period.

**13:19 “For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of creation.”** The last three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation are called “great tribulation” in Matthew 24:21.

**13:20 “Unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved.”** So severe will be the rebellion of mankind and the wrath of God at that time, that all mankind would be destroyed if the Lord Jesus did not come to end the carnage. **“For the elect’s sake.”** This refers to believing Israel—His chosen people.

**13:21–23 “False christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”** Many, even today, think that any sign or miracle is surely from God. But, here, Jesus warns that Satan also has power to work miracles for the purpose of deceiving even believers unless they “take heed.” To be forewarned is to be forearmed—if we respond in faith and obedience.

### The Return of Jesus Christ

Mark 13:24–27 (Matt. 24:29–31; Luke 21:25–28)

**13:24–25 “After that tribulation, the sun will be darkened.”** The darkening of the sun and moon will be the signs that immediately precede the coming of Jesus Christ back to this Earth. **“The powers in the heavens will be shaken.”** This refers not only to natural disturbance in the heavens, but also to the shaking of Satan’s kingdom (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7–12).

**13:26 “Then they will see the Son of Man coming.”** This refers to Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 7:13–14) where He receives the kingdom from God the Father. He will then share His kingdom with those who have believed in Him (Isa. 53:12; Dan. 7:27; Rev. 20:4; 22:12), where each believer will be rewarded with authority in keeping with our faithful service during this life (1 Cor. 3:10–15).

**13:27 “He will send His angels, and gather together His elect.”** This will be a “rapture” of all the saints left on the Earth at the end of the Tribulation. These are the ones who “endured” to the end and are therefore “saved” (Mark 13:13) from death to enter into His kingdom.

### The Parable of the Fig Tree and Its Meaning

Mark 13:28–37 (Matt. 24:32–44; Luke 21:29–36)

**13:28 “Now learn the parable from the fig tree.”** Jesus is referring to the fig tree, which He had cursed (Mark 11:12–14, 20–21). This fig tree represented Israel, which had the appearance of fruit, but not the reality. As a result, Israel was cursed in its present state of unbelief. Only by faith and regeneration (new birth) could the tree begin to bear fruit again.

## MARK 13:29–14:8

**13:29** *“When you see these things happening.”* He is referring to the warning signs in vv. 6–14.

**13:30** *“This generation will by no means pass away.”* The generation witnessing all these things will see the return of the Lord. While we see some of these things in our present time, we do not yet see all of them. The creation of the nation of Israel and the return back to her original homeland in 1948 is certainly an indication of these end-times events.

**13:31** *“My words will by no means pass away.”* Though this world will pass away (1 John 2:15–17; 2 Pet. 3:10), the Word of God will endure forever (Isa. 40:6–8; 1 Pet. 1:24–25). Whatever time we spend living for this world will also pass away. But all the time we “redeem” by faithful living for eternity, will last forever (Eph. 5:15–17; Col. 4:5–6).

**13:32** *“Of that day and hour no one knows.”* Jesus, in His humanity, limited even His own knowledge (Phil. 2:5–8) about certain things. Jewish believers living in the time of the Tribulation should not try to fix the day of His coming (Matt. 24:36), but instead should strive to be ready (Matt. 24:44).

**13:33–37** *“Take heed, watch and pray ... I say to all: Watch!”* Jesus’ emphasis to believers living in the end times, and this applies to us as well, is to be vigilant, to watch, pray, and to attend to our own work (v. 34) so as to be ready to meet Him with purity and confidence when He comes (1 John 2:28–3:3).

## MARK CHAPTER 14

The religious leaders and Judas form an alliance; Jesus is anointed in Bethany; Jesus celebrates the Passover with the disciples; the Lord’s Supper; Gethsemane; Jesus arrested and Peter’s denial.

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

Mark 14:1–2 (Matt. 26:1–5; Luke 22:1–2; John 11:45–53)

**14:1** *“After two days it was the Passover.”* This feast was in the spring (March/April), the first of the seven feasts of Israel (Lev. 23:4–6). This feast was a memorial of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt and was followed by the seven days of Unleavened Bread (Exod. 12:1–15).

**14:2** *“The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him ... and put Him to death.”* The religious leaders are now fully committed to the murder of Jesus. Because they feared the people, they said, *“Not during the feast.”*

### **The Anointing of Jesus at Bethany**

Mark 14:3–9 (Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:1–8)

**14:3** *“At the house of Simon the leper.”* This was most likely one of the lepers Jesus had healed (Mark 1:40–42). *“A woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard.”* This woman was Mary of Bethany (John 11:2; 12:1–3).

**14:4–5** *“Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii.”* It was Judas who made this objection (John 12:4–6). He was a thief and wanted to pilfer some of the money for himself. Three hundred denarii was nearly one-year’s wages.

**14:6–8** *“Let her alone ... She has done a good work ... She has done what she could ... to anoint My body for burial.”* Apparently, Mary of Bethany was the only disciple who understood what was about to happen (John 12:7). Mary was, perhaps, His most dedicated student (Luke 10:38–42).

**14:9** *“Wherever this gospel is preached ... what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”*

The Scripture says, *“Those who honor Me I will honor”* (1 Sam. 2:30b). Here, Jesus is honored by Mary, and she will be forever honored by Him. The same will be true for all who honor Him with their lives (Psalm 91:15; Prov. 21:21; John 12:26).

### **Judas Betrays Jesus**

Mark 14:10–11 (Matt. 26:14–16; Luke 22:3–6; John 13:18–30)

**14:10–11** *“Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve.”* Judas had shared life with Jesus and the other disciples for three years. Yet, he never trusted in Jesus as the Christ (John 6:64; 13:10–11, 21–26). *“Went to the chief priests ... They were glad, and promised to give him money.”* This appealed to Judas’ greed for money. The agreed-upon amount was thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–15). This was the price of a slave (Exod. 21:32) and was foretold by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 11:12–13).

### **Jesus Celebrates the Passover; Institutes the Lord’s Supper**

Mark 14:12–26 (Matt. 26:17–30; Luke 22:7–23; John 13:21–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–26)

**14:12** *“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb.”* The Passover was a memorial to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, when they put the blood of the lamb on their doors (Exod. 12:1–14) so that the angel of death would “pass over” their homes, leaving them safe. The Passover spoke of redemption and was followed by seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which spoke of purification following redemption (Exod. 12:15–20; Lev. 23:4–8).

**14:13–14** *“He sent out two of His disciples.”* These were Peter and John (Luke 22:8). *“A man ... carrying a pitcher of water.”* Though Jesus had most likely made preparations ahead of time to use this house, the coincidence of the man carrying the water just as Peter and John arrived showed His foreknowledge. *“Where is the guest room?”* This was most likely the house of John Mark’s parents—the same place where the disciples met on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:12–14; 2:1).

**14:17** *“In the evening He came with the twelve.”* The Jewish day began at sundown and ran until the next sundown. Thus, Jesus and the disciples ate of the Passover lamb, and Jesus (our “Passover”) was crucified the same day (1 Cor. 5:7).

**14:18–19** *“Jesus said ... ‘one of you ... will betray Me.’”* Jesus knew in advance that Judas had never believed in Him as Messiah/Savior (John 6:64, 70–71). *“Is it I?”* Each of the disciples, knowing their own sinfulness, feared that they might be the betrayer. Judas never asked this question until after the others, to hide his own guilt (Matt. 26:22, 25).

**14:20–21** *“It is one of the twelve ... It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.”* Both Matthew and John identify the traitor as Judas (Matt. 26:25; John 13:26). Mark does not call him by name. Though Judas’ betrayal was predicted in prophecy (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18–19; Acts 2:22–23), his actions were taken by his own choice. His eternal judgment would make it better for him if he had never been born.

**14:22–24** *“Take, eat; this is My body ... This is the blood of the new covenant.”* In this simple action, Jesus transformed the Passover into the Lord’s Supper. This marked a transition from the Old Covenant of Moses to the New Covenant of Jesus Christ (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–27). The elements of bread and wine became the symbols of Christ’s work on the cross and a picture of faith in Him, by which we come to partake in His flesh and His blood (John 6:35, 47–48, 54–57).

**14:25** *“I will no longer drink ... until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”* The Lord’s Supper not only reminds us of the cross of Christ, but also looks forward to the inauguration of His kingdom

## MARK 14:27–41

on this Earth (1 Cor. 11:23–26). The first event in the kingdom will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:5–9).

### Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

Mark 14:27–31 (Matt. 26:31–35; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:36–38)

**14:27** *“I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”* This prophecy, from Zechariah 13:7, foretold the actions of the disciples in deserting Jesus.

**14:28** *“But, after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”* Jesus predicts His resurrection, as well as the reunion and restoration of the disciples. Their actions were the result of fear (Mark 16:8), but Judas' betrayal was done in unbelief (John 6:64).

**14:30** *“You will deny Me three times.”* Only Mark, who wrote at Peter's direction, mentions the two rooster crows (Mark 14:68, 72). Peter would have remembered this night very clearly.

**14:31** *“If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”* Peter's devotion to Jesus was genuine, but his assumption of strength and courage was inflated (v. 38).

### The Prayer and Preparation in Gethsemane

Mark 14:32–42 (Matt. 26:36–46; Luke 22:39–46)

**14:32** *“Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane.”* The name means, “oil press,”—a place where olives were crushed for their oil. Jesus was about to be crushed to provide us eternal life, and the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit. *“Sit here while I pray.”* Jesus' preparation for the agony ahead was prayer; He also sought the prayer support of the disciples—especially Peter, James, and John (Matt. 26:36–37).

**14:33–34** *“He began to be troubled and deeply distressed ... exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.”* Jesus was not simply fearing physical suffering or death (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:4), rather, He feared His coming contact with the sins of the world (Isa. 53:5–8; 1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 1:3; 2:9; 10:12). Jesus remained silent under all His physical torture (Isa. 53:7), yet when our sins were poured out on Him, He screamed in agony (Matt. 27:45–46; Mark 15:33–34).

**14:36** *“Abba, Father ... Not what I will, but what You will.”* Jesus' use of “Abba” was never used by the Jews in praying. It speaks of His intimacy and child-like trust of the heavenly Father. Paul shows that we who are believers can use this same familiar and intimate term in our praying (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

**14:37–38** *“Simon, are you sleeping?”* Though Peter had just boasted of his loyalty (v. 29), he wasn't even able to watch and pray with his Savior. *“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Jesus recognizes the conflict between the flesh and the spirit in the spiritual life (Rom. 7:18, 21–23; 8:3–8; Gal. 5:16–17).

**14:40–41** *“He found them asleep again ... are you still sleeping and resting?”* This passage not only shows how easily our good intentions so often fail, but how Jesus is gracious and merciful—even when we fail repeatedly. Jesus often declared that the key to victory over sin and temptation was to *“watch and pray.”* The disciples slept when they should have prayed and were unprepared for what was about to happen. Jesus, however, who had poured out His heart to the Father, now goes with boldness and courage to face His crucifixion. *“Rise, let us be going ... My betrayer is at hand.”*

**Jesus Arrested in Gethsemane**

Mark 14:43–52 (Matt. 26:47–56; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:1–11)

**14:43** *“And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas ... with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came.”* John tells us Judas came with a detachment of troops (John 18:3, 12). This was made up of about 600 Roman soldiers, along with Jewish religious leaders (Luke 22:52).

**14:45** *“‘Rabbi, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him.”* Luke tells us Jesus responded to Judas’ hypocrisy by asking, *“Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”* (Luke 22:48). See Proverbs 27:6.

**14:47** *“One of those ... drew his sword and struck.”* Mark does not identify Peter here, neither does Matthew (Matt. 26:51) or Luke (Luke 22:49–50). Only John tells us this was Peter (John 18:10–11).

**14:48–49** *“Have you come out, as against a robber?”* Jesus’ meekness (power under control) and gentleness are a rebuke to the religious leaders. The word *“robber”* is used of Barabbas (John 18:40), and also Jesus would be crucified between two robbers (Mark 15:27). *“I was daily with you in the temple teaching.”* Jesus shows that He had nothing to hide at any time. *“But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”* Again, we see that Jesus’ courageous composure came from His complete surrender to the Word and will of God.

**14:50–51** *“Then they all forsook Him and fled ... a certain young man.”* All the disciples failed here. With them was a *“certain young man,”* most likely Mark’s way of referring to himself, the author of this Gospel. Remember that the Last Supper was probably held at his home. (see note on vv. 13–14 above).

**Jesus Before the Jewish Sanhedrin (High Court)**

Mark 14:53–65 (Matt. 26:57–68; Luke 22:54, 63–71; John 18:12–14, 19–24)

**14:53** *“And they led Jesus away to the high priest.”* This high priest was Caiaphas (John 18:13–14, 24). All the *“chief priests, the elders, and the scribes”* were already gathered. According to Jewish law, it was illegal to hold a court in the night.

**14:55–59** *“Many bore false witness against Him.”* According to the Law of Moses, no person could be convicted without at least two or three witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). Not only was this night trial a violation of their law, but their witnesses also broke the ninth commandment (Exod. 20:16). *“I will destroy this temple ... I will build another.”* Here, the false witnesses distorted His words from John 2:19–22, where He first spoke of His bodily resurrection.

**14:60–61** *“‘Do You answer nothing?’ But He kept silent.”* This was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7. *“Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”* Here, the high priest directly asks if He is the promised Messiah. He also reveals that he knew the Messiah would be the uniquely born Son of God. Jesus had not allowed even His disciples to declare this truth yet (Matt. 16:20).

**14:62** *“I am.”* This very response is a declaration of His deity, using the name God gave to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14). Jesus uses this term for Himself repeatedly in the Gospel of John (John 4:26; 6:35, 48, 8:12, 28; 9:5; 10:9, 11, 14; 11:25; 13:19; 15:1; 18:5–6, 8). *“You will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.”* This is a reference to His resurrection glory at the Father’s right hand (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom. 8:34; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2). Caiaphas would see this when he stands before Christ at the judgment (John 5:21–29).

**14:64** *“You have heard the blasphemy ... And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.”* This charge of blasphemy against Jesus was false because He was truly God in human flesh. Any other man who made this claim would be rightly condemned. But the religious leaders refused to believe Him—that He was the promised Messiah.

## **MARK 14:65–15:13**

**14:65** *“Then some began to spit on Him ... and to beat Him ... and the officers struck Him.”* All of these actions were forbidden in a Jewish court of law. Yet, these very actions fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 50:6; 52:14).

### **The Three Denials of Peter**

Mark 14:66–72 (Matt. 26:69–75; Luke 22:54–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27)

**14:68–70** *“But he denied it ... and a rooster crowed ... he denied it again.”* Jesus’ prophecy of Peter’s denial is sadly playing out, just as the dawn is breaking.

**14:71–72** *“Then he began to curse and swear ... a second time the rooster crowed.”* Peter’s betrayal of his Lord was complete. We must remember that we have all betrayed Him in various ways. Because Peter is a believer, he will be restored both to fellowship and usefulness after Jesus’ resurrection (John 21:15–17). Remember the foot-washing in John 13:10 and confession of sin in 1 John 1:9. Our many failures illustrate the truth of the corruption of our own sin nature (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:18).

**14:72** *“And when he thought about it, he wept.”* Luke tells us that after his third denial, the Lord Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and *“Peter went out and wept bitterly”* (Luke 22:61–62). Anyone who has known the shame of personal defeat has some idea of just how broken Peter must have been.

## **MARK CHAPTER 15**

Jesus is condemned, mocked, crucified, and buried.

### **Jesus Taken Before Pilate**

Mark 15:1–15 (Matt. 27:1–2, 11–26; Luke 23:1–5, 13–25; John 18:28–40)

**15:1** *“Immediately ... the chief priests ... bound Jesus ... and delivered Him to Pilate.”* Roman law prohibited the Jewish court from carrying out the death penalty. Therefore, the religious leaders took Jesus to Pilate. Only Pilate could confirm their charges.

**15:2** *“Are You the King of the Jews?”* The religious leaders changed their charge from blasphemy (Mark 14:63–64), to claiming to be a king, which would offend Roman law, as they had no king but Caesar. Jesus would be seen as a traitor to Rome. *“It is as you say.”* Jesus admitted His identity as Messiah/King, though Pilate would not likely know the full meaning of this title.

**15:3–5** *“He answered nothing.”* Again, this was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7. See Mark 14:60–61.

**15:9** *“Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?”* When the multitude asked Pilate to follow custom and release a prisoner, he assumed they wanted him to release Jesus.

**15:10** *“For he knew ... because of envy.”* Envy, a resentment and hostility against those who do or have what we cannot attain, is the deadliest emotion known to mankind. Jesus was hated because of their (religious leaders) envy of His success with the multitudes. Envy always creates strife and murder (Rom. 1:29; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:21; James 3:14, 16). Remember, Joseph was envied by his brothers (Gen. 37:11; Acts 7:9), as well, Paul was persecuted out of envy (Acts 13:45; 17:5).

**15:11** *“The chief priests stirred up the crowd ... release Barabbas.”* This man was a revolutionary and a murderer. Interestingly, his name means “son of the Father.” In keeping with His mission, Jesus died in place of the criminal.

**15:13** *“Crucify Him.”* The crowd, urged on by the priests (v. 11), demanded that Jesus be crucified. No doubt, some in this crowd had only a few days before greeted Him with joy at His triumphal entry.

**15:15** *“Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd ... delivered Jesus.”* Like many leaders, Pilate was more concerned with popularity than justice. *“Scourged.”* Mentioned only three times in the New Testament (Matt. 27:26; John 19:1, and here), scourging was a brutal flogging with whips made of many strips of leather tipped with metal or bone. Extreme scourging often exposed the ribs and intestines.

### **The Soldiers Mockery and Abuse**

Mark 15:16–20 (Matt. 27:27–31; John 19:1–4)

**15:16** *“Then the soldiers led Him away ... and they called together the whole garrison.”* Perhaps as many as several hundred or more soldiers were in the immediate garrison. See Acts 23:23. A full cohort was 600 men.

**15:17–20** *“They clothed Him with purple ... a crown of thorns ... spat on Him ... worshiped Him.”* They made fun of the true glory of the Lord Jesus, who is *“King of kings, and Lord of lords”* (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). Jesus fully paid the penalty of sin, which was sorrow, cursing, thorns, and death (Gen. 3:16–19).

### **The Crucifixion of the King**

Mark 15:21–32 (Matt. 27:32–44; Luke 23:26–43; John 19:17–27)

**15:21** *“Then they compelled ... Simon ... to bear His cross.”* Due to the extreme scourging, He had endured, Jesus was already weak from blood loss and unable to carry His cross. *“Rufus”* may be the one mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:13.

**15:22** *“Golgotha ... Place of a Skull.”* In Latin, this is called Calvary and was outside the city walls (John 19:20; Heb. 13:12–13).

**15:23** *“Wine mingled with myrrh.”* This was a kind of drug commonly given to victims of crucifixion to dull the agony. Jesus refused it to fully drink the cup of judgment the Father had ordained for Him (Matt. 20:22; Mark 10:38; John 18:11).

**15:24** *“When they crucified Him, they divided His garments.”* This was a direct fulfillment of Psalm 22:16–18, which was written a thousand years before the time of Christ.

**15:25** *“The third hour.”* This was 9 a.m. according to Jewish custom. Jesus died the ninth hour (v. 34), which was 3 p.m. His time on the cross was consistent with the morning and evening offerings of the lamb, according to the Law of Moses (Exod. 29:39).

**15:26** *“The King of the Jews.”* It was customary to place the crime of the victim over their head. Pilate identified, unknowingly, that Jesus’ “crime” was His true identity. This inscription was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:19–20)—the main languages of the ancient world. This was the first proclamation to all the world of Jesus Christ as King.

**15:27–28** *“With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left.”* These two are representative of all mankind, for one chose to believe in Him, and the other did not (Matt. 27:44; Luke 23:39–43). See also Matthew 25:31–33. *“And He was numbered with the transgressors.”* Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, in dying with and for sinners (Isa. 53:9–12).

**15:29–32** *“And those who passed by blasphemed Him ... and the chief priests.”* As Jesus died on the cross, the final insult of this world was the scorn and mockery of sinners for whom He was dying. *“Save Yourself and come down ... that we may see and believe.”* These religious hypocrites had seen many signs. Even if Jesus had come down off the cross, they would have rejected Him. It was for them—and for us all—that Jesus *“endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Heb. 12:2).

**The Death and Burial of the Savior**

Mark 15:33–47 (Matt. 27:45–61; Luke 23:44–56; John 19:28–42)

**15:33–34** *“The sixth hour ... Jesus cried out ... My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”* The sixth hour was 12 noon. The darkness conveyed God’s judgment on sin, and Jesus’ total isolation. The wages of sin are not only physical, but also spiritual death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23; Ezek. 18:4, 20), which means separation from God. Jesus was fully judged for the sins of the world (2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2) and was separated from His heavenly Father for three hours. This is what Jesus feared when He was in the Garden (Mark 14:33–34). Here, Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1.

**15:35–37** *“He is calling for Elijah!”* The bystanders misunderstood Jesus’ cry, possibly because of their ignorance of the Scriptures. *“Sour wine.”* See Psalm 69:21. *“Jesus cried out with a loud voice.”* This was His cry of victory, *“It is finished!”* (John 19:30), meaning the plan of redemption for mankind was completed.

**15:38** *“The veil of the temple was torn.”* This veil was very thick and tall. Only God could tear it *“from top to bottom.”* This amazing event demonstrated three things: First, that the way into the presence of God was now open to all (Heb. 4:16; 10:19–21); second, that the temple worship was no longer valid (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) because the new covenant was inaugurated (Heb. 8:7–13); and finally, it was a sign of the coming judgment on unbelieving Israel (Matt. 24:1–3; Luke 19:41–44).

**15:39** *“Truly this Man was the Son of God.”* This Roman centurion, like the crucified thief, was convinced that Jesus was the promised King—the Savior of the world (John 20:30–31).

**15:40** *“There were also women looking on from afar.”* Believing women played an important role in the ministry of Jesus (Mark 14:3–9). *“Mary Magdalene* [Luke 8:2], *Mary the mother of James* [He was one of the disciples, Matt. 10:3], *Salome* [the mother of James and John, Matt. 10:2; 27:56].” These three women were not only present at the crucifixion but also went to the empty tomb (Mark 16:1).

**15:41** *“And many other women.”* The disciples, with the exception of John, had all fled. But these women disciples were steadfast to the end. What a comfort it must have been to our Savior to look down and see these women, and His mother and John (John 19:25–27)!

**15:42** *“It was the Preparation Day ... before the Sabbath.”* This *“Sabbath”* was not the usual Saturday Sabbath—it was a “high Sabbath” as part of the Passover feast (Exod. 12:16; Lev. 23:6–7; John 19:31). It was the *“holy convocation”* on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

**15:43** *“Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member.”* Joseph was a secret believer (John 19:38), as was Nicodemus (John 19:39), and was probably not present when Jesus was condemned.

**15:44–45** *“Pilate marveled that He was already dead.”* Once Jesus’ work of redemption was finished, He voluntarily released His spirit (Luke 23:46). See also John 10:18. The other thieves had to have their legs broken, so they would die quickly. Jesus’ bones were not broken, as a fulfillment of Scripture (Exod. 12:46; Psalm 34:20; Zech. 12:10; John 19:31–37).

**15:46** *“Then he bought fine linen ... and wrapped Him ... and he laid Him in a tomb.”* Joseph’s actions fulfilled prophecy (Isa. 53:9). Nicodemus also came and anointed the body (John 19:39–42).

**MARK CHAPTER 16**

The Resurrection; Mary Magdalene sees Jesus; His appearances to the disciples.

**The Resurrection of the Son of God**

Mark 16:1–8 (Matt. 28:1–8; Luke 24:1–12; John 20:1–10)

**16:1–2 “*The Sabbath.*”** This was Saturday, so these events occurred very early on Sunday morning. It is worth noting that two of the Levitical offerings were to be offered on “*the day after the Sabbath,*” and both related to the “*firstfruits*” (Lev. 23:10–11, 15–17). Paul tells us that Jesus Christ, who rose on Sunday, is “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... Christ the firstfruits*” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). “*Mary Magdalene ... Mary ... Salome.*” These were the same women who watched the crucifixion (Mark 15:40).

**16:3–4 “*Who will roll away the stone?*”** These stones were like a big, round wheel. Once rolled into place, they were very difficult to move. “*The stone had been rolled away.*” Though the Romans had placed a seal and a Roman guard unit to watch the tomb (Matt. 27:62–66), the seal was broken, and the guard unit had fled from the angel who rolled away the stone (Matt. 28:1–4). The angel did not roll the stone away to let Jesus out, but to let the women in.

**16:5 “*A young man clothed in a long white robe.*”** This was an angel (John 20:11–12).

**16:6 “*He is risen!*”** This was the first announcement of the greatest news the world has ever heard. These three words proclaim the victory of our faith. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves His true identity and confirms to the world that the power of sin and death has been defeated (Hos. 6:2; Rom. 4:23–25; Col. 2:13–15; 1 Cor. 15:3–4, 55–57). To receive the benefit of His resurrection—eternal life—all one needs to do is to believe in Him (John 3:15–16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:23–25).

**16:7 “*But go, tell His disciples—and Peter.*”** What a gracious comfort this must have been to Peter, who had probably spent the three days and nights in an agony of grief and shame! “*He is going before you into Galilee.*” Jesus had told them beforehand that He would meet them there (Mark 14:28).

**16:8 “*So they went out ... and fled ... for they trembled ... And they said nothing.*”** Only Mark tells us of this initial hesitation of the women to pass on the message of the angel. After a delay, they went and told the disciples (Matt. 28:8–10; John 20:11–18).

**Jesus Appears First to Mary Magdalene, Then to Other Disciples**

Mark 16:9–14 (Matt. 28:9–10, 16–17; Luke 24:36–44; John 20:11–20)

**16:9 “*He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.*”** What a privilege for this woman, from whom Jesus cast “*seven demons*” (Luke 8:2). Truly, in God’s plan, the last shall be first (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31).

**16:10–11 “*They did not believe.*”** Jesus had told the disciples, at least three times, that He would be crucified and then rise again on the third day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Their unbelief was inexcusable. Observe that three times from vv. 11–14 it is stated that “*They did not believe.*” This is critical to understand what Jesus says to them in vv. 16–18.

**16:12–13 “*After that, He appeared in another form to two of them.*”** Jesus concealed His identity so as to move and talk with them for a time (Luke 24:13–35). “*They did not believe them either.*”

**16:14 “*He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.*”** The disciples’ grief and sorrow over the crucifixion had hardened their hearts to the good news of His resurrection. This strong rebuke—just before giving them their commission—may have also been preparation for them in seeking to reach hardened and unbelieving

## MARK 16:15–20

men. In John 20:29, Jesus declares that the faith of those who have never seen Him, or His mighty works is greater than that of the disciples.

### The Great Commission and Christ's Ascension

Mark 16:15–20 (Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 24:45–53; John 20:21; Acts 1:9–11)

**16:15–16** *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel.”* This is often referred to as the Great Commission. The word “*gospel*” simply means “good news.” *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”* This verse does not make baptism a requirement for salvation. Faith brings eternal life, and baptism is the public confession of that faith. Nowhere in the Gospel of John, Romans, or Galatians is baptism an issue in salvation (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:26–40; 16:31–34). “Baptism” is the first step in discipleship for one who has believed—for someone who has decided to follow Jesus. *“He who does not believe will be condemned.”* Unbelief is the only barrier to entering eternal life, just as believing is the only means of entering eternal life. See John 3:16–19.

**16:17** *“These signs will follow those who believe.”* Jesus is not making this promise to all believers, but only to the disciples/apostles who He had rebuked for their unbelief. If they went out in unbelief, they would have no power. See Matthew 17:20–21 and Mark 9:29. These signs were to give evidence of their apostleship (Acts 28:3–6; 2 Cor. 12:12).

**16:19** *“He ... sat down at the right hand of God.”* This was in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1. The right hand signifies the place of power and authority (Psalm 110:1, 5; Matt. 28:18; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 8:1).

**16:20** *“And they went out ... the Lord working ... and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”* Again, this shows that the promise in vv. 16–18 is not to all believers, but only to those designated by Jesus Christ as apostles. The author of the book of Hebrews says that the Word of the Lord was “... confirmed to us by those who heard Him [apostles], God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles ...” (Heb. 2:3–4).

## CONCLUSION

Mark's Gospel is a vivid account of Jesus' mighty words and deeds. Mark tells the story of Jesus with the attention and detail of an eyewitness. This Gospel has been called the closest thing we have to a firsthand account of Jesus' life, works, and personality. William Barclay said that Mark tells the story of Jesus the way an eager and excited child might tell what he has seen. The goal of the book is to impress us with the powerful figure of the Lord Jesus and to call us to follow Him in simple faith and faithful service.

**The Gospel According to**

***Luke***



## INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Luke, like Matthew and Mark, is written to a particular audience. Whereas Matthew wrote specifically for a Jewish audience and Mark for the Roman reader, Luke is written to the Greek-speaking world. The original Greek of this Gospel is very skilled and highly polished.

The book of Luke is actually the first of a two-part series—Luke and Acts—which chronicles the coming of the Savior and the beginnings of the early Church. Both were written to a believing, high official named Theophilus, which may be a pseudonym or “nickname” for a high Roman officer. The name translates “lover of God” or “friend of God.” Luke was Paul’s travelling companion in the Acts, as well as Paul’s personal physician (Col. 4:14), and the only Gentile author of a New Testament book.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

## **LUKE CHAPTER 1**

Luke dedicates his book; the birth of John the Baptist; announcement of the birth of Christ; Mary's song; prophecy of Zacharias.

### **Dedication to Theophilus**

Luke 1:1–4

**1:1 “*Things which have been fulfilled.*”** This Gospel is especially focused on the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the coming of Jesus Christ (John 20:30–31; 21:25).

**1:2 “*Those who ... were eyewitnesses.*”** Though Luke was not an eyewitness, his account recognizes the authority of other Gospel writers and supports their work (Acts 1:1–3; Heb. 2:3).

**1:3 “*Perfect understanding.*”** Luke was a careful researcher and faithful historian, having gained information from other apostles, and from Paul himself.

**1:4 “*That you may know the certainty ... in which you were instructed.*”** Theophilus was a new believer, possibly instructed by Paul, and needed further instruction to confirm and strengthen his faith in a world where Christians were being persecuted.

### **The Birth of John Announced to Zacharias**

Luke 1:5–25

**1:5 “*Zacharias, of the division of Abijah.*”** The priesthood was divided into 24 groups, who served in their turn (vv.8, 23; 1 Chr. 24:1–19). The division of Abijah is mentioned in Nehemiah 12:17. **“*His wife ... was Elizabeth.*”** She was descended from Aaron, so both were of the priestly line (Leviticus 8).

**1:6 “*They were both righteous before God.*”** This does not mean sinless. It means that they were both believers, that they lived faithful lives and were obedient to the commands of God, which included confession of sin through sacrificial offerings.

**1:7 “*Elizabeth was barren.*”** This sets the stage for the miracle of John's birth. The birth of Isaac to Sarah (Gen. 18:9–14; 21:1–7), of Samuel to Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1–23), and of John to Elizabeth, show God's power to bless faithful people and to raise up important figures in history.

**1:8–9 “*His lot fell to burn incense.*”** This great privilege fell to a priest only once in a lifetime. This incense represented the prayers of God's people ascending to Him (Exod. 30:1–10; Rev. 5:8; 8:3–4).

**1:11–12 “*An angel of the Lord appeared.*”** This was the messenger-angel Gabriel (v. 19; Luke 1:26; Dan. 8:16; 9:21).

**1:13–14 “*Your prayer is heard.*”** This could refer both to a prayer for a son, and also his prayer for the Redeemer of Israel to come—the Lord Jesus Christ. **“*Many will rejoice.*”** This is because John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus Christ (Isa. 40:1–8; John 1:22–23).

**1:15–17 “*For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.*”** This was confirmed by Jesus Christ Himself (Matt. 11:10–11; Luke 7:27–28). The command, **“*[He] shall drink neither wine nor strong drink,*”** shows us that John was a Nazarite from birth like Samson. See Numbers 6:1–12 and Judges 13:1–5. **“*Filled with the Holy Spirit.*”** The filling of the Spirit is seen as the source of three spiritual qualities: his greatness in God's sight, his power to turn the children of Israel to God, and his ministry of introducing the Messiah/Savior.

## LUKE 1:18–38

***“In the spirit and power of Elijah”*** indicates that he will be a kind of prophetic fulfillment (1 Kings 17–18; Mal. 4:5–6; Matt. 17:10–13; Mark 9:13).

**1:18 *“How shall I know this?”*** Zacharias is filled with doubts due to his age and Elizabeth’s barrenness.

**1:19–20 *“I am Gabriel.”*** In response to Zacharias’ doubts, Gabriel identifies himself, and declares that ***“you will be mute ... not able to speak.”*** Since Zacharias asked for a sign, he is given one that rebuked his unbelief. He was apparently unable to hear or to speak.

**1:21–22 *“They perceived that he had seen a vision.”*** In this way, the people are being prepared to recognize the work of God in the events that follow.

**1:25 *“Thus the LORD had dealt with me ... to take away my reproach among people.”*** In the ancient world, it was a great source of shame for a woman not to bear children (1 Sam. 1:1–10; Psalm 127:3; 128:3).

### The Birth of Jesus Announced to Mary

Luke 1:26–38

**1:26 *“Now in the sixth month.”*** This refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. ***“Gabriel was sent by God ... to ... Nazareth.”*** Acting on the authority of the Most High God, Gabriel goes to the insignificant mountain city of Nazareth, that Scripture might be fulfilled (Matt. 2:23).

**1:27 *“To a virgin ... the virgin’s name was Mary.”*** Here, we see the stage being set for the fulfillment of many prophecies (Gen. 3:15; 49:10–11; Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18–25).

**1:28–30 *“Rejoice, highly favored one ... blessed are you among women ... you have found favor with God.”*** Mary’s blessedness was based on the unmerited grace of God. Though Mary has been deified by the Roman Catholic church, she herself acknowledged her low estate and need of the Savior (Luke 1:46–50). The words ***“favor”*** (grace) and ***“mercy”*** (v. 50) speak of God’s undertakings on behalf of those who, though sinful, come to Him in faith.

**1:31–32 *“You will conceive ... and shall call His name JESUS.”*** The Hebrew name is *Yeshua* and means “God’s salvation” or “the salvation of Jehovah.” The word for ***“salvation”*** in Genesis 49:18 is *Yeshua*, as it is in Isaiah 25:9 and many other passages. ***“The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.”*** This anticipates the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–13; Psalm 2:7–9; 89).

**1:33 *“Of His kingdom there will be no end.”*** Because He is the ***“King of kings and Lord of lords”*** (Rev. 19:16), His kingdom will be eternal (Dan. 2:44; 4:34–35; 6:25–27).

**1:34–35 *“How can this be?”*** Mary’s question is born not out of doubt, but from the practical consideration of her virginity. Gabriel explains that her conception will be by the power of ***“the Holy Spirit.”*** Only in this way could the eternal Son become truly human (Psalm 2:7–12; Dan. 7:13–14).

**1:37 *“For with God nothing will be impossible.”*** The miracle of the virgin conception and birth is the greatest of all miracles. What is impossible for men is no hindrance to God (Matt. 17:20; 19:26; Mark 10:27; Luke 18:27).

**1:38 *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord!”*** Mary submits herself fully to the plan of God for her life. ***“According to your word.”*** The word of Gabriel was the Word of the Lord, which to Mary, as we see in vv. 46–55, was of utmost importance.

### Mary Visits Elizabeth

Luke 1:39–45

**1:39–40** “*Now Mary arose ... and greeted Elizabeth.*” In light of Mary’s deep understanding of Scripture (vv. 46–55), she must have concluded that the destiny of Elizabeth’s son and her own were divinely connected. Elizabeth was also able to conclude the meaning of these events.

**1:41** “*The babe leaped in her womb.*” John, the forerunner of Jesus (Isa. 40:1–5) reacts in the womb at Mary’s coming. Thus, he testified to Jesus before he was born. “*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*” The filling of God’s Spirit always brings illumination, wisdom, and utterance of truth (Acts 4:8–12; 13:9–12; Eph. 5:18–21).

**1:42–43** “*Blessed is the fruit of your womb ... the mother of my Lord.*” Elizabeth displays keen insight into what is happening. Mary was the mother of the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. His deity has always existed in the presence of the Father and the Spirit (Isa. 9:6–7; Micah 5:2; John 1:1–3; 10:30; 17:5, 21).

**1:45** “*Blessed is she who believed.*” Mary’s faith is contrasted with the doubt of Zacharias. Only faith can receive the power of God (Matt. 15:28; 17:20; Mark 2:5; Luke 7:9; Heb. 11:6).

### Mary Magnifies the Lord by Reciting His Word

Luke 1:46–55

In this section, Mary displays a deep understanding of Old Testament Scripture. Compare also the song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1–10).

**1:47** “*My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*” Contrary to the false teaching of Roman Catholicism, Mary was not sinless. Here, she declares that she also needed the redemption of the Savior.

**1:48** “*He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant.*” This refers not so much to her poverty, as to her sinful condition (see Rom. 3:23). “*All generations will call me blessed.*” She was certainly blessed to be the mother of the Lord Jesus. Again, blessing comes because of God’s grace—never our merit. In Luke 11:27–28, one woman called her blessed, but Jesus said that the greater blessing was faith and obedience to His Word.

**1:49** “*Holy is His name.*” To be holy is to be separate, set apart from all others. God alone is holy in His very nature (Lev. 11:44–45; Psalm 111:9; Isa. 6:3).

**1:50** “*His mercy is on those who fear Him.*” This fear is a humble reverence for His greatness and grace on undeserving men (Psalm 111:10; Prov. 9:9–10).

**1:51–52** “*He has scattered the proud ... He has put down the mighty.*” God’s plan is to lift up the humble and to bring down the proud (Psalm 37:9–20; 98:1–9; Luke 14:11; 18:14; 1 Pet. 5:5–6). The Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of humility leading to exaltation (Phil. 2:5–9).

**1:53** “*He has filled the hungry with good things.*” The focus here is spiritual hunger, which God will always fill with the good things of His Word (Psalm 34:8–10; 37:3–6; 84:11–12; Matt. 5:6).

**1:54–55** “*He has helped His servant Israel ... As He spoke to our fathers.*” Israel is referred to as God’s servant throughout the Old Testament (Isa. 41:8–9; 44:1–2). The word God spoke to Abraham and his seed refers to the covenants (Gen. 17:1–8; Exod. 19:4–6; 34:10, 28). As the servant of God, Israel gave the world His Word—both in written form and in Jesus Christ—the living Word. In this way, Israel is intimately connected to Jesus Christ as God’s chosen servant (Isa. 42:1–4).

### The Birth of John and the Prophecy of Zacharias

Luke 1:57–80

**1:59 “On the eighth day.”** This day was set aside as the day of circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9–13) Paul declares circumcision to be a sign of regeneration or new birth (Rom. 2:28–29; Gal. 5:6; Col. 2:10–12). The eighth day is also significant, since it represents the day after the Sabbath—Resurrection Sunday (Matt. 28:1–6; Mark 16:1–6; Luke 24:1–6; John 20:1–9).

**1:60–63 “His name is John.”** Normal custom was to call a son by the name of the father or some other male relative. John’s name was given by Gabriel (Luke 1:13). The fact that *“they made signs to his father”* (v. 62) shows that Zacharias was both deaf and dumb.

**1:64 “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed.”** This happened just as the angel had foretold (Luke 1:20).

**1:65 “All these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea.”** These amazing events were preparing the people for even greater wonders with the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 2).

**1:67 “Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit.”** In Old Testament times, the filling of the Spirit came at various times to accomplish some specific purpose (Psalm 51:11). To some degree, this prophecy is a fulfillment of Joel 2:28. Today, we are commanded to be filled by means of the Spirit daily, to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:22–23). We are enabled to do this by abiding in Christ (John 15:1–8). When we sin, fellowship is broken, and confession and correction is required to restore fellowship with the Lord (1 John 1:7–9; 2 Tim. 2:20–21).

**1:68–79** This prophecy of Zacharias displays his astounding grasp of what the birth of John foreshadowed—the coming of the Savior and the redemption of Israel.

**1:68 “He has visited ... His people.”** After 400 years of silence following the book of Malachi, God was again communicating with His people through dreams (Matt. 1:20; 2:13, 22), angels (Matt. 2:13; Luke 1:11–20), and prophecy (Luke 1:67). These were the ways God’s communicated in the Old Testament (Exod. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–2). However, this may be taken more literally, in the sense that God, in the Person of Jesus Christ, will come to visit Israel (Luke 1:78; 7:16; 19:44).

**1:69 “And has raised up a horn of salvation ... in the house of His servant David.”** This clearly shows that Zacharias identified the mission of John as the forerunner of the Messiah. The *“horn”* is used in the Old Testament to speak of power and authority and was a messianic symbol (Psalm 18:2; 132:17; 1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:3).

**1:70 “As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets.”** The central theme throughout Old Testament prophecy is the coming of the Redeemer/Messiah (Luke 24:27, 44–45; Rom. 1:2; Acts 3:21; 1 Pet. 1:10–12).

**1:72 “To remember His holy covenant.”** God had declared through Moses that the day would come, after long judgment, that He would remember His covenant with Israel (Lev. 26:42).

**1:73 “The oath which He swore to our father Abraham.”** This statement looks back to the call of God to Abraham and His initial promise to him (Gen. 12:1–3; 22:15–18; Heb. 6:13–14).

**1:74 “To grant us that we ... might serve Him without fear.”** Throughout history, Israel was persecuted for their devotion to the one true God. By God sending His own Son to die for us, our fears are overcome, and we can serve Him joyfully (Heb. 9:14; 1 John 3:16–17; 4:17–19).

**1:76** “*You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.*” Zacharias now speaks of John, anticipating his prophetic ministry (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; Matt. 3:3).

**1:77** “*To give knowledge of salvation ... by the remission of their sins.*” This salvation would come through John’s call to repentance and his pointing to Jesus as “*the Lamb of God*” (Luke 3:1–17; John 1:29).

**1:78–79** “*The Dayspring from on high.*” This speaks of the early dawn, the sun rising—a picture of Jesus’ arrival (Num. 24:17; Mal. 4:2; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16). “*To give light to those who sit in darkness.*” The Lord Jesus brought the light of God into a world in the darkness of sin (Isa. 9:2; Matt. 4:16; Luke 22:53; John 8:12; 9:5).

**1:80** “*So the child ... was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.*” John grew strong in body and spirit, hidden from sight, until he bursts onto the scene to announce the coming of the Savior. (Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:1–5; John 1:15; 19–23).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 2**

Jesus is born in Bethlehem; the shepherds worship Him; Simeon and Anna praise God; the boy Jesus in the Temple.

### **The Birth of Jesus the Christ**

Luke 2:1–7 (Matt. 1:18–25)

**2:1** “*Caesar Augustus.*” He ruled the Roman empire from approximately 30 B.C. to 14 A.D. This decree played a part in bringing Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, where prophecy declared the Messiah/Christ would be born (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:4–6).

**2:3** “*So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.*” Every male was to be registered in their ancestral home city.

**2:4** “*Joseph also went up ... to the city of David ... Bethlehem.*” Both Joseph and Mary were of the lineage of King David. Although Joseph was not the physical father of Jesus, it was essential that he be of the Davidic line—both to have Jesus born in Bethlehem and to give Him legal right to the throne of David. Later, Jerusalem, also known as Zion, was called “the City of David,” as the capital of his kingdom (2 Sam. 5:7).

**2:5** “*With Mary, his betrothed wife.*” Luke uses the word “*betrothed*” to remind us that although Mary “*was with child,*” she and Joseph had not consummated their marriage sexually (Matt. 1:18).

**2:7** “*Her firstborn Son.*” This is because, after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary had other children (Matt. 1:25; 13:55–56; Mark 3:31–35). “*Swaddling cloths.*” These were strips of cloth from old garments. “*Laid Him in a manger.*” This was a feed trough for sheep and cattle. Just as the inn had no room for Christ’s birth, so this world has no room for His life. From birth to His death, Jesus lived on this Earth as a wayfaring stranger (Jer. 14:8–9).

### **An Angel Appears to the Shepherds**

Luke 2:8–20

**2:8** “*Shepherds living out in the fields.*” King David once kept his father’s flock in these fields. The life of a shepherd was very rugged, as they lived with the flock. Jesus came to be our Shepherd and our King. He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) who gives His life for the sheep (Psalm 22). He is the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) who rose from the dead to care for the sheep (Psalm 23; John 21:15–17). He is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) who will receive the sheep into His kingdom.

## LUKE 2:10–38

**2:10–11** *“I bring you good tidings of great joy.”* The Good News about Jesus Christ always brings the joy of the Lord to those who believe. *“A Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* Jesus is described here by the angel as the Savior of sinners, the Christ anointed to sit on David’s throne, and the Lord from Heaven. In Luke 1:47, Mary calls God her Savior (see Psalm 106:21; Isa. 43:3; 60:16), so here the term implies the deity of Jesus Christ.

**2:12** *“This will be the sign to you ... a Babe ... lying in a manger.”* The Lord Jesus would be easy to identify, as the only infant in Bethlehem for whom there was no place but a manger for a bed.

**2:14** *“Glory to God ... goodwill toward men.”* The glory of God speaks both of His holy and perfect nature, made visible by brilliant light (v. 9) and of the praise that is His rightful due. *“Peace”* and *“goodwill”* are offered to all mankind through the coming of the Savior. Only those who receive Jesus Christ by faith will experience these blessings of God.

**2:18–19** *“All those who heard it marveled ... but Mary kept ... and pondered them in her heart.”* While others were amazed, Mary treated these events as a treasure and considered the meaning of them all. In Genesis 37:11, Jacob did the same in considering the revelation given through Joseph’s dreams.

### The Reception of the Christ-child in the Temple

Luke 2:21–38

**2:21** *“His name was called Jesus.”* The name *“Jesus”* (*Yeshua*) means “the salvation of Jehovah,” or simply, “Savior” (Matt. 1:21).

**2:22–24** *“Now when the days of her purification ... were completed ... to offer a sacrifice.”* These verses highlight the obedience of Joseph and Mary to the Law of Moses. Every Jewish boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day, in keeping with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3). The purification ceremony of the mother took place 40 days after the birth, at which time a sacrifice was offered (Lev. 12:1–8). It is interesting that Joseph and Mary could only offer the lesser offering, due to their poverty (Lev. 12:8). See also Exodus 13:2.

**2:25–26** *“Simeon ... was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel.”* That he was *“just”* shows that he was a believer. The word *“devout”* implies spiritual obedience to the Word of God. He was *“waiting for”* Israel’s Messiah (the *“Consolation of Israel ... the Lord’s Christ”*). And he was *“guided by”* the *“Holy Spirit.”* These four things represent what a faithful believer should be like.

**2:29–32** *“Lord ... my eyes have seen Your salvation ... the glory of Your people Israel.”* By the leading of the Holy Spirit, Simeon was able to recognize and praise the Christ-child. See Genesis 46:30; Isaiah 9:2; 42:6; 52:10; and Acts 10:45.

**2:34–35** *“Behold, this Child is ... for a sign.”* Jesus is the greatest sign ever given of God’s love for mankind (Isa. 7:14; 8:14; 9:6; 1 Pet. 2:6–8). The *“sword”* is a *romphaia*, speaking of a great broad-sword, symbolic of the many sorrows Mary would endure in seeing Christ rejected and crucified. Jesus Christ would reveal the *“thoughts of many hearts”* in how men would respond to Him (Heb. 4:12–13).

**2:36–38** *“Anna, a prophetess.”* Here is an example of a godly woman of great faith. She was also guided to come into the Temple in time to see the Christ-child and recognized Him as the Redeemer. Her life of constant devotion to God is a reflection of Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14), and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9).

### Incidents From the Early Life of Jesus

Luke 2:39–52

**2:40** *“The Child grew and became strong in spirit.”* Though the physical growth of Jesus was like any normal child, His spiritual development was unlike any other. He was *“filled with wisdom”* from the study of the Scriptures, and *“the grace of God was upon Him,”* as He had a unique relationship with the Father. As God, Jesus was always perfect. But in His humanity, He had to grow and develop.

**2:41** *“Every year at the Feast of the Passover.”* This was one of three feasts that every male in Israel was commanded to attend in Jerusalem: The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks or Harvest (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering (see Exod. 23:14–17; Deuteronomy 16). Again, this shows the devotion of Joseph and Mary to be obedient to God (Luke 2:22–24, 39).

**2:42** *“When He was twelve years old.”* It was the custom in Israel for a boy to become a man at the age of 13, when he became a “son of the law,” or Bar-Mitzvah. This was often anticipated one year in advance, at the age of twelve. It was at this time that the child would choose his life’s work.

**2:43–45** *“The Boy Jesus lingered behind.”* This would be easy to do, as people from Nazareth would travel in a caravan, and many children would travel with friends or relatives.

**2:46** *“After three days they found Him ... in the midst of the teachers.”* This verse amplifies what was said in v. 40. Jesus was able to engage the learned rabbis in theological discussions and had been doing so for three days.

**2:47** *“All who heard Him were astonished.”* These rabbis were amazed at His knowledge of the Scriptures and His understanding, which surpassed their own.

**2:49** *“I must be about My Father’s business.”* In response to Mary’s rebuke, Jesus declares His lifework—to do the will of the Father. This shows that Jesus knew His unique identity and the plan of the Father for Him. In place of Mary’s statement *“your father,”* Jesus declares His purpose was from *“My Father.”* He declares His Father is God.

**2:51–52** *“He ... was subject to them.”* The Lord Jesus was a model son to Joseph and Mary, even though He had declared that His ultimate responsibility was to His heavenly Father. *“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature.”* Again, this speaks of His normal physical and supernatural spiritual development (Gal. 4:4–5; Heb. 4:14–16; 5:8; 7:26–28).

### LUKE CHAPTER 3

The appearance and ministry of John the Baptist; Jesus is baptized by John; the lineage of Jesus.

#### John Prepares the Way of the Christ

Luke 3:1–20 (Matt. 3:1–12; Mark 1:1–8)

**3:1** *“In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate ... Herod ... Philip ... and Lysanias ... while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.”* Luke’s attention to detail shows why he is considered to be a first-rate historian and accurate witness (Luke 1:1–4). This time would be approximately 28–29 A.D. Both Annas and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, served as high priests during this time.

**3:2** *“The word of God came to John.”* God had prepared John in the wilderness for his ministry (Luke 1:80). Now God called him to enter into his prophetic ministry (Isa. 40:3–8; Amos 3:7; 1 Pet. 1:24–25).

## LUKE 3:3–22

**3:3 “Preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”** John’s call to Israel to “repent” would have shocked many, who thought they were saved by virtue of Abraham (Matt. 3:9; John 8:33, 39), or because of circumcision (Acts 15:1–5; Rom. 2:25–29; Gal. 5:1–6), or by keeping the Law (Gal. 3:1–14). The forgiveness of sins was not due to the baptism, but to the repentance leading to baptism. This repentance was not only from sin, but from the “*dead works*” of trying to save themselves by good deeds (Heb. 6:1; 9:14).

**3:4–5 “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain ... brought low.”** This was John’s graphic way of saying that “*the last will be first*” (Matt. 20:16), or “*whoever exalts himself will be humbled [abased], and he who humbles himself will be exalted*” (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11). It is the same truth James and Peter write of in James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5–6.

**3:6 “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”** This is taken from Isaiah’s prophecy in Isaiah 52:10. The emphasis is on the saving work of Jesus Christ for all mankind. This is stressed in v. 38 by showing Jesus’ link to Adam, the father of all mankind.

**3:7–8 “Brood of vipers!”** Here, John rebukes those leaders who came with the multitudes to hear him, but who had no true interest in the call to repent of their self-assumed goodness. See Matthew 3:7; 12:34; 23:33.

**3:9 “The axe is laid to the root of the trees.”** Unfruitful trees were cut down, and so the nation of Israel would be destroyed. Remember the fig tree (Matt. 21:18–19; 24:32–35).

**3:10–14 “What shall we do then?”** John’s rebuke of the religious leaders touched the hearts of the humble people. John shows what real repentance looks like. It is not making a show of one’s past sins, nor weeping and crying to look sincere. It is to demonstrate a humble and genuine care and concern for others, to be honest in our dealings with others, and to show mercy (see Micah 6:8). Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of behavior.

**3:16–17 “One mightier than I ... He will thoroughly clean out [purge] His threshing floor.”** This is John’s first mention of Jesus (Matt. 3:11–12; Mark 1:7–8; John 1:26–27). He uses familiar language to illustrate the coming harvest of the saved and judgment of the lost. “*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*” (for those who believe, Cor. 12:13) “*and [with] fire*” (for those who do not believe, Matt. 25:41). See Revelation 14:17–20 for another example of this harvest.

**3:19–20 “Herod the tetrarch ... shut John up in prison.”** John jumps ahead to show the end result of John’s righteousness, that he was persecuted, imprisoned, and finally killed by Herod (Matt. 14:3–5; Mark 6:16–20). See 2 Timothy 2:12 and 3:12.

### Jesus Is Baptized by John

Luke 3:21–22 (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; John 1:29–34)

**3:21 “Jesus also was baptized.”** Jesus’ baptism was for entirely different reasons than that of the people. They were baptized to identify with the coming Messiah. He was baptized to identify with a sinful people. Jesus told John that His baptism was necessary “*to fulfill all righteousness*” (Matt. 3:15). It was only right that the Savior identify with a sinful people (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:9). But also, it was necessary to fulfill God’s Word to John about identifying the true Messiah (John 1:31–34). Further, His baptism by John, in identifying with sinners, looked forward to His ultimate baptism on the cross (Luke 12:49–50).

**3:22 “The Holy Spirit descended ... upon Him.”** This symbol was a visual picture of His anointing by the Father to bear the sins of the world (Isa. 42:1–4, 6–7; Luke 4:16–19; Acts 10:38).

### The Lineage of Jesus Christ

Luke 3:23–38 (Gen. 5:1–32; 11:10–26; Ruth 4:18–22; Matt. 1:1–16)

**3:23** *“Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age.”* Luke links Jesus’ baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. He traces His lineage back to Adam (v. 38) and links this with His temptations in the wilderness (Luke 4:1–13) to show that where the first Adam failed when tempted by the devil, Jesus—the second or last Adam—was victorious (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:20–28, 45–49). *“(As was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli.”* Though people assumed Jesus was Joseph’s son, He was virgin-born and, thus while being *“the son of Adam,”* He was truly *“the Son of God”* (Luke 3:38). In Matthew, Joseph is said to be the son of Jacob (Matt. 1:16). Here he is called *“the son of Heli.”* In fact, he was born of Jacob, but became a *“son of Heli”* (Mary’s father) by marriage (in other words, his son-in-law). Matthew follows Jesus’ lineage through Joseph, his legal father. Luke follows His lineage through Mary, His true physical line.

**3:38** *“The son of Adam, the son of God.”* By linking Jesus to Adam, Luke magnifies the victory of Jesus over the failure of Adam, but also shows that His victory on the cross was for all the descendants of Adam (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; Heb. 2:9).

## LUKE CHAPTER 4

Jesus is tempted by the devil; His ministry in Galilee; His ministry in Capernaum.

### The Temptation of Jesus by the Devil

Luke 4:1–13 (Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13)

**4:1** *“Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Luke emphasizes the working of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. There is a progression here that all believers should consider. First, Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). Next, He is filled by the Spirit and led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1). Following His victory in the face of temptations, He *“returned in the power of the Spirit”* (Luke 4:14). He then gives credit to the Spirit for the power of His ministry (Luke 4:18–19). Every believer should meditate on the significance of these stages in the Lord’s ministry, as a model for our own.

**4:2** *“Being tempted for forty days.”* The temptations recorded here are only the final temptations of the forty-day trial.

**4:3** *“If You are the Son of God.”* The devil knew that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. But as with Adam in the Garden, he sought to cast doubt on the plan and purpose of God. *“Command this stone to become bread.”* This was something Jesus, as Creator (John 1:1–3) had the power to do. This would not be a temptation for us since we could not do it.

**4:4** *“It is written.”* Here, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 to show that God’s Word is food for our souls, and it is far more important than physical bread. Jesus defeated the devil’s deceptions by referring to the truth of God’s Word.

**4:7** *“If You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”* The devil offers Jesus a crown without the cross. Jesus knew that exaltation from God required submission to His plan (Phil. 2:5–11).

**4:8** *“You shall worship the LORD your God.”* Jesus again quotes Deuteronomy (6:13). By simply citing clear and simple Scriptures and committing to obey them, Jesus defeated the devil.

**4:9–11** *“For it is written.”* Now the devil quotes from Psalm 91:11–12, showing that he knows what the Word of God says, but also that in his deceitful way, he will try to use it even to deceive the Lord Himself.

## LUKE 4:12–32

**4:12** *“You shall not tempt the LORD your God.”* This quote, from Deuteronomy 6:16, reveals two great truths. First, the Lord Jesus would not tempt the Father by casting Himself down from the Temple. Second, it was a rebuke to the devil, who was tempting the Lord God, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also a reminder of Israel’s failure to enter into the land due to tempting the Lord God (Exod. 17:1–7; Heb. 3:7–19).

**4:13** *“The devil ... departed ... until an opportune time.”* That time would occur in the Garden of Gethsemane.

### Jesus’ Galilean Ministry

Luke 4:14–30 (Matt. 4:12–17; 13:53–58; Mark 1:14–15; 6:1–6)

**4:14** *“Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit.”* The Word of God declares that spiritual power comes from fasting/self-denial, testing, and victory (Luke 9:23; Rom. 5:3–5; 8:37; James 1:2). We build spiritual strength in much the same way we build physical strength. Paul showed that discipline, endurance, and overcoming are the keys to spiritual victory (1 Cor. 9:24–27).

**4:16** *“As His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath.”* Jesus was faithful to gather with others in the synagogue for the reading and exposition of the Word of God. *“Stood up to read.”* It was customary for any male Jew to have the privilege of reading a portion from God’s Word.

**4:18–19** *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me.”* Jesus opened the scroll of Isaiah to what we know as chapter 61:1–2a. In this prophecy, the Holy Spirit is seen as His power, the preaching of the good news is His mission, and the healing of the brokenhearted, deliverance of captives, and giving sight to the blind are the sure signs of His true identity and power. Jesus ended in the middle of verse two, because He came the first time to proclaim the *“acceptable year of the Lord”* (see 2 Cor. 6:1–2). It would not be *“the day of vengeance of our God”* (Isa. 61:2b) until His Second Coming.

**4:21** *“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”* Jesus was declaring Himself to be the One about whom Isaiah spoke. At first, this was not clear to His listeners.

**4:23** *“Physician, heal yourself.”* Although the people initially spoke well of Him (v. 22), Jesus anticipated their final rejection of Him. At the cross, the leaders said essentially this very thing (see Matt. 27:40–43; Mark 15:29–32; Luke 23:35–37).

**4:24–27** *“In the days of Elijah ... Elisha.”* By referring to these stories from their past, the people now understood that He was saying that they would reject Him, just as their ancestors had rejected the prophets (Matt. 23:29–33; Acts 7:51–53). In the days of Elijah and Elisha, it was often the Gentiles—not the Jews—who received God’s Word (see 1 Kings 17:8–24; 2 Kings 5:1–19).

**4:28–30** *“They ... were filled with wrath.”* Remember that Simeon had prophesied that Jesus Christ was *“a sign which will be spoken against ... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed”* (Luke 2:34–35). Here, at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we see his words being fulfilled. The unbelief of the people led them to a murderous attempt to kill Jesus. Outside the mountain village of Nazareth, there is a steep drop of about two thousand feet. This is where they took Him. But it was not His time, and so *“He went His way.”*

### Jesus’ Ministry in Capernaum

Luke 4:31–44 (Matt. 8:14–17; Mark 1:21–39)

**4:32** *“They were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority.”* No one could teach with the authority of Jesus because He is both the Author of the Bible, and also the Living Word (Matt. 7:29; 21:23–24; Mark 1:21–22; John 1:1–4, 14).

**4:34** *“Let us alone ... Jesus of Nazareth ... the Holy One of God.”* The demon knew who Jesus was and that He had indeed come to destroy them by defeating their king, the devil—thus destroying their kingdom (Psalm 2:1–12; 110:1–7; Rev. 20:7–15).

**4:35** *“Be quiet, and come out of him.”* By speaking His word, Jesus shows that He has power over the kingdom of darkness.

**4:36–37** *“What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands ... and the report about Him went out into every place.”* The emphasis here is on the power and authority of Jesus’ words. Just as He spoke the world into existence (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 29, Psalm 102:25; John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2, 10), even so His word has authority over all evil powers, and even nature (Matt. 8:26; Luke 8:24). We have His word in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12), but do we believe it, and use it to overcome the devil’s attacks against us (Eph. 6:10–18)?

**4:38** *“Simon’s house.”* This was apparently where Jesus and the disciples stayed while in Capernaum. *“Simon’s wife’s mother.”* Simon Peter was one of the disciples who was married. *“He ... rebuked the fever.”* Again, the power is in His word alone.

**4:39** *“Immediately she arose and served them.”* God delivers us and heals us so that we might be useful in His service. Even in our affliction, we are to serve Him (1 Cor. 4:11–13; 2 Cor. 1:3–11; 4:5–15).

**4:40–41** *“He laid His hands on every one of them.”* Jesus showed no partiality to anyone. Instead of merely speaking the word, He touched them—perhaps to show His love and compassion for them. *“You are the Christ, the Son of God!”* Again, the demons showed that they knew His true identity.

**4:42** *“Now when it was day.”* Jesus may have been healing people throughout the night. *“He departed and went into a deserted place.”* This was no doubt to gain strength from prayer and fellowship with the Father (Mark 1:35).

**4:43** *“I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also.”* Jesus’ mission was not to become popular in only one place. He came for all mankind. No one people or place can claim ownership of Jesus. He belongs to all who will receive Him by faith. The “kingdom” referred to here is Jesus’ reign over Israel from the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:12–13) and ultimately over all the kingdoms of Earth (Psalm 2:1–12; 110:1–7; Rev. 19:11–16).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 5**

Jesus calls His disciples; heals a leper and a paralytic; calls Matthew; is questioned about fasting.

### **Four Fishermen Called to Be Disciples** Luke 5:1–11 (Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20)

**5:1** *“As the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God.”* Unlike the religious leaders in Jerusalem, these people, who were poor, loved to hear Jesus teach. *“The Lake of Gennesaret.”* This lake is commonly known as the Sea of Galilee.

**5:3** *“Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s.”* Jesus used this setting both to teach the people and to call His first four disciples.

**5:4–5** *“Let down your nets for a catch.”* This was a test of Simon Peter’s faith. He and the others had fished all night with no catch. *“Master ... at Your word I will let down the net.”* Peter responds with faith to the word of Jesus. This is the only way to please God (Psalm 33:9; John 21:3–6; Heb. 11:6).

## LUKE 5:6–27

**5:6** *“They caught a great number of fish.”* The Lord was teaching them that success, whether in fishing or in evangelism, demanded obedience to His Word and guidance.

**5:8** *“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”* The power and authority of Jesus convinces Peter of His deity and convicts him of his own sinfulness. God’s Word will always have the same effect on those who respond in humility and faith (2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 4:12–13).

**5:10** *“Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”* Sinners who come to Christ in faith have no need to fear His judgment. God uses sinful men to reach other sinful men (Matt. 4:19). It is not our sinfulness—but lack of faith—that will hinder our ministry (see v. 24).

**5:11** *“They forsook all and followed Him.”* Following Christ is the priority of the disciple. Later, Jesus would clearly define the demands of discipleship (Luke 9:23–26; 14:33).

### Jesus Displays His Power to Heal

Luke 5:12–26 (Matt. 8:1–17, 8:28–9:8; Mark 1:40–2:12)

**5:12–13** *“Lord, if You are willing ... I am willing; be cleansed.”* Leprosy was a picture of the effects of sin. Lepers were considered unclean, and whoever touched one was ceremonially unclean. But Jesus, the Creator, touched him and healed him. This shows both the power, but also the compassion of the Lord. He who can cleanse leprosy can also wash away our sins. *“Show yourself to the priest.”* Jesus was obedient to the Law (Lev. 13:1–3; see also Leviticus 14), but also commanded this *“as a testimony to them.”* The religious leaders had no excuse for rejecting Jesus Christ.

**5:16** *“He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.”* The Gospels clearly present Jesus’ prayer life as the secret to His power (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; 9:10, 18).

**5:17** *“Pharisees.”* They numbered about 6,000 in Israel and sought to follow the Law diligently, but too often elevated past rabbinical tradition over Moses (Matt. 15:3–9; Mark 7:6–13). The *“teachers of the law.”* Also known as scribes, these were considered to be experts in the Law of Moses and were often called lawyers. The true scribe is pictured by Ezra (Ezra 7:10).

**5:20** *“Man, your sins are forgiven you.”* Jesus proclaimed this man forgiven based on faith alone! There was nothing this man or his friends could do to help him. In the same way, salvation is always by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8).

**5:21** *“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”* The Pharisees were correct in saying this. The problem was that, since Jesus proved His power to forgive sin by healing the man, they should have concluded He was God in the flesh. Instead, they charged Him with speaking *“blasphemies,”* which was to dishonor God (Matt. 9:3; Mark 2:6–7; Luke 22:70–71; John 10:33) and carried a penalty of death (see Lev. 24:10–23).

**5:23–24** *“Which is easier.”* Only God can forgive sin, and only God could heal by His command. Jesus wants these leaders to understand His true identity and power as the Son of God (see Luke 7:14). The term *“Son of Man”* is an Old Testament title for the Messiah, who had to be both God and man (Dan. 7:13–14; Luke 21:27; 22:69).

### The Call of Matthew/Levi to Discipleship

Luke 5:27–32 (Matt. 9:9–13; Mark 2:13–17)

**5:27** *“A tax collector named Levi.”* Levi is the disciple, Matthew. Tax collectors were despised as collaborators with Rome and were usually lumped together with publicans and sinners (vv. 29–30). *“Follow Me.”* This was, and still is, Jesus’ typical call to discipleship.

**5:29 “Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house.”** The Gospel of Luke records many feasts that Jesus attended (Luke 7:36–50; 9:10–17; 10:38–42; 11:37–54; 14:1–24; 22:14–38; 24:28–32, 41–43). Luke shows us the joy of the Lord in gathering with believers around the table. The first event in His future kingdom will be the wedding feast (Matt. 26:29).

**5:30 “Why do You eat and drink ... with sinners?”** By the man-made rules of the Pharisees, if you ate with sinners, you became defiled. The Pharisees did not recognize their own sinfulness. Jesus came “*to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Luke 19:10; see also Luke 15:1–10).

**5:31–32 “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”** Jesus could only reach and forgive those who confessed that they were sinners. Since the Pharisees thought they were pure, He could not reach them with the Gospel (1 Tim. 1:15).

### Jesus Questioned About Fasting

Luke 5:33–39 (Matt. 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–22)

**5:33 “Why do the disciples of John fast ... likewise ... the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?”** The Pharisees usually fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12). By contrast, to them it seemed that Jesus and the disciples were always feasting (see note above in Luke 5:29). Because Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Jewish feasts (see Leviticus 23), it was only right for them to feast in His presence. In another passage, Jesus shows the evil of the Pharisees, who hated John because he fasted and hated Jesus because He feasted (Luke 7:31–35).

**5:34–35 “Can ... the friends of the bridegroom fast?”** Here, Jesus used a figure which was first introduced by John the Baptist. It pictures the Old Testament saints (before the Church Age) as the friends who accompany the bridegroom to the wedding (John 3:29). The time of the wedding was a joyous occasion—not a time to be fasting. Since Jesus—the Bridegroom—had come, it was only right that they celebrate. The prophets pictured the Messianic Age as a wedding (Isa. 54:5–6; 62:4–5; Jer. 2:2; Ezekiel 16; Hos. 2:14–23).

**5:36–39 “No one puts new wine into old wineskins.”** Jesus used the figure of repairing an old garment and using old wineskins to show that the Old Covenant was giving way to the New Covenant, but these Pharisees were unable to enter into the new because of their unbelief (Jer. 31:31–34; 2 Cor. 3:4–18; Heb. 8:1–13). **“Both are preserved.”** The coming of the New Covenant was not designed to destroy what had gone before, but to fulfill it in its true purpose—to point men to Christ (Rom. 3:27–31; Gal. 3:19–26).

## LUKE CHAPTER 6

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath; He chooses the twelve; healing the multitude; the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount.

### Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

Luke 6:1–11 (Matt. 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–3:6)

**6:1 “On the second Sabbath.”** The Sabbaths were numbered from the first Sabbath on Passover, so this would be the second Sabbath after Passover. Jesus chose the Sabbath day for many of His miracles to provoke the religious leaders’ opposition.

**6:2 “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?”** These Pharisees considered the disciples’ actions to be equal to harvesting, based on the many regulations given by the rabbis for the Sabbath that were not a part of Moses’ Law. The disciples were actually taking advantage of a provision in the Law for the poor (Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 23:24–25). Jesus declared in another passage that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

## LUKE 6:3–22

**6:3–5 “What David did.”** Jesus uses the story found in 1 Samuel 21:1–6. Jesus declares that David was blameless in doing this, and God did not punish him for it. His main point is that their need was more important than rules and regulations. **“The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”** Jesus claims to be the Author of the Sabbath; His second claim is to be equal to God (Luke 5:21–24; see Matt. 12:8).

**6:6 “On another Sabbath.”** Luke especially focuses on Jesus’ good deeds on the Sabbath, in contrast to the legalistic attitude of the religious leaders.

**6:9 “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?”** Jesus declares that doing good on the Sabbath cannot be condemned, and that to be able to do good and not to do it, is to do evil (see Matt. 12:11; Luke 13:16; James 4:17).

**6:11 “But they were filled with rage.”** The response of the Pharisees is based on Jesus’ blatant violation of their self-assumed authority and petty rules and regulations. We see the same attitudes in many churches today.

### Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles

Luke 6:12–16 (Matt. 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19)

**6:12 “He went out to the mountain to pray.”** Again, private prayer and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, were the secrets to Jesus’ power and victory (Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 9:18; 11:1; 18:1; 22:41–42).

**6:13–16 “He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.”** The word “apostle” is an ancient word, used of one who is “sent forth with authority.” It was originally used of ambassadors and Greek naval commanders. Here, are some highlights on the apostles:

1. They were chosen from among His disciples. A “disciple” is both a learner and a follower. These men had already proven their dedication to Jesus.
2. His disciples were chosen from among common, working men (Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:2–10; John 1:35–51).
3. Jesus chose them to be near Him in all He did (Mark 3:14), and that He might send them out with power (Matt. 10:1–5; Mark 3:15).
4. As apostles, they were to represent Jesus to the world—ambassadors of the kingdom of Heaven (2 Cor. 5:19–21; Phil. 3:20).
5. They were from different walks of life. Matthew was a tax collector and Simon (not Peter) was a zealot (Luke 6:15). Only the love of Christ could hold these men together.

### The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount

Luke 6:17–49 (Matthew 5–7)

**6:17–19 “A great multitude ... the whole multitude sought to touch Him.”** This was the greatest crowd Jesus had drawn. From the south and from the north, people came **“to hear Him”** and **“the whole multitude sought to touch Him.”** It was at this critical point that Jesus gave what is called “the Sermon on the Mount.” There are differences between Matthew’s and Luke’s versions, which suggest that Jesus may have given this message more than once.

**6:20 “Blessed are you poor.”** In Matthew 5:3, we read *“poor in spirit.”* The word *“poor”* used here speaks of one who is totally impoverished. They have nothing to offer. He is saying that those who come to Him with no good works to commend them, who can only receive His grace by faith, are the ones who are truly blessed. The word *“blessed”* speaks of those who share the happiness of God.

**6:20–22 “Blessed are you poor ... who hunger ... who weep ... when men hate you.”** Jesus’ message here is revolutionary. He is explaining what He means when He says, *“The last shall be first, and the first shall be*

*last*” (Matt. 19:30). He is showing the contrast between those who seek the comfort of this world and those who seek commitment to Him by faith.

**6:22 “For the Son of Man’s sake.”** This means that people are not blessed just because they are poor, or hungry, or weeping. But that these afflictions have brought them to Jesus Christ in humble faith. Most people come to Christ in faith because of sufferings (Rom. 8:18; Acts 14:22; 2 Cor. 4:17).

**6:23 “Indeed your reward is great in heaven.”** There is only one way to lay up treasure in Heaven (Matt. 6:19–20) and that is to live by faith (see James 1:2, 12; 1 Pet. 1:3–5).

**6:24–26 “But woe to you who are rich ... who are full ... who laugh now.”** Jesus is not saying these things are evil, but that those who have them without faith are cursed. Remember the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–27). All that is in this world is passing away (1 John 2:15–17). To be rich without faith is to have eternal poverty! The word “*woe*” was only used by Jesus for those who rejected Him (Matt. 23:13–29).

**6:27–28 “Love your enemies ... bless those who curse you.”** This conduct is a reflection of the life that Christ lived. Jesus and Paul both declared that the love of God was the essence of the spiritual life (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10). This is a love that only the Holy Spirit can produce in us (1 Cor. 13:4–8; Gal. 5:22–23).

**6:29–30 “Offer the other [cheek] also.”** This verse has been misinterpreted to declare that Christianity is equal to pacifism. Jesus was not a pacifist! He is declaring the need to be patient, enduring, and non-retaliatory to those who persecute us (Deut. 15:7–8; Prov. 3:27; 1 Cor. 6:7).

**6:31 “As you want men to do to you.”** This is often called the “golden rule.” This is an active and positive expression of the command to love our neighbor (Lev. 19:18).

**6:32–34 “What credit is that to you?”** The love of Christ that we are to be moved by (2 Cor. 5:14) is totally contrary to natural human love, which is selfish and self-serving.

**6:35 “You will be sons of the Most High.”** In ancient Israel, to be a “son of” someone meant that you reflected their character and conduct. Jesus is not saying that we are saved by acting in this way, but rather that those who are saved should act in this way.

**6:36–37 “Be merciful, just as your Father.”** Again, this conduct reflects the character of God Himself. “*Judge not ... forgive.*” The practical expression of mercy is to forgive others and not to judge them (Matt. 6:14–15; 7:1–5).

**6:38 “With the same measure you use.”** God will deal with us as we deal with others. Those who are gracious and merciful will receive the same treatment by God (James 2:8–13).

**6:39 “Can the blind lead the blind?”** Just as a blind man cannot lead another blind man, so those who are spiritually blind, like the leaders in Israel, cannot lead others to spiritual truth. Since He uses this to introduce instructions to the disciples, He was warning them against both arrogance and ignorance of His Word.

**6:40 “Perfectly trained.”** This does not refer to sinlessness, but rather to a mature understanding of God’s Word. We cannot lead others beyond what we know and do (Ezra 7:10).

**6:41–44 “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye?”** In these verses, Jesus is warning the disciples against destructive attitudes and actions that can destroy one’s spiritual life and ministry:

## LUKE 6:46–7:10

1. In vv. 41–42, He warns against ignoring our own faults while we magnify those of others. ***“Let me remove the speck that is in your eye.”*** We can never help others with the faults in their lives if we are blind to our own (Matt. 7:3–5).
2. In vv. 43–44, He declares that one’s conduct is a true indicator of the condition of the heart. ***“Every tree is known by its own fruit”*** (Matt. 7:15–20; James 3:12).
3. In v. 45, He ends by saying ***“Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”*** This warning about the tongue is often found in Scripture (Matt. 12:33–37; Rom. 3:13–14; James 3:1–12).

**6:46–49** ***“Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever ... hears My sayings and does them.”*** To call God “Father,” or to call Jesus “Lord,” demands that we obey them (Mal. 1:6; John 14:21). Many call Jesus “Lord,” but they do not really believe in Him (Matt. 7:21–23). Those who have faith in Jesus’ Word and act on it can withstand any storm or trial in life. ***“He who heard and did nothing.”*** ***“Without faith it is impossible to please God”*** (Heb. 11:6). The whole book of James is dedicated to teaching us to be ***“doers of the word, and not hearers only”*** (James 1:22–25). ***“And the ruin of that house was great.”*** With these words, Jesus anticipates the fall of the house of Israel due to their unbelief (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35; 19:41–44).

## LUKE CHAPTER 7

Jesus heals; raises the dead; responds to John’s question; forgives a sinful woman.

### **A Soldier’s Faith Rewarded and a Mother’s Grief Removed**

Luke 7:1–17 (Matt. 8:5–13)

**7:2** ***“A certain centurion’s servant.”*** The Roman army was essentially run by centurions. The historian, Polybius, said of them, ***“They must be steady in action ... ready to hold their ground and die at their posts.”*** Every time they are spoken of in the New Testament, they are spoken well of (Luke 23:47; Acts 10:22; 22:26; 23:17–24; 24:23; 27:43). ***“Who was dear to him.”*** The first unique thing about this soldier is that he loved his Jewish servant.

**7:5** ***“He loves our nation.”*** This centurion may have been a proselyte or may have simply come to believe in the God of Israel. This is the second unique fact about this man.

**7:6** ***“Lord ... I am not worthy.”*** The third thing about this soldier is that he was humble. The Jewish leaders said he was worthy; he said that he was not. Humility is the key to coming to faith in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 5:5–6).

**7:7** ***“But say the word.”*** The fourth quality of this man is his great faith. He knows that Jesus can simply speak, and the servant will be healed (Psalm 33:9; 107:20).

**7:8** ***“For I also am a man placed under authority.”*** The fifth thing is his understanding of authority. He knows that he is under the authority of Rome, and he exercises that authority over his soldiers. Jesus was under the authority of God the Father. Therefore, He could speak with the authority of Heaven, and it would be done.

**7:9** ***“When Jesus heard these things He marveled.”*** Jesus only marveled twice: here at the faith of this centurion (Matt. 8:10), and in Mark 6:6 at the unbelief of His own people. ***“I have not found such great faith.”*** Though the Jewish nation was to be a light to the Gentiles, here is a Gentile who shows more light and faith than the entire nation. At this time, not even the disciples had faith like this man.

**7:10** ***“And those who were sent ... found the servant well.”*** Remember that Luke was a physician (Col. 4:14). The word ***“well”*** here is a medical term for one in good health.

**7:12 “A dead man ... the only son of his mother.”** It is interesting that Nain was near to Shunem, where Elijah raised the widow’s son (2 Kings 4:18–37).

**7:13 “He had compassion on her.”** Jesus, who came to take away the curse of sin, always had compassion on those suffering from sin’s effects (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 8:2). **“Do not weep.”** His mission to Earth was not only to bring salvation, but also *“to heal the brokenhearted ... to console [comfort] those who mourn ... to give them beauty for ashes ... the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”* (Isa. 61:1–3).

**7:14–15 “Young man ... arise ... he who was dead sat up.”** Jesus is recorded as raising three people from the dead (Mark 5:41; John 11:44). However, there were probably many more (see John 21:25; Matt. 27:52–53).

### Jesus Responds to the Messengers of John

Luke 7:18–35 (Matt. 11:1–19)

**7:19 “Are You the Coming One?”** John, now in prison (Luke 3:19–20), had declared that the Messiah would purge the nation and judge wickedness (Matt. 3:11–12). When this did not happen, John began to doubt. Like the rest of the nation, John did not know about Christ’s two advents—the first, to save, and the second, to judge (Rev. 19:7–21).

**7:21–23 “And that very hour He cured many.”** Jesus answered John’s question by mighty deeds of healing. John knew the Scriptures, and these works certified that Jesus was the promised Messiah/Savior (Isa. 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 61:1–3).

**7:24 “What did you go out ... to see?”** Jesus emphasizes the unique character and mission of John by first showing what he was not. He was not just a passing spectacle. Sometimes in the desert, the wind will blow and cause a reed to shake and make a sound like a voice. John also was not one who lived a life of comfort, but rather lived a harsh life in the desert. He was **“more than a prophet.”** No other prophet in all of history had a mission as important and unique as John’s.

**7:27 “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face.”** Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1 to identify John as His forerunner (see also Isa. 40:1–8). This was also a clear declaration to the crowd that He was Himself the true Messiah.

**7:28 “He who is least in the kingdom of God.”** John was great (Luke 1:15), but he was the prophet of the end of an age, and Jesus was the beginning of another. Those who believe in Jesus Christ in the Church Age are placed in Christ and seated with Him in Heaven spiritually (Eph. 1:1–14; Col. 3:1–4). Believers of this age will judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

**7:29 “Even the tax collectors justified God.”** The word *“justified”* means that they declared Him to be right, just, and fair. They had repented (Luke 3:3) and been baptized by John (Luke 3:12), but the Pharisees and lawyers (scribes) had rejected John’s message.

**7:31–34 “The men of this generation ... are like children.”** The children in the marketplace would play games. If one said, “let’s play wedding feast, and I will play the flute,” but the other children will not dance. Then they say, “Then let’s play funeral, and you can mourn,” but the other children will not play along. In the same way, when John came in fasting and hardship (like mourning), the Pharisees said, **“he has a demon.”** Then Jesus came eating and drinking (like a celebration), and they called Him a glutton and drunkard. The religious leaders rejected the truth, no matter who the messenger was.

**7:35 “Wisdom is justified by all her children.”** Jesus declares that those who respond to the truth with faith, whether they mourn or rejoice, show true wisdom. They are children of wisdom, and their faith proves that it is true.

### A Sinful Woman Forgiven

Luke 7:36–50

**7:37** *“A woman ... who was a sinner.”* We know from John 11:2 that this was Mary. *“Brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil.”* Both the flask and the oil were very expensive, showing the love of this woman for the Lord. At times, when a prominent guest was asked to dine, it was customary for many people to enter and sit around the outside of the room or courtyard to listen to the conversation.

**7:38** *“She began to wash His feet ... and wiped them with the hair of her head.”* In Israel, it was considered shameful for a grown woman to appear in public with her hair down. Paul tells us that a woman’s hair is her *“glory”* (1 Cor. 11:15). This woman was showing her repentance, her shame and humiliation, and her love for Jesus—all at the same time.

**7:39** *“This Man, if He were a prophet, would know ... for she is a sinner.”* In the mind of Simon, the fact that Jesus let the woman touch Him proved that He was not a prophet (see Luke 15:2). Jesus surprises Simon by answering his thoughts!

**7:41** *“Five hundred denarii.”* A denarius was one day’s wage. Jesus is comparing sin to a debt that we could never pay.

**7:42** *“He freely forgave them both.”* In the analogy here, it is like God forgiving men, whose sins differ in amount and degree, but all who receive Christ are forgiven alike.

**7:43** *“I suppose the one whom he forgave more.”* The Pharisee answers correctly and, therefore, condemns himself for his self-righteous attitude. *“You have rightly judged.”* Many people who can see the truth in practical daily terms still cannot understand or accept it when it comes in spiritual terms.

**7:44–46** *“You gave Me no water ... you gave Me no kiss ... You did not anoint My head.”* During Jesus’ day, these three practices were the common way to greet a guest. Simon had rudely neglected to do these, possibly as a way of showing his contempt for Jesus.

**7:47** *“Her sins, which are many, are forgiven.”* Jesus now applies His own parable to the situation. Because her sins are many, her debt was a great one, but Jesus forgave it all. And because of this, her love was great. Remember that the Pharisees attacked Jesus for forgiving sins (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21).

**7:48–50** *“Your sins are forgiven ... Your faith has saved you.”* When Jesus forgives the sins of those who believe in Him, He forgives them all (Psalm 103:3–4; Rom. 4:6–8). The woman was eternally saved by her simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Go in peace.”* If we seek salvation by works, we will never know peace, and we will never be forgiven. Only complete trust in Jesus’ work on the cross and His power to save, can bring peace to our troubled souls (John 14:27; Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8–9; Phil. 4:7; 2 Pet. 1:2).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 8**

Jesus’ supporters; parables and miracles; Jesus’ true family—His disciples.

### A Band of Faithful Women

Luke 8:1–3

**8:1** *“He went through every city and village.”* This extended tour continued His mission announced in Luke 4:43. Everywhere, He was *“bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.”* Jesus had begun by teaching in the synagogues (Luke 4:16, 20, 28, 33, 38; 6:6), but now, due to the opposition of the religious leaders, the

synagogues were closed to Him. The “*glad tidings*” indicate that entrance into His kingdom is always by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8; James 2:5).

**8:2–3** “*Certain women ... and many others who provided for Him.*” This band of women were faithful to travel with Him and support Him from their means. “*Mary*” from the village of Magdala, had been delivered from demon possession. “*Joanna*” as the wife of Herod’s steward, was undoubtedly wealthy. We do not know anything more about “*Susanna*.” What an encouragement this little band must have been to Jesus.

### Jesus Teaches in Parables

Luke 8:4–18 (Matt. 13:1–23; Mark 4:1–25)

**8:4–8** “*A sower went out to sow.*” Parables were a way of teaching people spiritual truths using common daily observations. To this large crowd (v. 1), Jesus declares that there are four common responses to His Word. Like the sower, whose seed is falling on various types of soil (souls): some are hardened, some are shallow, and some are entangled in this world. These hearers do not bring forth fruit. But the good soil is the goal of the sower, for it brings forth fruit to various degrees. It is fruit that the sower is seeking (see notes on Mark 4:1–9).

**8:9–10** “*To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.*” Jesus introduces the idea of “mystery” doctrines, that is, truths that had not been revealed before, but now were made known (Eph. 3:1–6). These new doctrines would primarily relate to the coming Church Age (Rom. 16:25–27; Eph. 1:7–10). These truths were for the disciples to learn, but not for those whose hearts were hardened. Like those who assumed they were righteous and, therefore, did not need to repent (Matt. 9:13; Mark 1:4), those who claimed to see spiritually, in reality, could not comprehend their meaning (John 9:40–41).

**8:11–15** “*Now the parable is this.*” Jesus explains the parable’s meaning to the disciples. Those who hear with hardened hearts make it easy for the devil to snatch away what they heard, Jesus says, “*lest they should believe and be saved.*” This is the only one of the four soils that He indicates fully rejects God’s Word. Those representing the shallow soil “*receive the word with joy.*” They have believed the Gospel but fall away in time of temptation (John 6:60–66). The thorny ground does not “*bring ... fruit to maturity.*” This suggests that there is fruit, but that it is choked out by the “*pleasures of life.*” Finally, the good soil represents those who do three things: First, they “*heard the word with a noble and good heart,*” Next, they “*keep it*” (guard it), and finally “*bear fruit with patience.*” This fruitfulness should be the goal of every believer in Christ.

**8:16–18** “*No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it.*” God’s Word is spiritual light, and believers are like lamps. The light of truth should shine from us out to the world (Matt. 5:14, 16; John 3:21; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7). Because of the light of God’s Word, everything hidden in the darkness will be revealed. Therefore, every believer must “*take heed how you hear.*” We are to be “*doers of the word, and not hearers only*” (James 1:22). If by humility and faith we gain insight from God’s Word, “*more will be given.*” But if we fall away from/reject what we hear from God’s Word, it will be “*taken from [us],*” and we will lose precious spiritual treasure and the opportunity to use it for God’s kingdom (see 2 Pet. 2:21).

### Faithful Disciples Are Jesus’ True Family

Luke 8:19–21 (Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35)

**8:19–21** “*My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.*” Jesus’ half-brothers did not yet believe in Him (John 7:1–10). These words are a rebuke to them for their unbelief. Jesus often taught that faith and obedience to His Word brings us into a deeper and more intimate relationship with Him (John 14:15, 21–23; 15:1–11).

**Jesus Displays His Authority over Nature**  
Luke 8:22–25 (Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41)

**8:22–25** *“Let us cross over to the other side.”* This declared intention was just as much the Word of God as anything Jesus said. His intention was to go to the other side. In the storm, the disciples doubted His ability to fulfill His word. Jesus, no doubt exhausted by His labors in ministry, is asleep. *“Master, we are perishing”* is the expression of their fear, doubt, and unbelief. *“He arose and rebuked the wind.”* Jesus does what only God can do (Luke 5:20–21; 6:5; 7:11–15, 48–50). *“Where is your faith?”* They failed to trust in Him who is the focus of all true faith. Fear and faith cannot co-exist in the human soul. One or the other will dominate and prevail.

**Jesus Delivers a Demon-Possessed Man**  
Luke 8:26–39 (Matt. 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20)

**8:26–27** *“There met Him a certain man ... who had demons.”* See the story in Matthew 8:28–34 and Mark 5:1–17. In Matthew, two demon-possessed men are mentioned. Mark and Luke focus on the one who believed.

**8:28** *“Jesus, Son of the Most High God.”* In v. 25, the disciples asked, *“Who can this be?”* Here, the true answer is given. The demon-possessed man in Luke 4:34 also identified Him. See also the angel’s announcement in Luke 1:31–32. *“I beg You, do not torment me!”* These demons knew their ultimate punishment (Matt. 25:41).

**8:29** *“He ... was driven by the demon into the wilderness.”* Compare this with Mark 5:1–17. Demon-possessed people often display super-human strength, have violent tendencies, and self-destructive ways. They display a deep anguish and desire for death.

**8:30** *“What is your name ... Legion.”* A Roman legion was 6,000 soldiers. This poor man was possessed by an army of demons.

**8:31** *“Into the abyss.”* This is where the angels of the Genesis 6 revolt are held. In 2 Pet. 2:4, the word *“hell”* is *Tartarus*—which is the same as *“the abyss.”* Here, Satan will be bound for the one-thousand-year (Millennial) kingdom reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1–3).

**8:33** *“The swine ... ran violently ... into the lake.”* It appears that demons can possess animals, but that possession also drives the animals crazy.

**8:34–38** *“When those who fed them saw ... they fled.”* The reactions to Jesus’ deliverance of this man are amazing. The swine-herders fled and reported the matter. The people of the city go out to see what happened. They are terrified when they see the demon-possessed man *“sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.”* They then beg Jesus *“to depart from them.”* They are more at home with demon-possessed men than with Jesus! Yet the restored man *“begged Him that he might be with Him.”* Jesus, however, sent him to be a witness to his own home and the surrounding region.

**8:39** *“[Tell] what great things God [has] done for you.”* This is the essence of Christian witness. When we tell what Jesus Christ has done for us, we are giving glory to God the Father for His mercy upon us.

**Healing Jairus' Daughter; Restores a Suffering Woman**

Luke 8:40–56 (Matt. 9:18–26; Mark 5:21–43)

**8:41** *“A man named Jairus ... a ruler of the synagogue.”* This man was the chief elder of the synagogue. He would conduct the service, much like a pastor will do today. His daughter was dying, thus *“he ... begged Him to come”* as the matter was urgent.

**8:43** *“A flow of blood ... could not be healed by any.”* Luke, the physician (Col. 4:14), takes special note of the doctor's inability to heal this woman.

**8:44** *“Touched the border of His garment.”* Consider the many ways people come to Jesus. Some come directly, others indirectly. All who draw near to Him in faith receive healing, salvation (Luke 7:48–50), or both. We should not question how people express their faith, as long as their faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**8:46** *“I perceived power going out from Me.”* Ministry to the needs of people is demanding; it requires the power of the Holy Spirit. All who truly minister know what Jesus is saying here. The true minister will often know the joy of seeing people strengthened and uplifted, while at the same time he is left depleted.

**8:48** *“Your faith has made you well.”* The original Greek says, “Your faith has saved you.” Not only was her body healed, but her soul was also delivered for eternity.

**8:49** *“Your daughter is dead.”* How troubling this must have been to Jairus, who was trying to get Jesus to her in time. Yet it was all designed as a test of his faith.

**8:50** *“Do not be afraid; only believe.”* Jesus immediately comforts Jairus. The only cure for fear is faith (Psalm 56:3).

**8:51** *“He permitted ... Peter, James, and John.”* These three were being prepared by Jesus to be leaders among the twelve (Matt. 17:1; 26:37).

**8:52** *“She is not dead, but sleeping.”* Jesus' resurrection power turns death into sleep, from which she will awaken. Those who believe in Jesus Christ do not die; the body sleeps, while the spirit goes to God (John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:51; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; 1 Thess. 4:13–15).

**8:54–55** *“Little girl, arise ... then her spirit returned.”* Jesus, by a quiet command, reverses death and restores life. This is what He does every time someone believes in Him. We have *“passed from death into life”* (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14).

**LUKE CHAPTER 9**

Sending out the twelve; feeding five thousand; Peter's confession; Jesus twice predicts His death; Jesus transfigured; the demands of discipleship.

**Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

Luke 9:1–9 (Matt. 10:5–15; 14:1–12; Mark 6:14–29)

**9:1** *“He called His twelve ... and gave them power and authority.”* Paul tells us we are in a spiritual war (2 Cor. 10:4–6; Eph. 6:10–18). Yet we do not ignore the physical needs of people.

**9:2** *“He sent them to preach the kingdom of God ... and to heal.”* The message was not about the death, burial, and resurrection at this time (1 Cor. 15:3–4), as those events were yet future. Now, in the Church Age,

## LUKE 9:3–20

the promise of the coming King and His kingdom are offered to those who believe. Though, unlike them, we may not have the ability to heal, we can feed, clothe, and provide medical care for those in need.

**9:3** *“Take nothing for the journey.”* Jesus wants them to travel light and fast. He is also teaching them to rely on the Father to provide. Later, He will give different instructions (Luke 22:35–36).

**9:5** *“Shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”* It was customary at this time for a rabbi, on returning from Gentile lands, to shake the defilement of those places from his feet. Jesus takes this custom and gives it spiritual meaning. Those who reject Jesus’ messengers and message have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46).

**9:7–8** *“Now Herod ... heard of all that was done by Him.”* This shows both the growing fame of Jesus, and also the effectiveness of the ministry of the twelve. Many assumed that *“John ... Elijah ... [or] one of the old prophets”* (Mal. 4:5–6) had returned. These opinions were all the result of rejection of the clear claims of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:13–16).

**9:9** *“And Herod ... sought to see Him.”* Like so many, Herod was only seeking to witness some sign or miracle (Luke 23:8). He had no spiritual interest in knowing who Jesus really was.

### The Disciples Return; Feeding Five Thousand

Luke 9:10–17 (Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; John 6:1–14)

**9:10** *“The apostles ... returned ... He took them ... privately into a deserted place.”* Jesus’ intention was for them to rest from their labors and to further instruct them (Mark 6:31).

**9:11** *“But ... the multitudes ... followed Him, and He received them.”* Most of us would resent this intrusion on such valuable private time. The Lord Jesus always put the needs of men first. *“[He] spoke to them about the kingdom of God.”* This assurance that the promises of the Old Testament were true and firm was a great comfort to the people. *“And healed.”* Jesus exemplified what He had commanded the apostles to do (v. 2).

**9:13** *“You give them something to eat.”* This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels (Matt. 14:16; Mark 6:37; John 6:5). It shows Jesus teaching the apostles that if we dedicate what little we have to the service of the Lord, He is able to multiply it—not only to meet their needs, but also to have “leftovers” for the future. *“Five loaves and two fish.”* These were donated by a little boy (John 6:9).

**9:14** *“Make them sit down in groups of fifty.”* Jesus organizes the disciples to make an orderly division of the people. Our God is not a God of confusion, but of order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40).

**9:16** *“He blessed and broke them.”* The Jews believed that to receive good things without thanking God was to rob Him of the praise and glory due to Him (1 Thess. 5:18). Since this great feeding occurred in light of Herod’s murder of John the Baptist, it reminds us of Psalm 23:1, 5, *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want ... You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”*

**9:17** *“They all ... were filled ... twelve baskets of the leftover fragments.”* God’s grace is always sufficient, and above and beyond what we expect (2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:19).

### Peter’s Confession; Jesus’ Prediction of His Death

Luke 9:18–22 (Matt. 16:13–23; Mark 8:27–33)

**9:18–20** *“Who do the crowds say that I am?”* Luke has already recorded the various rumors among the people (vv. 7–8). *“Who do you say that I am?”* Everyone must choose what they will believe about Jesus (2 Tim. 1:12). We will each be judged by how we answer this question. *“The Christ of God.”* This means the Messiah/Savior

who was promised throughout the Old Testament. This is the only correct answer, and to believe this truth alone is the basis of our eternal salvation. Peter's correct answer prompts Jesus to remind them what this means.

**9:22** *"The Son of Man must suffer ... be rejected ... and be killed, and be raised."* If they believed Him to be the Christ, they must know that what was foretold must come to pass (Psalm 22:1; Isa. 52:13–53:12; Zech. 13:6).

### **The Demands of Discipleship**

Luke 9:23–27 (Matt. 16:24–28; Mark 8:34–38)

**9:23** *"If anyone desires to come after Me."* This is a personal decision that each individual must make. *"Let him deny himself ... take up his cross daily ... follow Me."* These three demands are the key ingredients of discipleship:

1. We must surrender all claim on our own life (Gal. 2:20).
2. We must accept the plan of God for our lives, just as Jesus surrendered His will to the Father (Matt. 26:36–42).
3. We must follow Jesus Christ as we walk by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Eph. 4:1; Col. 2:6; Heb. 10:38).

**Note:** This is the first mention of the cross in Luke. When Jesus was about eleven, a Galilean named Judas led a revolt against Rome just four miles from Nazareth. The Romans captured 2,000 of the rebels and crucified them along the road—a sight that the boy-Jesus no doubt saw. His whole life was aimed at the cross—the Father's plan for Him.

**9:24–26** *"Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."* We can choose to live life for our own desires and lose all eternal reward. Or we can surrender our lives for His service and find rich reward in eternity (John 12:25). Nothing we could gain in this life is worth what we can *"lay up"* as *"treasures in Heaven"* (Matt. 6:19–21). Unfaithful believers who are ashamed to claim Christ in this life, will be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28; see 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:11–13).

### **The Transfiguration of Jesus**

Luke 9:27–36 (Matt. 17:1–9; Mark 9:1–10; 2 Pet. 1:16–18)

**9:27** *"Some standing here ... shall ... see the kingdom of God."* This saying not only anticipates the Transfiguration, but also the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

**9:28** *"Peter, John, and James."* Jesus had trained these three men for leadership roles. They were with Him at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:51), here at the Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37).

**9:30** *"Two men talked with Him ... Moses and Elijah."* These two were prophesied to appear before Messiah's coming to Israel (Mal. 4:4–5). Moses and Elijah represent *"the law and the prophets"* (Matt. 22:40; Luke 24:27, 44). They both illustrate what Jesus meant in v. 24, for they both gave their lives to God's service, and they will be great in His coming kingdom.

**9:31** *"His decease ... at Jerusalem."* The Greek uses the word *Exodus* for *"decease."*

**9:33** *"Master ... let us make three tabernacles."* Peter, *"not knowing what he said,"* puts Jesus on an equal standing with Moses and Elijah. The Father will now intervene to set Jesus entirely apart.

## LUKE 9:35–61

**9:35–36** *“This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”* The Father spoke earlier in Luke 3:22. Here, Jesus was set apart, *“Jesus ... alone”* (Deut. 18:15–19; John 1:45; 4:25; Acts 3:22). We are not to elevate any human prophet or teacher to the level of Jesus. He is the *“one Mediator between God and men”* (1 Tim. 2:5; see Job 19:25–27).

### **The Disciples’ Faith Tested by Demonic Possession; Jesus’ Prediction of His Betrayal; the Dispute about Greatness**

Luke 9:37–50 (Matt. 17:14–23; 18:1–5; Mark 9:14–37)

**9:39–40** *“I implored Your disciples ... but they could not.”* Jesus had empowered them to do this (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1). Their failure here was due to lack of faith (v. 41), and failure of daily spiritual disciplines (Matt. 17:21).

**9:41** *“O faithless and perverse generation.”* Our degree of “abiding in Christ” (John 15:1–8) and “walking in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16) will often be tested. Our spiritual failures should be cause for renewed spiritual dedication and discipline (1 Cor. 9:24–27).

**9:43–44** *“They were all amazed at the majesty of God ... the Son of Man ... betrayed into the hands of men.”* Even while the multitudes proclaim Him, Jesus predicts His coming betrayal. That the disciples did not understand (v. 45) was probably due to their hardness of heart, as they were still competing for prominence (v. 46).

**9:46** *“Which of them would be greatest.”* This was a common dispute among the disciples. It is a good thing to desire greatness in the kingdom, but it can only be gained by humility and service (Matt. 18:1–4; Phil. 2:5–11).

**9:48** *“For he who is least ... will be great.”* This explains Jesus’ common saying, *“the last [shall be] first”* (Matt. 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31; Luke 13:30).

**9:49–50** *“He who is not against us is on our side.”* The same attitude that seeks greatness attempts to control the ministry of others (Matt. 27:18). Jesus forbids such efforts to dominate others (Matt. 12:29–30; Luke 11:21–23). As well, we are not to judge the service of other believers (Rom. 14:4).

### **Jesus Determines to Go to Jerusalem; Repeats the Cost of Discipleship**

Luke 9:51–62 (Matt. 8:18–22)

**9:51–53** *“He ... set His face.”* Jesus determines to go to the cross in obedience to the Father’s will (Isa. 50:7). *“The Samaritans ... did not receive Him.”* Samaritans were descendants of Jews who married Gentiles after the Northern Kingdom fell in the days of Isaiah (2 Kings 20). They held to their own form of worship (John 4:19–22).

**9:54** *“James and John ... said.”* They were truly *“Sons of Thunder”* (Mark 3:17). They recalled the act of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:9–16).

**9:56** *“The Son of Man did not come to destroy ... but to save them.”* Jesus rebukes them for being motivated by a spirit contrary to His expressed mission, *“to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10).

**9:57–61** *“Lord, I will follow You ... Follow Me ... let me first go.”* In these verses, we see three examples of those who desired to follow Jesus but were unwilling to count the cost of discipleship. The first was unwilling to give up the comforts of home; the second wanted to wait until his father was buried; and the third wanted to say goodbye to family. While Elisha did first return home, it was only to sacrifice all that belonged to him (1 Kings 19:20–21). The main point here is that discipleship demands unconditional surrender to the Lord Jesus (Mark 1:16–18; 3:34–35).

**9:62** *“No one ... looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”* Jesus is talking about usefulness in the kingdom—not entrance into the kingdom, which comes only by faith in Him. To be useful, a believer must be persistent and effective. See the contrast of this in the man named Demas (Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:10). This is why Paul urged Timothy to be constant and faithful (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:1–4; 4:1–2).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 10**

The sending of the seventy; parable of the Good Samaritan; Martha and Mary.

### **The Sending and Return of the Seventy**

Luke 10:1–24

**10:1** *“The Lord appointed seventy others also.”* Just as the twelve represented the twelve tribes of Israel, so these seventy represent the nations listed in the roster of nations in Genesis 10 (see Exod. 1:5; Deut. 32:7–8). While the twelve were commanded to only go to *“the lost sheep of the house of Israel”* (Matt. 10:6), no such command is given to the seventy. Many of the cities in this region were Gentile cities.

**10:2** *“The harvest truly is great.”* Jesus predicts a fruitful mission for them. *“Pray the Lord of the harvest.”* Jesus urged the twelve to do the same (Matt. 9:37–38). We are not only to labor in the Lord’s service but to pray for more workers to be raised up. It would seem the *“Lord of the harvest,”* is God the Father (John 14:16, 26; 15:16).

**10:3** *“I send you out as lambs among wolves.”* Along with great harvest opportunities would come fierce persecution (Matt. 5:10–12; 2 Tim. 3:10–12).

**10:4** *“Greet no one along the road.”* The time was short, and the ministry was urgent. They were to go to the crowds in the cities, where many could hear—not delay with one or two along the way (2 Kings 4:29).

**10:7–8** *“Do not go from house to house.”* They were to stay in the first home that welcomed them, and not seek to move to better or richer homes. *“Eat such things as are set before you.”* They were not to be scrupulous about what food was offered.

**10:12–16** *“More tolerable in that Day for Sodom ... Tyre and Sidon.”* Jesus declares that if the mighty works He had done in *“Chorazin ... Bethsaida ... Capernaum”* had been done in many of the ancient cities of the Old Testament, *“they would have repented”* (Matt. 11:21–24). God holds men accountable for the light they have been given. Therefore, those who have greater light have greater responsibility and condemnation if they don’t use it (John 3:19; 2 Pet. 2:21).

**10:16** *“He who hears you hears Me.”* The servant of the Lord goes forth with the word of the Master, just as Jesus represented the Father (John 5:23).

**10:18** *“I saw Satan fall ... from heaven.”* The ministry of the seventy was a preview of the ultimate defeat of Satan and the reversal of his dominion on Earth (John 12:31; Rev. 12:9–10; 20:1–3).

**10:19–20** *“Behold, I give you the authority.”* This authority was unique to the apostles (Mark 16:15–18; Acts 28:3–5; 2 Cor. 12:12). Our authority is in (comes from) His Word, which will defeat all the wiles of the devil (Jer. 23:29; 2 Cor. 10:3–6; Eph. 6:10–11; Heb. 4:16; Rev. 12:11). *“Over all the power of the enemy.”* Absolutely nothing can touch the believer apart from God’s permission. If we are faithful, we cannot die until our mission is complete. *“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”* The names of all believers were written before the foundation of the world (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:8, 17:8).

## LUKE 10:21–37

**10:21** *“You have hidden these things from the wise ... and revealed them to babes.”* Men who are wise in their own understanding stumble over the simplicity of the Gospel (2 Cor. 11:3). Those who are humble understand and receive it through faith (1 Cor. 1:26–31; 2:8–15).

**10:22** *“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father.”* As the Son of God, Jesus has been given all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matt. 28:18; John 3:35; 5:19–23; 17:2).

**10:23–24** *“Many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see.”* Peter tells us that the prophets studied what they wrote, seeking to understand what these disciples were seeing and experiencing (1 Pet. 1:10–12).

### The Lawyer’s Question and the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25–37

**10:25** *“A certain lawyer ... tested Him.”* The lawyer (scribe) was not honest in his question but was hoping to catch Jesus in some error in His answer. *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* This was the same question asked by the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16). In both passages, the question assumes that eternal life is “inherited” by good works. In both cases, Jesus shows that the righteousness required for eternal life is impossible apart from regeneration by faith (Rom. 4:3–8; Gal. 3:6–14; Phil. 3:9 Heb. 11:6).

**10:26–28** *“What is written in the law?”* The lawyer’s summary of the Law of Moses is accurate (Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 13:9–10). *“You have answered rightly; do this and you will live”* (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). Love for God and for others is possible only to believers, since faith works through love (Gal. 5:6, 22). Again, no one is capable of doing this all of the time (James 4:8–12). Only by the forgiveness that comes by the blood of Christ can we be made righteous (Rom. 5:6–11, 17–19; 1 Pet. 1:18–19).

**10:29** *“Wanting to justify himself.”* It seems that the lawyer was somewhat humbled by Jesus’ gracious answer and wanted to truly be justified. *“And who is my neighbor?”* This response indicated that he still limited demonstrating love to only Jews, not Gentiles. Jesus will quickly show that he stands condemned.

**10:30** *“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.”* This was a mountain path that led through a gorge that was often filled with robbers, called *“the valley of the shadow of death”* (Psalm 23:4). *“Fell among thieves who ... wounded him ... leaving him half dead.”* Unless someone had compassion on him and rendered aid, this man would surely die.

**10:31–32** *“A certain priest ... likewise a Levite.”* These men were set apart to minister to the people of Israel, yet they became arrogant and self-serving (Mal. 2:1–9). They show no compassion for the injured man.

**10:33** *“But a certain Samaritan ... had compassion on him.”* To the Jews, especially the religious leaders, Samaritans were even more hated than the Gentiles. Jesus uses this story to show that often those who are most held in contempt are the most humble and faithful. Jesus’ repeated use of the words *“certain”* man suggests that this was a true event.

**10:34–35** *“Went to him ... bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine ... set him on his own animal ... took care of him.”* The many acts of kindness show a genuine concern by the Samaritan for this helpless man. He went far above and beyond what might have been expected. *“When I come again, I will repay you.”* Even after he left, he made provision for the care of the man until he fully recovered. We must see here that, though we do not have the power to heal as Jesus and the apostles did, we do have the power to show the same compassion and care from the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14–15; Phil. 2:1–3).

**10:37** *“Go and do likewise.”* Jesus is not suggesting that the lawyer will be saved by these actions, but rather in the attempt to obey the command, he will be brought to humility and faith (Gal. 3:21–25; James 4:6–10; 1 Pet. 5:5–6).

### Martha Serving and Mary Worshiping

Luke 10:38–42

**10:38** *“A certain village ... a certain woman named Martha.”* Again, as in the “parable” of the good Samaritan, the use of the word “*certain*” always suggests a real person or village and a true story or event (see John 11:1–5).

**10:39** *“Mary ... sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word.”* Every time we see Mary in the gospel story, she is sitting at Jesus’ feet—a posture of submission and learning (Luke 7:38; John 11:1–2; 12:1–3). She alone, of all the disciples, understood that Jesus was going to His cross (John 12:7–8). Jesus said that she had “*kept this for the day of My burial*” (John 12:7). The word “*kept*” in Greek means “to guard something precious.”

**10:40** *“Martha was distracted ... Lord, do You not care?”* When we are not walking and serving in fellowship with the Lord, our service becomes a burden, and we tend to judge others who seem to be doing nothing. Like Martha, we tend to think that the Lord is unconcerned with our labor. The problem is not that Martha was busy serving, but that she was doing it with the wrong motives and priorities.

**10:41** *“Martha, Martha.”* The repetition is designed to get attention and show passion (Luke 6:46; 8:24; 13:34; 22:31). *“You are ... troubled about many things.”* The fact that Martha was not serving in love and fellowship is found in her distraction from the Lord’s teaching, her outburst to Him, and her troubled heart.

**10:42** *“One thing is needful.”* That one needful thing is the Word of the Lord Jesus. *“Mary has chosen that good part.”* If we make the Word of God our priority at all times, we will always be feasting—not on a meal that passes away, but on the “*bread of life*” (Matt. 5:6; John 6:27, 35, 51).

### LUKE CHAPTER 11

Jesus teaches on persistence in prayer; the kingdom of Satan; the importance of obedience; proclaims woe on the scribes and Pharisees.

### Jesus Teaches the Disciples How to Pray

Luke 11:1–13 (Matt. 7:7–11)

**11:1** *“Lord, teach us to pray.”* The disciples were impressed with the prayer life of Jesus (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16).

**11:2–4** *“Our Father in heaven.”* Perhaps the most revolutionary, new teaching of Jesus was His portrayal of God as the heavenly Father of all who believe. The first concern of the prayer is for the glory of God and that His will be done. The requests for the disciple are fourfold: daily bread, forgiveness of sin, willingness to forgive others, and deliverance from temptation and evil.

**11:5–8** *“Because of his persistence.”* Jesus often stressed that the key to prayer is the refusal to give up in making our requests (Matt. 7:7–11; Luke 18:1–8).

**11:9–10** *“Ask ... seek ... knock.”* This illustrates the persistence displayed by the friend in the parable above. He would not take “no” for an answer (Isa. 55:6; John 15:7).

**11:11–13** *“If you then, being evil ... how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.”* Even in our sinful condition, a father would not give a deceitful or harmful gift in response to the plea of a child. Here, the pre-Pentecost believers had to ask for the Holy Spirit (v. 13), as did the believers in the Old Testament, who sought the Spirit through prayer and purification. Prior to the sending of and the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, believers could only be temporarily enabled by the Spirit

## LUKE 11:14–34

(Judges 13:24–25; Psalm 51:11; Zech. 4:6). Now, the Father, whose love and compassion are perfect, not only hears and answers our prayers as He sees best, but beyond all we—Church Age believers—could request or expect, He has given us His own Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 10:45; Rom. 8:9–11; 1 Cor. 12:11, 13). The Holy Spirit could not come in the sense of permanent indwelling until Christ had died on the cross and was raised up to the right hand of the Father. As Jesus said to the disciples in the Upper Room, “*greater works than these he will do, because I go to My father*” (John 14:12), and later, “*I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever ... for He dwells with you [now] and will be in you [then]*” (John 14:16–17). The difference between “now” and “then” was the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, which inaugurated the Church Age.

### **Jesus Falsely Accused; Teaches on Satan’s Kingdom**

Luke 11:14–28 (Matt. 12:22–30, 43–45; Mark 3:22–27)

**11:14–16** “*He casts out demons by Beelzebub.*” This title originally referred to a Philistine god (2 Kings 1:2, 3, 6, 16). It means, “Lord of the Flies,” and later became used as a title for Satan. This accusation showed their determined unbelief and the hardness of their hearts.

**11:20** “*If I cast out demons with the finger of God.*” So great is the power of God that even mighty deeds are done only by His finger (Exod. 8:19; Deut. 9:10; Psalm 8:3; John 8:6). Jesus replies that by their argument, Satan would destroy his own kingdom. The only other option was that “*the kingdom of God has come upon you.*”

**11:21–22** “*A strong man ... stronger than he.*” The strong man represents Satan, who seeks to hold the souls of the lost in his possession. But Jesus, the stronger man, will bind him and plunder his house and his kingdom. “*Divides his spoils*” is a reference to Isaiah 53:12, speaking of Christ’s victory in His resurrection, which He shares with all who believe in Him (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3).

**11:23** “*He who does not gather ... scatters.*” The religious leaders should have gathered the nation to the Lord in faith. By refusing to do this, they would play a part in the scattering of the nation when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

**11:24–26** “*An unclean spirit ... takes with him seven other spirits.*” To be delivered from a demon and then to fail to bring Jesus Christ into that life means that the “house” is open to even worse demonic control than before. To be delivered by God from evil and fail to turn to Him in faith is to ensure even greater condemnation (2 Pet. 2:20–21).

**11:28** “*Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.*” The woman in v. 27 was declaring Mary to be blessed (Luke 1:28, 48). While this was true, Jesus wants us to understand that we can all be blessed by learning and obeying His Word (Luke 8:21; John 13:17; 14:21).

### **The Sign of Jonah; the Lamp of the Body**

Luke 11:29–36 (Matt. 12:38–42; Mark 8:11–12)

**11:29** “*The sign of Jonah the prophet ... Jonah became a sign.*” The burial and resurrection of Jesus will be the sign of His true identity, and the greatest miracle ever performed (Jonah 1:17–2:10; Matt. 12:39–40).

**11:31–32** “*The queen of the South ... the men of Nineveh.*” Both the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1–10), and the Ninevites (Jonah 3) repented when they heard the Word of God. At the final judgment (Rev. 20:11–15), they will be witnesses against Jesus’ generation, who had even greater light and signs and still refused to believe.

**11:34** “*The lamp of the body is the eye.*” A good and healthy eye is that which chooses to see the light of truth (Job 19:27; 31:1; Psalm 101:3). An evil or spiritually unhealthy eye likes to focus on the sin and corruption of

this world. (1 John 2:15–17). We choose to look at what we love (Col. 3:1–4). The only way to keep our inner life pure is to allow the light of God’s Word to enter into our soul daily (Psalm 119:105, 130).

### **Jesus Pronounces “Woe” on Pharisees and Lawyers**

Luke 11:37–54 (Matt. 23:1–36; Mark 12:38–40)

**11:38** *“The Pharisee saw ... He had not first washed.”* The Pharisees followed a strict program of washing (Matt. 15:1–2; Mark 7:1–4). They magnified physical cleanness but ignored the filth and corruption in their own souls (Titus 1:15–16).

**11:42** *“You Pharisees ... pass by justice and the love of God.”* These Pharisees were meticulous in their tithing but were slow to give to the poor (v. 41). They were not motivated by the love of God (Micah 6:7–8; Zech. 7:8–10; John 5:42; 2 Cor. 5:14).

**11:43–44** *“Woe to you Pharisees!”* The word “*woe*” is a declaration of severe judgment to come. *“You are like graves which are not seen.”* To step on a grave was cause for defilement (Num. 19:11–19). Though they presented themselves as righteous, the Pharisees only defiled the people with their false teachings. The word “*hypocrite*” was only used by Jesus for Israel’s unbelieving religious leaders (Matt. 23:13–29).

**11:46** *“Woe to you also, you lawyers!”* These were the scribes who were to be the interpreters of Scripture. They were equally as corrupt as the Pharisees.

**11:47–51** *“You build the tombs of the prophets ... the blood of all the prophets ... shall be required of this generation.”* Jesus accuses the religious leaders of His day of finishing the persecution that their fathers began. By their rejection of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, they would bring the guilt of all the prophets, who foretold of Jesus, upon their own generation. This was confirmed when the crowd yelled to Pilate, “*His blood be on us and on our children*” (Matt. 27:25). The phrase “*this generation*” declared that the judgment would fall on those standing there. It refers to the fall of Jerusalem about 40 years later, in 70 A.D. “*Abel*” was the first recorded martyr (Gen. 4:1–15), and “*Zechariah*” was the last (2 Chr. 24:17–22) in the Old Testament record.

**11:52** *“You have taken away the key of knowledge.”* Jesus Christ Himself is the key to all scriptural knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Rev. 19:10). To seek to find God apart from Jesus Christ is impossible (John 14:6).

**11:53–54** *“The scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently.”* Jesus had exposed their evil hypocrisy, and their true hatred of Him comes out. By their hate-filled attacks, they confirm everything He has said of them.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 12**

Jesus teaches the disciples on many topics regarding the life of the disciple.

### **Teaching on Hypocrisy and Courage**

Luke 12:1–12 (Matt. 16:6–12; 10:28–33)

**12:1** *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees ... hypocrisy.”* Leaven is a picture of the evil of false teaching (Matt. 16:12) that gradually permeates the soul. The result of continued reception of false doctrine is hypocrisy—to think you are holy when you are not.

**12:2** *“There is nothing covered that will not be revealed.”* All of the secrets of men will be revealed at the final judgment (Mark 4:22; Rom. 2:15–16; 1 Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:13).

## LUKE 12:4–34

**12:4–7** *“I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid.”* Those who trust in Christ and walk by faith have no need to fear. It was said of John Knox, the Scottish preacher, that he feared God so much that he had no fear of men (Psalm 27:1–5; 119:120). *“The very hairs of your head are all numbered.”* God knows and cares about every detail of our lives and is with us at all times.

**12:8–9** *“Whoever confesses Me.”* Faithfulness in our witness will result in praise from Christ in the presence of the angels. *“He who denies Me.”* The unfaithful believer, who denies Christ in time of persecution, will be denied the reward he or she could have won in eternity (2 Tim. 2:11–13; 1 John 2:28; Rev. 3:11).

**12:10** *“To him who blasphemes ... the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven.”* Those who saw the mighty works of God in Jesus Christ, and yet accused Him of being an agent of Satan, had hardened their hearts beyond the point repentance (Matt. 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–29; Acts 7:51; 13:46).

**12:11–12** *“Do not worry ... for the Holy Spirit will teach you.”* Rather than fear those who persecute us, we should have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide us in how to respond (John 14:26; Acts 4:5–13)

### Teaching on Possessions and Priorities

Luke 12:13–34 (Matt. 6:19–21, 25–34)

**12:13** *“Teacher, tell my brother.”* This man made the same mistake Martha made (Luke 10:40), in trying to command the Lord. He also displays a concern for this life, but not for the kingdom of God (1 Tim. 6:6–12).

**12:15** *“One’s life does not consist in ... the things he possesses.”* The concern for things of this life can deaden our hearts to the potential for heavenly riches (Matt. 6:33; James 4:1–6; 1 John 2:15–17).

**12:16–19** *“A certain rich man ... I will ... I will ... I will ... I will.”* This man had no thought of God or of eternity in all his planning. His world revolved around only himself. His priorities were all wrong (Eccl. 4:7–8; 5:10–15; 6:1–2; 1 Cor. 15:32; James 4:13–17).

**12:20** *“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you.”* This man-made provision for this life but gave no thought to eternity. All wealth is passing away (Matt. 6:19–21; 1 Tim. 6:6–10, 17–19; James 5:1–6; 1 John 2:15–17). There is an old saying, “There are no pockets in a death shroud.”

**12:21** *“So is he who ... is not rich toward God.”* Jesus does not condemn wealth or possessions. There were wealthy women who supported Him (Mark 15:40–41). What He condemns is concern for possessions in this life, but no concern for eternal riches (Luke 12:31–34).

**12:22–23** *“I say to you, do not worry ... Life is more than food ... clothing.”* True life—abundant life—is found only in a relationship with Jesus Christ (John 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:10–12 Eph. 3:20).

**12:24–28** *“Consider the ravens ... Consider the lilies.”* Jesus points to the natural world as an example of the Father’s care. God feeds the birds and clothes the grass; *“how much more”* valuable are we in His sight? Worry cannot add the least bit to our height or to our lifespan. But faith can fill our lives with spiritual riches (Eph. 1:3; Col. 3:1–4).

**12:31–34** *“Seek the kingdom of God.”* We must learn to have eternal priorities and to live like pilgrims and strangers on the Earth (Matt. 6:33; Heb. 11:9–10, 23–29; 1 Pet. 2:11–12). *“Where your treasure is.”* We set our hearts on the things we value most. If we value the things of God, our hearts will be set on our eternal home (Matt. 6:21; Rom. 8:5).

### Teaching on Faithfulness

Luke 12:35–48 (Matt. 24:42–51)

**12:35–40** *“Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning.”* This is a picture of the servant who is ready and waiting for his master to come late in the night. He is ready to serve him at any time. *“Blessed are those servants whom the master ... will find watching.”* Here, Jesus pictures those believers at His Second Coming who are watching and waiting. *“He ... will come and serve them.”* Jesus suggests that He Himself will serve those servants who are found waiting. *“You also be ready.”* This is the sum of the parable: be serving and looking for the Lord’s return (Eph. 5:14–16; 1 Thess. 5:6; Rev. 2:25; 3:3).

**12:42** *“Who then is that faithful and wise steward?”* In response to Peter’s question (v. 41), Jesus turns the parable from the servant to the steward. This is a picture of those in positions of leadership. They are entrusted to *“give them their portion of food,”* that is, to teach the Word of God. Jesus reminded Peter of this after His resurrection (John 21:15–17), and Peter passed this lesson on to his fellow pastors (1 Pet. 5:1–4).

**12:43–44** *“Blessed is that servant ... he will make him ruler over all that he has.”* Those leaders who faithfully teach the people of God can look forward to great eternal reward—in both crowns and authority (2 Tim. 2:12; 4:6–8; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 3:21).

**12:46–48** *“The master of that servant will come ... and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.”* Remember that the entire nation of Israel was called to be the servant of Jehovah (Gen. 26:24; Psalm 105:42–45; Isa. 41:8–10; 44:1–2, 21; 49:3; Jer. 2:14; 46:27–28). Jesus is not talking about believers in the Church Age, which is yet future. He is speaking about unfaithful and unbelieving Jews. *“For ... to whom much is given ... much will be required.”* God’s judgments will be fair and equitable (Lev. 5:17; Deut. 25:1–2; Rom. 2:4–12). Israel was richly blessed above all nations, and thus is much more accountable for rejecting her Messiah (Rom. 9:1–5, 30–33; 10:1–4, 11–13; 16–21).

### End-Time Conditions

Luke 12:49–59 (Matt. 16:1–4)

**12:49–50** *“I came to send fire on the earth.”* This speaks of judgment and is exactly what John the Baptist predicted for those who did not believe and receive the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; see also Isa. 30:27–28). *“I have a baptism to be baptized with.”* Here, Jesus is referring to His cross, which must come first. See Psalm 18:4–5, 16; 69:1–2.

**12:51–53** *“Do you suppose that I came to give peace? ... rather division.”* The mission of the Lord Jesus was to bring about redemption. To those who receive Him, this brings peace with God (Luke 2:14; 7:50; 8:48; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13–17). Those who believe in Him are forever divided from those who do not. *“One house will be divided.”* Some in one household will believe in Him, the others will not, and the house will be divided.

**12:54–56** *“Hypocrites! You can discern ... the sky ... how is it you do not discern this time?”* They could judge the coming change in the weather but were ignorant about the signs of His coming (Matt. 2:3–12; Luke 19:41–44). Simeon and Anna are examples of those faithful believers who knew the time (Luke 2:25–38).

**12:57–59** *“Make every effort ... to settle with him.”* This lesson is in the form of a parable. All men are guilty before God; and if they are wise, they will seek to find peace and reconciliation before the time of judgment. *“You shall not depart ... till you have paid the very last mite.”* The unbeliever will be judged with no chance to escape the full sentence of God.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 13**

Jesus increases His warnings to Israel to choose redemption and life.

### **Repent or Perish**

Luke 13:1–9

**13:1–5** *“Do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners?”* The common false teaching during Jesus’ time was that bad things happened to people because of their sins (Job 4:7; John 9:1–3). *“Or those ... on whom the tower in Siloam fell.”* This was another event current at the time, for which we have no historical records. *“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”* All mankind are sinners (Rom. 3:23; 6:23) and will ultimately perish unless they turn from sin and man-made religion to faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 7:21–23; Luke 3:7–17; John 1:29–34).

**13:6–9** *“A certain man had a fig tree ... and he came seeking fruit on it and found none.”* This parable relates the actual experience of Jesus Himself—both with the fig tree (Matt. 21:18–19; Mark 11:12–14) and with the nation which the fig tree pictured (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35). *“Cut it down.”* The judgment described here in the cutting down of the fig tree is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Luke 19:41–44; 20:9–19). Every child of God should consider how to be useful in God’s service (John 15:1–8; James 2:14–17).

### **Healing on the Sabbath**

Luke 13:10–17

**13:12** *“Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.”* This miracle again showed Jesus to be the true Messiah (Luke 7:20–23). He healed by the power of His Word (Rom. 10:17).

**13:14** *“But the ruler of the synagogue ... said ... ‘There are six days on which men ought to work.’”* Jesus often healed on the Sabbath—the day dedicated to God—to show God’s compassion and power (Luke 6:6–11; Mark 3:1–4).

**13:15–16** *“Hypocrite! ... So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham ... be loosed ... on the Sabbath.”* The synagogue leader would surely take his ox or donkey to water on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5) but had no compassion for this woman. Jesus declares that each and every person is a very special gift of God.

**13:17** *“His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced.”* Jesus’ constant rebuke to religious leaders, and His popularity with the multitudes, was the reason for the envy and hatred of the religious leaders. This was the division He spoke about earlier (Luke 12:51–53).

### **Parables of the Kingdom and the Narrow Way**

Luke 13:18–35 (Matt. 13:31–33; 23:37–39; Mark 4:30–32)

**13:18–19** *“What is the kingdom of God like? ... a mustard seed.”* The kingdom begins very small but grows to become a refuge to many (Psalm 104:12; Ezek. 17:22–24; Dan. 4:10–12; Mark 4:30–32).

**13:20–21** *“The kingdom of God ... is like leaven.”* Just as leaven (yeast) permeates the dough and makes the bread rise, so the kingdom of God will permeate the world. The work of leaven is:

1. from the inside out,
2. invisible to the eye, and
3. affects all that it touches.

This should be a challenge to every believer to let the Spirit of God have a pervading influence in our lives.

**13:22** *“He went through the cities ... teaching ... journeying toward Jerusalem.”* Luke continues to show Jesus’ resolute movement toward the cross (Isa. 50:7; Luke 9:51–53).

**13:24** *“Strive to enter through the narrow gate.”* The narrow gate is Jesus Christ Himself (John 14:6). The “striving” is to lay aside the “dead works” of self-effort (Heb. 12:1) and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ (John 19:30; Heb. 4:3, 10–11; 6:1; 9:14).

**13:25** *“Lord, Lord, open for us.”* Once life is over, it is too late to call Jesus “Lord.” When Jesus says, *“I do not know you,”* He shows that they never believed in Him because, as Jesus said, *“I know My sheep”* (John 10:14), and Paul says, *“the Lord knows those who are His”* (2 Tim. 2:19).

**13:28–29** *“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* These are signs of either deep sorrow or of great anger (Matt. 8:12; 13:42). These warnings especially apply to unbelieving Israel, who will be enraged that multitudes of Gentiles will join Jesus for the wedding feast, but the unbelieving Jews, who relied only on their lineage from Abraham, will be cast out. *“They will come from the east and the west.”* Believing Gentiles from around the world, who have believed in Jesus Christ, will feast in the kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11; Rom. 9:30–33; Rev. 7:9–10).

**13:32–33** *“The third day I shall be perfected.”* Jesus predicts His resurrection on the third day (Matt. 12:39–40). The perfection spoken of here is the fulfillment of the Father’s plan of redemption for mankind. *“A prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”* Jesus indicates that He follows a historical line of prophets killed in Jerusalem (1 Kings 18:4, 13; 19:10, 14; 2 Chr. 24:20–22; Jer. 2:30; 26:20–23; 38:4–6; Amos 7:10–17; Matt. 23:29–35; Acts 7:51–53).

**13:34–35** *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often I wanted to gather your children.”* Here, Jesus speaks as God in His desire throughout history to deliver Israel. *“You were not willing.”* Because of their continued rebellion and unbelief, He declares *“Your house is left to you desolate.”* This refers to the coming destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the nation. *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.”* This cry, which comes from Psalm 118:26, will be on the lips of believing Jews at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 14**

Jesus teaches on humility, reward, and preparation for the kingdom.

### **A Healing and a Parable in a Pharisee’s House**

Luke 14:1–14

**14:1** *“He went ... to eat bread on the Sabbath.”* These Sabbath events were intended to challenge the legalism of the Pharisees. The Gospels record seven times how Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31, 38; 6:6; 13:14; John 5:9; 9:14; Mark 1:21). *“They watched Him closely.”* This suggests that the invitation was a trap set by the Pharisees, and that the sick man was invited there for this purpose.

**14:3** *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”* Jesus constantly battled against the man-made laws of the Pharisees (see Luke 6:2, 9). To show love and give aid to the needy is always good in God’s plan (Rom. 13:8–10).

**14:5** *“Which of you ... will not ... pull him out on the Sabbath day.”* Jesus reveals their twisted values; they cared more for animals than for people made in the image of God.

## LUKE 14:7–31

**14:7–10 “*He told a parable.*”** Jesus challenged their practice of self-promotion. This parable illustrates the value of humility and the danger of pride.

**14:11 “*For whoever exalts himself.*”** This proverb sums up the lesson of the parable (Prov. 3:34; Prov. 29:23; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5–6).

**14:12–14 “*You shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*”** To show compassion to the sick and needy is to reflect the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “*just*” refers to those who are justified by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:23–25; 5:1; John 11:24–25).

### Rejection and Reception of the Gospel Invitation

Luke 14:15–24 (Matt. 22:1–14)

**14:15 “*Blessed is he.*”** What this man said is not wrong, but Jesus goes to the heart of the matter to answer the question, “Who will enter into the kingdom?”

**14:18 “*Come, for all things are now ready.*”** There was nothing remaining to do for those who were invited. It was all done for them, just as Jesus has done all that is necessary for us to enter eternal life (John 19:30). But the invitation must be received by faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

**14:18–20 “*I ask you to have me excused ... I cannot come.*”** Here, we see excuses made that show the things we allow to come between us and the grace of God: a purchase of land, new possessions, even the biblical relationship of marriage. And yet the value of our relationship with God far surpasses all these things (1 John 2:15–17).

**14:21 “*Go out quickly ... bring in here the poor ... the maimed ... the lame ... the blind.*”** We see a divine application of v. 13. The Jews believed that they had automatic rights to enter into the kingdom. Here, the poor and maimed represent the Gentiles who were hated by the Jews. The Gospel that the Jews rejected, the Gentiles received gladly (Acts 28:25–28; Rom. 9:30–33).

### Jesus Teaches on the Demands of Discipleship

Luke 14:25–35 (Matt. 10:34–39)

**14:25 “*Great multitudes went with Him. And He ... said to them.*”** From vv. 1–24, Jesus is in the presence of Pharisees, most of whom rejected His teaching. Now, He turns to the “*common people*” who gladly received His teaching (Mark 12:37b).

**14:26–27 “*If anyone ... does not hate.*”** Jesus’ use of the word “*hate*” does not mean emotional hatred. It simply means to make Him the priority over all other things (Col. 1:18). Family, friends, and even our life must be rejected as the things of first importance (Matt. 6:33). “***Does not bear his cross.***” Jesus’ three-fold demand in Luke 9:23 is centered in the bearing of the cross. This means to surrender all personal claims to the will of God. It involves a willingness to share in His suffering (2 Cor. 5:14–21; Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:12; 3:12). We enter eternal life by a simple act of faith (John 3:16, 36; Rom. 4:3–5; Eph. 2:8–9), but we become a disciple by a life of dedicated learning and service (Ezra 7:10).

**14:28 “*Count the cost.*”** A wise builder plans not just the beginning of the building, but the completion. So we should do as we enter the life of faith. The greatest eternal rewards are given to those who finish the race (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; Heb. 12:1–3).

**14:31 “*What king, going to make war.*”** The goal of going to war is to win. Failure to consider one’s strength and resources can only lead to shame and defeat.

**14:33** *“Whoever ... does not forsake all.”* This does not mean to sell all. Jesus had disciples who had wealth, but they used it for His purpose (Matt. 19:27; Luke 8:1–3; 23:50–53).

**14:34–35** *“Salt is good.”* Jesus compares the life of a disciple to salt (Matt. 5:13). Salt in the ancient world was very poor quality and could degrade in taste. This useless salt was thrown out of the house. *“Men throw it out.”* This lesson is not saying that God will cast any believer out. He is speaking of discipleship and effectiveness in being a witness for Christ. Those whose lives do not match their message are generally rejected by men as hypocrites.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 15**

Jesus teaches on the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. This is perhaps one of the most beloved chapters in all of the Bible because it shows the infinite nature of the love and grace of God.

### **The Lost Sheep**

Luke 15:1–7 (Matt. 18:10–14)

**15:1–2** *“This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”* The Pharisees and scribes prove that they had not accepted His earlier teaching (Luke 14:13–14, 21–24). To the Pharisees, the common people were considered accursed sinners (John 9:34).

**15:4** *“What man of you ... go after the one which is lost until he finds it?”* Israel was a nation of shepherds. The shepherd was accountable for each and every sheep. If one wandered, the shepherd was bound to seek for it until he found it. Jesus later declared that His mission was to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10; see Matt. 18:12–14). These Pharisees, who should have cared for the flock, were in fact the false shepherds Ezekiel spoke of (Ezek. 34:1–10), and Jesus was the *“good shepherd”* (Ezek. 34:11–31; John 10:11). The word *“lost”* occurs five times in these three parables. Note also the repetition of the words *“rejoice ... joy.”*

**15:6** *“Rejoice with me.”* Since most flocks in Israel were communal flocks, the whole village would join in the celebration. The Pharisees could not join in celebrating the rescue of lost sinners by Jesus.

**15:7** *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.”* This joy is *“in the presence of the angels”* (v. 10). Heaven celebrates at the salvation of sinners. The word *“repent”* is used here in its most common sense of turning from self-righteousness to faith in Christ. *“Who need no repentance.”* Jesus is speaking sarcastically, because these Pharisees thought that they had no need to repent and trust in Jesus as Savior.

### **The Lost Coin**

Luke 15:8–10

**15:8** *“Or what woman.”* Jesus adapts this parable to the many women who followed Him. *“Having ten silver coins.”* This shows that those who teach that God only chose a few to be saved, and does not care about the rest, are false teachers. In ancient Israel, the mark of a married woman was a head-dress with ten silver coins sewn into it. This was the equivalent of today’s wedding ring. *“Does not light a lamp ... and search carefully until she finds it?”* The continual search of the woman shows that God diligently seeks for each and every lost sinner.

**15:9–10** *“Rejoice with me ... joy in the presence of the angels.”* Jesus’ emphasis in these three parables is in the joy and delight that God in Heaven and the angels have over the salvation of each sinner.

**The Parable of the Lost Son**

Luke 15:11–32

**15:11** *“A certain man had two sons.”* The focus of this parable is the love of the father and the repentance and restoration of the younger son.

**15:12** *“Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.”* Normally, the inheritance was not given until the father was near death. *“So he divided to them his livelihood.”* This is often overlooked. Both sons received their inheritance, and that of the older son was the “double-portion” (Deut. 21:15–17).

**15:13** *“The younger son ... wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”* Like so many people on this Earth, God’s rich blessings are treated with a careless contempt. The *“far country”* represents those who, because of sin, are *“alienated from God”* (Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21).

**15:14** *“But when he had spent all ... he began to be in want.”* When we squander God’s blessings, He allows us to come into great need, to bring us back to Him. God uses discipline to restore wandering believers (Heb. 12:3–11) and uses judgment to awaken the unbeliever (see Dan. 4:28–34).

**15:15–16** *“He sent him ... to feed swine.”* This was a condition of total defilement to a Jew (Lev. 11:1–8; Deut. 14:3–8). *“No one gave him anything.”* Everyone who strays from God will find this world to be a harsh and unforgiving place.

**15:17–18** *“When he came to himself ... I will arise and go to my father.”* Jesus shows that often it is the sufferings of this life that drive the soul to seek Him. *“Father, I have sinned.”* In the same way, true confession will always restore the wandering believer to a right relationship with God our Father (2 Sam. 12:13; Psalm 51:3–4; 1 John 1:9).

**15:19** *“I am no longer worthy.”* One of the first steps toward receiving the grace of God is the realization that we are unworthy. We deserve nothing, we have nothing to offer, and only the grace of God can meet our needs. This is true humility (1 Pet. 5:5–6; James 4:10).

**15:20** *“His father ... had compassion, and ran ... and kissed him.”* This shows the ready response of God the Father to receive every repentant sinner (unbeliever) or son (believer) when they come to Him in humble faith.

**15:22** *“But the father said ... ‘Bring out the best robe ... put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.’”* Here, we see the rebellious son fully restored to his rightful place in the family. He is not an outcast, but a beloved son.

**15:24** *“My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”* These contrasts illustrate God’s power to restore both lost sinners and straying saints to His favor and grace.

**15:25–28** *“Now his older brother ... was angry and would not go in.”* This older son represents the self-righteous Pharisees, who could not join in the rejoicing of the multitude that followed Jesus, because they thought they were righteous (see Luke 18:9–14).

**15:31** *“Son ... all that I have is yours.”* The older son resented the gracious welcome of the father to the prodigal. His complaint was that he never received so much as a young goat to make merry with his friends, which shows that he had never asked the father for it. The Jewish nation was given the riches of blessings by God (Rom. 9:4–5), and yet they failed to appropriate them by faith in Christ (Rom. 9:30–33).

**15:32** *“It was right that we should make merry and be glad.”* There is no confusion in the counsels of God. Though He will thoroughly judge the unbelieving sinner, He will always receive the humble and broken who

believe. The point of the story is to show that no sin is too great for God to forgive and cleanse away. Once this is done, the only right response is a joyful celebration of fellowship.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 16**

Jesus continues with two parables about forgiveness, divided by personal instruction to the Pharisees. From Luke 16:1–18:30, we have Jesus' teaching to the disciples on various subjects as they are traveling to Jerusalem.

### **The Unjust Steward**

Luke 16:1–13

**16:1** *“A certain rich man ... had a steward.”* The steward was the highest and most trusted servant in the household. He had charge of all the possessions and riches of his master. *“An accusation ... that this man was wasting his goods.”* The word “wasting” is the same word used of the son’s prodigal living in Luke 15:13.

**16:2** *“Give an account of your stewardship.”* The main idea of this parable is that we who are believers and disciples will one day have to give an account of how we have used the gifts and resources given to us by God (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–11; Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:3).

**16:3–4** *“What shall I do?”* The steward knows that his time is short, and he devises a plan to use what little time remains to prepare for the future. *“They may receive me into their houses.”* The steward’s plan would benefit others so that they would return the favor and provide for him.

**16:5–7** *“So he called every one of his master’s debtors.”* The plan of this shrewd steward was to forgive part of every bill to reap what he could for the master, and to invite the future gratitude and hospitality of the debtors.

**16:8** *“So the master commended ... because he had dealt shrewdly.”* What is commended here is not his dishonesty, but his ingenuity. Since the steward may have received a commission on these transactions, he may have simply given that up for future gain. *“The sons of this world ... the sons of light.”* Unbelievers are more skilled in using money for their own gain than believers are for eternal reward (Matt. 6:19–21).

**16:9** *“Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon.”* The point is to use money wisely and for eternity. What we give to ministry, to missions, to the poor and needy, will return to us a hundredfold in eternity (Matt. 19:29).

**16:10** *“He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much.”* Money is the least of our resources to be used for God’s kingdom. If we are careless in using what is least, we will be careless in the greater riches (Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17; Eph. 1:3).

**16:13** *“No servant can serve two masters.”* We cannot faithfully serve God and serve wealth and possessions at the same time. Money and possessions make good servants for eternity, but they are terrible masters.

### **The Law, the Prophets, and the Kingdom**

Luke 16:14–18

**16:14–15** *“The Pharisees ... were lovers of money.”* Because of their love of money, the Pharisees scoffed at Jesus’ teachings. *“What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”* Men love wealth, power, possessions, and high positions. God despises these things, apart from faith and the faithful use of them. The Pharisees believed that God gave riches to those who were worthy.

**16:16–17** *“The law and the prophets were until John.”* Before Jesus came, the Law and prophets were the only revelation of God. But when Jesus—the Living Word—came (John 1:1–4, 14–18), the full and final

## LUKE 16:18–29

revelation was made (Heb. 1:1–4). He was the King presenting His kingdom. ***“Everyone is pressing into it.”*** The publicans, harlots, and sinners flocked to hear Him and believed what the Pharisees rejected. ***“One tittle of the law”*** is a reference to a small stroke at the top or bottom of a Hebrew letter. Not the least of the words of the prophets would fail to be fulfilled.

**16:18** ***“Whoever divorces his wife ... commits adultery.”*** The Pharisees defined the term “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 to mean anything that caused the man displeasure. To them, divorce was commonplace. Jesus made it clear in Matthew 5:32 that this word meant “sexual immorality”. In Matthew 19:4–6, He declared that marriage was a sacred bond between one man and one woman for life. However, if divorce is likened to adultery, then like adultery it can also be forgiven (John 8:1–12).

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19–31

**16:19–20** ***“A certain rich man ... a certain beggar named Lazarus.”*** The rich man’s name is not mentioned because, at physical death, the names of those who refuse to believe are *“blotted out”* of the book of life (Psalm 69:28; 109:13), because they would not allow their sins to be blotted out by faith (Isa. 44:21–22; Psalm 109:14; Acts 3:19). The ***“purple and fine linen”*** suggests that he was a priest, many of whom were very rich.

**16:21** ***“The crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table.”*** In those times, people ate with their hands. The rich would wipe their hands and mouth with a piece of bread, then throw it away. These are the crumbs Lazarus was craving (James 5:1–6)!

**16:22** ***“The beggar died ... was carried ... to Abraham’s bosom.”*** Abraham’s bosom is the same as paradise (Luke 23:43). After the resurrection of Jesus, Paradise, which contained the souls of all Old Testament believers, was moved to Heaven (2 Cor. 12:4; Eph. 4:8–9). That Lazarus was carried to Paradise proves that he was a believer. Note that the angels come to carry Lazarus, but the rich man is simply buried.

**16:23** ***“And being in torments in Hades.”*** Men do not go to Hell for being rich, they go to Hell for rejecting Jesus Christ (John 3:19 cf. John 8:12). ***“He ... saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”*** Before Christ’s resurrection, Paradise and Hades were in close proximity, but separated by a great gulf (v. 26). The rich man is suffering while Lazarus is being embraced and comforted by Father Abraham.

**16:24** ***“Have mercy on me ... I am tormented in this flame.”*** The rich man now—too late—cries out for mercy. Suddenly, he sees in Lazarus someone who is important to him. This story shows *“(1) conscious existence after death; (2) the reality and torment of Hell; (3) no second chance after death; and (4) the impossibility of the dead communicating with the living (v. 26). Two men ... two different lives ... two different deaths ... two different destinies.”*—Ryrie Study Bible

**16:25** ***“Son, remember ... your lifetime.”*** This illustrates that *“For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged”* (Matt. 7:2). Eternal judgment will be perfectly just and fair. First, the question is: “Have you received the gift of eternal life through belief in Jesus Christ or not?” See John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8–9. Those who do will go to Heaven; those who do not, go to Hell. Next: “How did you live your life?” Believers will be rewarded according to their faithfulness. Unbelievers will be punished to the degree that they abused others (Matt. 11:20–24; Rev. 20:11–15).

**16:27–29** ***“I beg you ... send him to my father’s house ... I have five brothers.”*** In Hell, the rich man suddenly becomes an evangelist, wanting to save his brothers, but it is too late (see Heb. 9:27). ***“They have Moses and the prophets.”*** Those who reject the Word of God all their lives cannot be reached by any other means. (John 5:39–40; Luke 24:25–27, 45; Acts 15:21; 17:11).

**16:31** *“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets ... though one rise from the dead.”* Many of those of Jesus’ time rejected the true teachings of the Old Testament, so that their hearts were hardened. Even when Jesus rose from the dead, still they would not believe.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 17**

Jesus, now on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified, continues to instruct the disciples.

### **The Danger of Offenses; the Power of Faith**

Luke 17:1–10 (Matt. 17:19–21; 18:6–7; Mark 9:28–29, 42)

**17:1** *“He said to the disciples.”* It is always important to distinguish Jesus’ teaching to the multitudes and His instruction to the disciples. *“Offenses”* refers to putting a stumbling block in the way of someone coming to faith, or that causes them to sin. *“Woe to him”* refers to the one, like the rich man in Luke 16:19, who treats others with contempt or causes them to sin. This refers especially to those who are false teachers.

**17:2** *“It would be better for him.”* A quick death by being cast into the sea would be preferable to eternal judgment.

**17:3** *“Take heed to yourselves.”* In vv. 1–4, Jesus gives the disciples three principles for dealing with others:

1. See that you do not cause others to stumble.
2. Warn those who are a stumbling block to others.
3. Forgive those who fail, yet repent.

**17:4** *“Seven times.”* Peter may have been thinking of the teaching in Matthew 18: 21–22 when he questioned Jesus on the subject (see Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

**17:5** *“Increase our faith.”* The disciples rightly understood their inability to carry out Jesus’ demands (Matt. 17:19–20; Mark 11:22–23). By our own effort, we can never satisfy the demands of the Law (James 2:10–11), but by grace and faith we are enabled to keep the demands of Christ’s love (James 4:6; 2 Cor. 5:14–15).

**17:6** *“Faith as a mustard seed.”* The smallest of seeds illustrates the power of faith. Even the least amount of faith has great power, not because of its size but because of its focus—the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of faith is in the Object of the faith. It is not that we have powerful faith, it is that we believe in a powerful Savior.

**17:7–10** *“We have done what was our duty to do.”* In these verses, Jesus teaches His disciples to be faithful servants. We do not serve to be blessed; we serve because we are blessed. We seek always to keep Jesus Christ first in everything (Col. 1:18). Even if we have done everything we are commanded (John 13:17), we have only done our duty as servants of Jesus Christ. Our service does not put God in our debt, nor can we ever repay what He has done for us through Christ (Rom. 11:34–35).

### **The Grateful Leper**

Luke 17:11–19

**17:12** *“Theremet Him ten men who were lepers.”* According to the Law, lepers were unclean (Lev. 13:45–46), therefore they *“stood afar off.”*

**17:14** *“Go, show yourselves to the priests.”* See Matthew 8:1–4 and Luke 5:12–14. The priest had to certify that they were clean (Lev. 14:1–32).

## LUKE 17:15–35

**17:15–16** *“One of them ... returned, and ... glorified God.”* Out of the ten, only this one returned to give thanks. *“And he was a Samaritan.”* The Samaritans were hated and despised by the Jews, which is why Jesus often used them in His lessons (Luke 10:25–37, see 2 Kings 17:24).

**17:19** *“Your faith has made you well.”* The word used here is the same as in Matthew 9:22, and literally means, “Your faith has saved you.” Ten lepers received healing; only one of them received eternal life.

### The Second Coming of Christ

Luke 17:20–37 (Matt. 24:23–28, 37–41; Mark 13:14–16)

**17:20** *“He was asked ... when the kingdom of God would come.”* The Pharisees were looking for the physical kingdom, which would come with great signs (Joel 2:28–32). Jesus is speaking of the spiritual kingdom, which comes through personal faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

**17:21** *“The kingdom of God is within you.”* This is the kingdom entered by all who have faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 14:17).

**17:22** *“Then He said to the disciples.”* Again, Jesus turns from the Pharisees to give instruction to the disciples. Only those who believe in Christ are capable of receiving spiritual instruction. *“The days will come.”* Here, Jesus refers to the coming days of the Jewish war (66–70 A.D.) that would lead to the destruction of the Temple and the scattering of the Jewish nation.

**17:24** *“For as the lightning that flashes ... so also the Son of Man will be in His day.”* When Jesus Christ returns at His Second Coming, it will be impossible to miss Him (Zech. 12:10; Matt. 24:27, 30; Rev. 1:7).

**17:25** *“But first He must suffer.”* This is a reference to His crucifixion for our redemption (Isa. 53:3–10; Mark 8:31; 9:31; Luke 9:22).

**17:26** *“As it was in the days of Noah.”* Noah warned the world of the coming judgment of the flood, but they went about life as usual (see Genesis 6; Matt. 24:37–39; 2 Pet. 2:5). In many ways, Noah being lifted up in the ark, is a picture of the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

**17:28** *“Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot.”* The same indifference to coming judgment was shown by Lot’s generation (see Genesis 19). After the Rapture, will come times of terrible judgments on the Earth (1 Thess. 5:1–3; 2 Thess. 2:1–12; Revelation 6).

**17:30–31** *“In the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”* Again, this is referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation Period.

**17:32** *“Remember Lot’s wife.”* At the time of judgment on Sodom, Lot’s wife looked back, contrary to the angels’ command. See Genesis 19:26. This world will ultimately be judged, and we ought not to cling to it (1 John 2:15–17). This is illustrated by the command to not turn back (v. 31).

**17:33** *“Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it.”* In times of judgment, people think of saving their lives, which is a selfish desire. Rather, it is those who are willing to die for the sake of serving Christ who will save their lives for eternity (Matt. 5:10–12; 10:39; John 12:25).

**17:34–35** *“One will be taken and the other will be left.”* This passage is not talking about the Rapture. It is speaking of the Second Coming. The one “taken” is not a believer and is taken in judgment (see Matt. 24:39, “and took them all away”). Just like those “taken” at the flood, this is referring to those who were unbelievers. They were taken away in judgment; but believers will live to enter into the Kingdom Age.

**17:37** *“Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered.”* At the Second Coming, there will be multitudes of dead bodies everywhere (Isa. 63:1–6; Joel 3:14–16; Rev. 14:14–20; 19:11–21). The word “eagles” actually refers to vultures, who gather to eat the dead.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 18**

Various teachings on prayer, humility, greed and faith; Jesus again predicts His death and resurrection.

### **Teaching on Prayer**

Luke 18:1–8

**18:1** *“Men always ought to pray and not lose heart.”* Luke gives us the point of the parable at the beginning. We can summarize by saying:

1. We need to be people of prayer;
2. we should pray always, for all things; and
3. we should not lose heart if the answers are not immediate.

**18:2–5** *“I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.”* Jesus uses the unjust judge as a contrast to a gracious and loving God. The woman’s persistence in pressing her case does not mean we need to wear God down; rather, Jesus is teaching that persistent prayer is necessary for us to strengthen our faith.

**18:7** *“Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him ...?”* God does not always answer us quickly. If He did, we would all be spoiled, spiritual children. He has a perfect time for prayers to be answered. The perfect prayer is always, *“Your will be done.”* (Matt. 26:42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

**18:8** *“He will avenge them speedily.”* When the time is right, there will be no delay. *“When the Son of Man comes.”* This is a reference to His Second Coming, not the Rapture of the Church. The question is not whether there will be believers; the question is, will those believers be faithful to the end?

### **Teaching on Humility**

Luke 18:9–17

**18:9** *“He spoke ... to some who trusted ... that they were righteous.”* In this parable, Jesus combines the previous teaching on prayer with the need for humility. The parable is directed to the self-righteous, who treated others with contempt.

**18:10** *“Two men ... a Pharisee and ... a tax collector.”* The Pharisee personifies the self-righteous man, and the tax collector demonstrates true humility. *“Went up to the temple to pray.”* Prayers were considered especially effective if they were offered in the Temple. Official times of prayer were 9 a.m., 12 noon, and 3 p.m.

**18:11** *“The Pharisee ... prayed thus with himself.”* His prayers were not really to God, but rather were a form of self-congratulation. *“I thank You that I am not like ... this tax collector.”* He was assured of his own righteousness, yet it was the tax collector he despised that he should have imitated.

**18:12** *“I fast ... I give ... I possess.”* This Pharisee is obviously full of himself. This is the essence of pride, when you are the center of your own world. This is a picture of those who think they can be saved by their good deeds.

**18:13** *“The tax collector ... beat his breast ... ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’”* The Pharisee compared himself to other men and felt superior. The tax collector compared himself to the righteousness of God and saw himself condemned. God’s grace provides to us what we do not deserve. God’s mercy withholds the judgment that we do deserve.

## LUKE 18:14–30

**18:14** *“This man went ... justified.”* The Bible makes it clear throughout that we can only be justified, or “declared righteous,” by grace through faith (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 3:22, 28; 4:3; Gal. 3:8, 11). *“He who humbles himself will be exalted.”* Those who humble themselves before God in faith will be lifted up by His grace (James 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:5–6).

**18:15** *“Then they also brought infants to Him.”* These were small babies, not little children. The connection with the tax collector in the previous parable is that neither he nor these babies have anything to offer to God, but can only receive His grace and blessing.

**18:17** *“Whoever does not receive the kingdom ... as a little child.”* Simple, child-like faith is all that is required to enter eternal life. Anything added to this is false teaching!

### The Rich Young Ruler

Luke 18:18–23 (Matt. 19:16–22; Mark 10:17–22)

**18:18** *“Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* This story again shows a contrast to the faith of the tax collector, and the child-like faith Christ desires and accepts. He wants, like the Pharisee, to earn his entrance into the kingdom by good works. There is no record of any rabbi in Israel ever being addressed as “Good Teacher.”

**18:19** *“No one is good but One, that is, God.”* The challenge of Jesus is not that He is not good, but that to rightly come to Him, the young ruler must understand that Jesus is God.

**18:20** *“You know the commandments.”* Jesus now points the young man to the commandments of Moses. If a man wants to earn eternal life, he must keep every one of them all the time. No man but Jesus could ever do this (Matt. 5:17; Gal. 3:10–12; James 2:10–11).

**18:21** *“All these things I have kept.”* This reveals the self-righteous attitude of the young ruler, who was so much like the Pharisee in v. 11. This is remarkably similar to the Apostle Paul’s view of himself before his conversion (Phil. 3:4–6).

**18:22** *“You still lack one thing.”* The “one thing” the young ruler lacked was faith in Christ. But to get to it he would have to remove the obstacle to his faith. *“Sell all that you have ... and come, follow Me.”* Jesus now puts His finger on the one commandment the young ruler obviously violated—the tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17). Covetousness is greed. This was the barrier between the young ruler and coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Giving all one has to the poor saves no one. But the young ruler could not follow Jesus as long as he was enslaved to his wealth. (see Matt. 6:19–21; Luke 16:13). Remember in Luke 8:38–39, the man delivered from demons was told to stay home and be a witness. God’s plan differs for each of us.

### The Lesson Applied

Luke 18:24–30 (Matt. 19:23–30; Mark 10:23–31)

**18:24–25** *“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”* Jesus’ point here is not that it takes great effort to be saved. Rather, He is saying that, apart from grace and faith, it is impossible. The problem is that rich people learn to trust in their riches (Mark 10:23–24) rather than in God.

**18:26–27** *“Who then can be saved?”* The disciples misunderstood Jesus’ lesson. What is impossible for men is simple with God (Jer. 32:17; Luke 1:37).

**18:29–30** *“Assuredly, I say to you ... in this present time ... in the age to come eternal life.”* In response to Peter, Jesus gives assurance that those who serve Him sacrificially will receive blessings in time and reward in

eternity. God's richest blessings are relational—the family of God—not material (Job 42:10; Matt. 12:48–50; Mark 3:34–35).

### **Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection**

Luke 18:31–34 (Matt. 20:17–19; Mark 10:32–34)

**18:31–33** *“Behold ... all things that are written by the prophets ... will be accomplished.”* This statement is important, because Luke wants to emphasize the prophetic fulfillment in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Luke 1:45–55, 68–79; 24:27, 44–45). See Luke 19:11 for explanation of the disciples' blindness.

### **The Blind Man Healed**

Luke 18:35–43 (Matt. 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52)

**18:35** *“A certain blind man sat by the road begging.”* In Matthew's account, there were two men. Luke seems to focus on the one who not only received his sight, but who also believed for eternal life. In Mark 10:46, this man is named as Bartimaeus.

**18:38** *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* The term *“Son of David”* is a messianic title (Luke 1:32–33, 68–69; 2:1–5, 11), showing that Bartimaeus believed in Jesus as the Savior. His cry for mercy shows that unlike the Pharisee (v. 11) and the rich, young ruler (v. 18), he claimed no merit before God, but was—both physically and spiritually—a beggar in need of grace.

**18:42–43** *“Your faith has made you well.”* This blind man (Bartimaeus) received both physical and spiritual healing. This was given solely on the basis of simple, child-like faith. This is the only way anyone can ever enter into eternal life. It is worth mentioning that giving sight to the blind was prophesied to be a qualifying sign of the Messiah (Isa. 35:5; 42:5–7).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 19**

Zacchaeus the tax collector; the parable of the coins; Jesus' triumphal entry; He weeps over Jerusalem and cleanses the Temple.

### **Jesus Meets Zacchaeus**

Luke 19:1–10

**19:1–2** *“Jesus entered and passed through Jericho ... there was a man named Zacchaeus.”* The story of Zacchaeus shows a contrast to the Pharisees (Luke 16:14) and the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18). *“A chief tax collector, and he was rich.”* Tax collectors were despised as collaborators with Rome, and often overcharged to make excess profits. Jericho was famous for its fertility and rich produce of palm oil and fruits. This made it a place of rich taxation. As *“chief tax collector,”* Zacchaeus would have many other tax collectors under him.

**19:4** *“A sycamore tree.”* This tree was a kind of fig tree, with a short trunk and wide branches. It would have been easy to climb.

**19:5** *“Zacchaeus ... today I must stay at your house.”* Jesus saw the “mustard seed” of faith in the efforts of Zacchaeus to see Him.

**19:6** *“So he ... received Him joyfully.”* All who receive Jesus in simple faith receive eternal life (John 1:12), regardless of their sin or their social standing.

## LUKE 19:7–27

**19:7** *“But when they saw it, they all complained.”* The multitude believed they were more deserving than Zacchaeus. *“He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”* Since *“all have sinned”* (Rom. 3:23), none are worthy.

**19:8** *“Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor.”* Zacchaeus, with his new-found faith and love for the Lord, goes beyond the *“fruits worthy of repentance”* required by John the Baptist (Luke 3:8), and even beyond the requirements of the Law (Lev. 5:14–16; Num. 5:6–7). His actions show that he is indeed a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

**19:9** *“He also is a son of Abraham.”* This term describes those who have believed in Jesus Christ (Luke 13:10–17; Gal. 3:8–9, 26, 29).

**19:10** *“For the Son of Man has come.”* With these words, Jesus summarizes His purpose for coming into the world. Remember the three parables on *“lost”* things in Luke 15.

### **The Parable of the Minas** Luke 19:11–27 (Matt. 25:14–30)

**19:11** *“Because ... they thought the kingdom ... would appear immediately.”* This likely refers to the disciples. Because of their preconceived ideas about the kingdom, Jesus’ warning of the cross was *“hidden”* from them (Luke 18:34).

**19:12** *“A certain nobleman went into a far country.”* This represents the Lord Jesus, who after the resurrection would receive all power and authority at the Father’s right hand (Psalm 110:1–2; Matt. 25:14; 28:18).

**19:13** *“Ten of his servants ... ten minas.”* The servants represent Jesus’ disciples. The mina was worth one hundred days’ wages. *“Do business till I come.”* The time of his return is not specified, but an accounting of their service is certain (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10).

**19:14** *“We will not have this man to reign over us.”* This does not represent his disciples, but the people of Jerusalem (John 1:11; Matt. 23:37–39; 27:25).

**19:15** *“He then commanded these servants ... to be called to him.”* First, before the nobleman is made king, he entrusted wealth to his servants. Here, he returns as king and now must test the faithfulness of his servants. He will then reward those who were faithful.

**19:17–19** *“Well done, good servant ... have authority over ten cities.”* The reward is in direct proportion to the servant’s use of what was entrusted to him. So it is with the second servant.

**19:21** *“I feared you.”* This servant did not have a right view of the nobleman. Because of his wrong understanding, he never multiplied his gift. This is true of many believers today. This servant did not value his master, or the gift and opportunity that were given to him.

**19:24–26** *“Take the mina from him.”* Because of his unfaithfulness, he loses what he had been given. *“Give it to him who has ten minas.”* The point here is that he who is faithful will be given even greater opportunity; those who are unfaithful will lose eternal reward (1 Cor. 3:10–15; Rev. 3:11).

**19:27** *“Bring here those enemies ... and slay them before me.”* This again is a picture of the coming judgment on Jerusalem for their rejection of the Lord Jesus, as well as the final judgment (Matt. 13:40–42).

### The Triumphal Entry

Luke 19:28–40 (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; John 12:12–19)

**19:30** *“Go into the village ... as you enter you will find a colt tied.”* Here, Jesus intentionally fulfills prophecy (Zech. 9:9). He had probably arranged in advance to have the colt tied there. If not, this is another evidence of His omniscience.

**19:32** *“Just as He had said to them.”* This same statement is made in Luke 22:13 about making preparations for the Passover.

**19:34–35** *“They threw their own clothes on the colt ... many spread their clothes on the road.”* This was a common practice for the approach of a king (2 Kings 9:13).

**19:38** *“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!”* These words are from Psalm 118:26 and are prophetic of the coming of the Messiah. Jesus came to bring *“peace”* to those who would receive Him by faith (Psalm 85:5; Luke 1:77–79; John 14:27, 16:33; 1 Cor. 14:33).

**19:39** *“Some of the Pharisees.”* These were the religious leaders of Israel, and they expressed the official rejection of Jesus by the nation.

**19:40** *“If these should keep silent, the stones would ... cry out.”* Just as God could *“raise up children to Abraham from [these] stones”* (Matt. 3:9), so He could cause the stones to cry out in praise of the Lord Jesus.

### Jesus Weeps Over Jerusalem

Luke 19:41–44 (Matt. 23:37–39)

**19:41** *“He saw the city and wept over it.”* This is the second time we see Jesus weeping over the unbelief of men (John 11:35). His grief was due to that unbelief, and to the judgment that would follow (Matt. 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:5–6).

**19:42** *“If you had known ... the things that make for ... peace!”* As in v. 38, this peace could only be found through faith in Jesus Christ (Luke 1:68–79; 2:8–14; Rom. 5:1).

**19:43–44** *“For days will come upon you.”* Jesus is describing the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred in 70 A.D. (Jer. 6:4–8; Matt. 23:38; 24:2).

### Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Luke 19:45–48 (Matt. 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; John 2:12–25)

**19:45** *“Then He ... began to drive out those who bought and sold in it.”* The cleansing of the Temple recorded in John 2:12–25 occurred at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. This event is at the end. Like the Pharisees (Luke 16:13–14), these Temple vendors loved money more than God.

**19:46** *“My house is a house of prayer.”* This is a quote from Isaiah 56:7. *“You have made it a den of thieves”* is another quote, from Jeremiah 7:11. Like too many churches today, the place of worship had become a place of business, with profit the main goal. The money-changers (Mark 11:15) charged inflated prices for both currency exchange and the animals that were to be sacrificed, which according to the Law, were to be affordable (Lev. 14:21–22).

**19:47** *“The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders ... sought to destroy Him.”* Again, these were the leaders of the nation. Their rejection of Jesus and desire to kill Him reflected the rejection of Israel as a whole.

## **LUKE CHAPTER 20**

The chief priests, Pharisees, and the Sadducees join forces to attack and discredit Jesus. Twice in this chapter Jesus plainly declares that He is God in human flesh.

### **Jesus' Authority Questioned**

Luke 20:1–8 (Matt. 21:23–27; Mark 11:27–33)

**20:1** *"The chief priests and the scribes, together with the elders, confronted Him."* Men from these three groups formed the Jewish Council, called the Sanhedrin. This was the highest religious authority in the land.

**20:2** *"By what authority are You doing these things?"* By His cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:45–46), Jesus had challenged the entire structure of the hypocritical religion of His day.

**20:3** *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?"* Jesus often responded to a question by asking another question. The right answer to this question would answer the question they asked of Him. John directly claimed to be the fulfillment of prophecy, the forerunner of the Messiah (Isa. 40:1–8; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:2–4). He also boldly proclaimed Jesus to be the promised Messiah (John 1:29, 33–34; 36). If John's authority came from heaven, then so did that of Jesus.

**20:5–7** *"So they answered that they did not know."* Jesus put these religious hypocrites in a dilemma. If they said it was from heaven, then they had to acknowledge Jesus' authority. If they denied John's heavenly commission, then the people would stone them. So they chose the third option—to claim ignorance. This was a shameful thing for these learned men to have to admit. For it showed that they were ignorant of the working of God in their own time (Luke 19:44).

**20:8** *"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."* Jesus' authority was:

1. Independent of human authorities,
2. Absolute and final (Matt. 28:18), and
3. Given directly by God the Father (John 5:22–24).

### **The Parable of the Vineyard**

Luke 20:9–19 (Matt. 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12)

**20:9** *"Then He began to tell the people this parable."* It is very important to make a distinction when Jesus tells a parable to the disciples, and when He is speaking to the religious leaders (note v. 19; Matt. 21:45; Mark 12:12). *"A certain man [landowner] planted a vineyard."* This is a figure taken out of the Old Testament. God is the landowner and Israel is His vineyard (Isa. 5:1–7). This is similar to the parable told in Luke 13:6–9.

**20:10–14** *"Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers."* The three servants in this story represent the Old Testament prophets. The response of Israel to the prophets of God showed their unbelief and unwillingness to bear spiritual fruit (Matt. 23:29–36). *"My beloved son."* This represents Jesus Christ and anticipates the coming crucifixion.

**20:16** *"He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others."* This anticipates the destruction of Israel in 70 A.D. and the coming of the Church. This theme fits with Matthew 8:11–12; 21:43–44; and Romans 9:30–33.

**20:17** *"The stone which the builders rejected."* This refers to Jesus Christ—the Cornerstone of God's spiritual temple (Psalm 118:22; Acts 4:10–12; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:4–8).

**20:18** *“Whoever falls on that stone.”* To fall on Christ in humility and faith breaks our pride but saves our soul. *“but on whomever it falls, it will grind him.”* Those on whom the stone falls are those who reject Him and are crushed in judgment (Isa. 8:14–15; Dan. 2:34–35, 44–45).

### Another Trap Set for Jesus

Luke 20:20–26 (Matt. 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17)

**20:20–21** *“So they watched Him ... that they might seize on His words.”* We are told in Matthew 22:15–16 that the Pharisees and the Herodians plotted this trap. These two parties were generally enemies, yet they united on the basis of their hatred for Jesus. *“Teacher, we know that You ... teach rightly.”* This flattery was intended to make Him drop His guard. Note that *“They pretended to be righteous”* (v. 20).

**20:22** *“Is it lawful ... to pay taxes to Caesar?”* If Jesus says “yes,” then the Pharisees can accuse Him of being a traitor to Rome. If He says “no,” then the Herodians, who loved Rome, could accuse Him of being an enemy of Caesar.

**20:24** *“Show Me a denarius.”* Jesus saw through their scheme. The common coin, a denarius, was used in Israel, showing that they recognized the authority of Rome. Caesar’s image was upon it.

**20:25** *“Render ... to God the things that are God’s.”* Caesar could claim the coin, for it bore his image. But we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; James 3:9). Therefore, we owe God our total faith, allegiance, and service.

**20:26** *“They marveled at His answer and kept silent.”* The wisdom of Jesus shut the mouths of His attackers.

### The Resurrection Questioned

Luke 20:27–40 (Matt. 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27)

**20:27–33** *“Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection ... came ... asked Him.”* This group was made up of the rich priestly order. They accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament and denied a bodily resurrection. *“Teacher, Moses wrote.”* They base their question on Deuteronomy 25:5–10. We have an example of this in Ruth 4:1–12. *“Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become?”* They assume that they have Jesus in a trap, because, if there is a resurrection, which man may claim her? Their ignorance of the resurrection state is enormous.

**20:34–35** *“The sons of this age ... But those who ... attain that age.”* Jesus must show them the different conditions between this earthly life and life in His kingdom.

**20:37–38** *“But even Moses ... called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’”* By referring to Moses, Jesus was meeting the Sadducees in the texts they claimed to believe—the five books of Moses. Since *“He is not the God of the dead but of the living,”* then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive. Therefore, the bodily resurrection was certain.

**20:39** *“Teacher, You have spoken well.”* Even the scribes had to admit the wisdom of Jesus (1 Cor. 1:30).

### Jesus Boldly Claims to be God

Luke 20:41–47 (Matt. 22:41–46; 23:1–7; Mark 12:35–40)

**20:41–44** *“How can they say that the Christ is [David’s Son]?”* Having shut the mouths of His opponents (v. 40), Jesus now poses a most important question. If the Christ is the Son of David, how can David call Him Lord? *“The LORD said to my Lord.”* This quote, from Psalm 110:1, relates to the resurrection of Jesus from the

## LUKE 20: 46–21:19

dead. God the Father says to God the Son, ***“sit at My right hand.”*** Certainly, no mere human could receive this invitation (see Luke 22:67–69; Acts 2:30; 7:56). ***“Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”*** Here is a warning of future judgment for those who reject and resist the Messiah.

**20:46–47** ***“Beware the scribes ... These will receive greater condemnation.”*** Jesus applies the point of His previous question. All those who hold positions of religious power, and yet reject Him, will be held to greater accountability (Luke 12:48; James 3:1, 2 Pet. 2:21).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 21**

Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple and the signs of His Second Coming.

### **The Widow’s Offering**

Luke 21:1–4 (Mark 12:41–44)

**21:1–2** ***“A certain poor widow putting in two mites.”*** This offering of the widow is in contrast to the scribes’ love of luxury and praise in Luke 20:45–47 and the offerings of the rich. The two mites were copper coins—the smallest currency used at that time.

**21:3–4** ***“All these out of their abundance ... but she out of her poverty.”*** Jesus contrasts not only the amount given, but the sacrifice of the giver. This made the poor widow’s gift of much greater value in God’s sight. Her sacrifice showed her gratitude for God’s extravagant grace to her.

### **Jesus Predicts the Temple’s Destruction**

Luke 21:5–6 (Matt. 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2)

**Note:** In all three passages listed in the heading above, Jesus connects the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem with the signs of His Second Coming. This is because, in the history of Israel, these events come close together. But, in between the events of 70 A.D. and the end-time signs, the Church Age takes place from Pentecost to the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:50–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). When the Church is removed at the Rapture, the history of Israel will pick up right where it left off.

**21:5–6** ***“The days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another.”*** The destruction by Rome in 70 A.D. was only the beginning. Today, the Western Wall of the Temple shows that this prophecy was not totally fulfilled. The climax of this prophecy will come at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

### **Signs of Israel’s Last Days**

Luke 21:7–19 (Matt. 24:3–14; Mark 13:3–13)

**21:7** ***“Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be ...?”*** Again, Jesus’ answer combines both the events surrounding the destruction of the Temple by Rome in 70 A.D., and the end-time events of the Tribulation.

**21:8–9** ***“Take heed that you not be deceived ... do not be terrified.”*** Turbulent times always give rise to false prophets, false christs, and fearful events. Jesus warns His followers not to give in to the two greatest dangers of such times.

**21:10–11** ***“Nation ... against nation ... earthquakes ... famines and pestilences.”*** Multiplied wars and natural disturbances, with signs from Heaven, will be the signs of Christ’s Second Coming (Matt. 24:6–8; Revelation 6).

**21:12–19** ***“But before all these things.”*** In this section, Jesus turns from end-time events to the things the apostles would face in their lifetimes. These predictions are fulfilled in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 3–5, 7,

21–28). They include persecution (v. 12), testimony (vv. 13–15), betrayal (v. 16), and divine protection (v. 18). ***“By your patience possess your souls.”*** Perseverance in faith delivers (saves) the soul from failure and loss of reward (Matt. 24:13; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 1 John 2:28). Only faith in Jesus Christ saves us for eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 5:24). This end-times perseverance is anticipated in Daniel 11:32–35.

### **The Fall of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ**

Luke 21:20–28 (Matt. 24:15–31; Mark 13:14–27)

**21:20 “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies.”** The events described in vv. 20–24 all occurred in the Roman invasion of 70 A.D., but they will also be fulfilled to an even greater degree at the end of the Tribulation Period (Joel 2:1–11; Zeph. 1:14–18; Zech. 12:1–14; 14:1–5).

**21:21 “Let those ... in Judea flee to the mountains.”** Believing Jews will flee Jerusalem before her final destruction (Rev. 12:1–17).

**21:23 “For there will be great distress ... and wrath upon this people.”** This refers to God’s final judgment on unbelieving Israel in the last half of the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15–28).

**21:24 “Jerusalem will be trampled ... until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”** Only Luke refers to these times, which are a reference to Daniel 9:27; 11:36–39, Matthew 24:15–21, Romans 11:25, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1–10. These times began with Nebuchadnezzar and will end with the Antichrist.

**21:25 “And there will be signs in the sun ... the moon ... the stars ... the sea and the waves roaring.”** There will be great disturbance in the natural realm before the Second Coming of Christ (Isa. 24:18–23; Ezek. 32:7–8; Joel 2:30–32).

**21:27–28 “Then they will see the Son of Man coming ... with power and great glory.”** All these events are leading up to the return of Jesus Christ as ***“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”*** (Rev. 1:7; 14:14; 19:11–16). ***“Your redemption draws near.”*** While these events will terrify unbelieving mankind, they should encourage believers that the plan of God is being fulfilled!

### **The Parable of the Fig Tree Taught and Applied**

Luke 21:29–38 (Matt. 24:32–44; Mark 13:28–37)

**21:29 “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees.”** In the accounts of Matthew and Mark, only the fig tree is mentioned. Here, Jesus includes all trees. It may be that, while the fig tree represents Israel, the other trees could represent the nations.

**21:31 “Know that the kingdom of God is near.”** This is the comfort mentioned in v. 28. We must always live our lives not based on current events, but rather focused on eternity.

**21:32 “This generation will by no means pass.”** Jesus is talking about the end-times generation when all these things will occur (Matt. 24:33–34). In Matthew 23:36, He uses the same phrase, but here it refers to His own generation, leading up to the events of 70 A.D.

**21:33 “My words will by no means pass away.”** God’s Word is the only sure foundation on which to build our lives (Matt. 7:24–27; 24:35; Mark 13:31; 1 Pet. 1:24–25; Isa. 40:6–8).

**21:34–36 “But take heed to yourselves ... watch therefore, and pray always.”** These words are very close to what Jesus said to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:35–37; 14:38). The world and its cares can be a great enemy of our souls (2 Tim 2:3–4; 1 John 2:15–17). ***“That you may be counted***

## LUKE 21:37–22:22

*worthy ... to stand before the Son of Man*”—that is, to stand approved and unashamed (1 John 2:28; 1 Cor. 3:14–15).

**21:37** *“At night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet.”* Here, we see Jesus, the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), watching over the flock of Israel. His days were filled with teaching, pleading, and warning the people. At night, under the stars, He drew strength from His Father. Truly, *“The Son of Man [had] nowhere to lay His head”* (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58).

## **LUKE CHAPTER 22**

The plot to kill Jesus unfolds; Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper; Peter’s denial; the prayer in the Garden.

### **The Satanic Plot of the Chief Priests**

Luke 22:1–6 (Matt. 26:1–5, 14–16; Mark 14:1–2, 10–11; John 11:45–53)

**22:1–2** *“The feast of Unleavened Bread ... called Passover.”* The Feast of Passover led into the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exod. 12:1–20; Lev. 23:5–6). *“The chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him.”* They are now fully determined to kill Jesus.

**22:3–5** *“Satan entered Judas.”* The chief priests and captains find an unexpected ally in Judas. All are united with the purpose of Satan, who now indwells Judas. This apparently first happened when he took the money, and again when he was at the Last Supper (John 13:2, 27). The *“money”* was thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15), which was a fulfillment of prophecy (Zech. 11:12–13), and the price of a slave (Exod. 21:32). Judas was a lover of money and a thief (John 12:1–8).

### **Jesus Transforms the Passover into the Lord’s Supper**

Luke 22:7–23 (Matt. 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; John 13:21–30)

**22:7** *“When the Passover must be killed.”* This refers to the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:5–8), which was a picture of Christ (John 1:29, 36).

**22:10–12** *“Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover.”* As in the preparations for the Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28–35), Jesus may have made plans ahead, but kept them secret, so as to finish the Passover before Judas could betray Him. However, that they would meet *“a man ... carrying a pitcher of water”* reveals Jesus’ omniscience—His deity.

**22:15** *“I have desired to eat this Passover ... before I suffer.”* There appears to be three reasons for this statement:

1. It foreshadowed the purpose of His death.
2. It looked forward to His kingdom.
3. He transformed Passover into the celebration of the New Covenant fulfillment as it applied to Israel (v. 20; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–28; Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25).

**22:17–20** *“Then He took the cup ... and He took bread ... He also took the cup.”* Only Luke mentions two cups. In the Passover, there were four cups of wine shared. The cup in v. 20 was the third cup of the Passover meal, called by the Jews, “the cup of redemption.” See 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, which is similar to this passage.

**22:21–22** *“Behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table ... woe to that man.”* Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas never believed in Him and would betray Him (John 6:64, 70–71). Though Jesus’ death was *“as it has been determined”* by God, yet Judas willingly chose to play his part and would be judged accordingly.

**Jesus Instructs the Disciples and Peter**

Luke 22:24–38 (Matt. 26:31–35; Mark 14:27–31; John 13:36–38)

**22:24** *“There was also a dispute ... which of them should be ... greatest.”* How tragic that, in the very night of His betrayal, the disciples would seek their own greatness, and Peter would deny Him.

**22:27** *“Yet I am among you as the One who serves.”* No greater rebuke could be given than the difference between the Lord of glory—Jesus Christ in His humility—and the self-serving attitude of these disciples (Matt. 20:26–28; Mark 10:43–45; Phil. 2:5–9).

**22:28** *“You are those who have continued with Me in My trials.”* Jesus does not overlook their faithfulness, in spite of their failures. What great hope this gives to each of us, for we all stumble in so many ways (James 3:2)!

**22:29–30** *“I bestow upon you a kingdom.”* The apostles would receive great eternal reward in Christ’s kingdom. This would include *“that you may eat and drink at My table.”* This is reminiscent of David’s gracious care for Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:1–8). Also, they would *“sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* See Matthew 19:28; 24:47.

**22:31** *“Satan has asked ... that he may sift you as wheat.”* Though he is in rebellion against God, Satan cannot touch a believer without God’s permission (Job 1:9–12; 2:3–6). The “sifting” would be a trial of Peter’s faith and that of all of the disciples (Amos 9:9; Matt. 26:31–35; Mark 14:27–28; 1 Pet. 5:5–8).

**22:32** *“But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail.”* As our only true Mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), the Lord Jesus prays for each and every believer (John 17:9–11; Heb. 7:25). *“Strengthen your brethren.”* Jesus essentially restored Peter even before he fell (cf. John 21:15–17). Even though Peter’s faith failed, it did not affect his eternal salvation (John 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 5:1; 1 John 2:2).

**22:35–37** *“Did you lack anything?”* The earlier sending of the disciples was designed to prove the providential care of God (Matt. 10:9–10). Jesus is now warning the disciples that persecution would increase, and that foresight would include the provision of *“money,” “knapsack”* (backpack), and even a *“sword”* for self-defense.

**Jesus Prays; Is Betrayed and Arrested; Denied by Peter;  
Mocked and Beaten; and Faces the Sanhedrin**

Luke 22: 39–71 (Matt. 26:36–7; Mark 14:32–50, 53–72; John 18:1–26)

**22:39** *“He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed.”* Jesus did not stay in Jerusalem at night but retreated to this place (John 7:53–8:1; 18:1; Luke 21:37).

**22:40** *“Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”* The temptation that night would be to forsake and deny Him. The disciples all failed this test.

**22:42** *“Father ... take this cup away from Me ... not My will, but Yours, be done.”* The cup was the judgment of the sins of all the world (Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Jesus drank this cup of God’s wrath (Psalm 11:6; 75:7–8; Jer. 25:15).

**22:43** *“An angel ... strengthening Him.”* God did not remove the cross, but sent an angel to strengthen Jesus for the coming judgment.

**22:44** *“His sweat became like great drops of blood.”* The internal agony of Jesus at the prospect of becoming sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21) caused Him to sweat like a man who was bleeding. He would have begun the ordeal of His crucifixion completely dehydrated.

## LUKE 22:46–23:4

**22:46 “Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”** Twice Jesus warned the disciples that the lack of prayer led to spiritual failure (Matt. 17:21; see James 1:12–15).

**22:48 “Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”** Jesus let Judas know that He was aware of Judas’ betrayal and the hypocrisy of doing it “*with a kiss.*”

**22:49 “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”** The disciples misunderstood Jesus’ earlier instruction (v. 36). While we have the right to self-defense against criminal attack, we do not establish His kingdom, nor uphold His cause, using violence.

**22:52–53 “Have you come out, as against a robber ...?”** Jesus rebukes these religious leaders for their hypocrisy. His total command of the situation shows the effects of His prayers. **“But this is your hour.”** Though these events fulfilled prophecy (v. 37; Isaiah 53), these men were still accountable for their rejection and unbelief.

**22:54 “Peter followed at a distance.”** Peter’s fall was predictable. His lust for greatness (v. 24), his boastful self-assurance (v. 33), his lack of prayer (vv. 40, 46), and his futile attempt to keep Christ from the cross (v. 50) had all placed him “*at a distance*” from the power of fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:7; Gal. 5:16).

**22:55–62 “I do not know Him.”** Peter’s three-fold denial happened just as Jesus had warned. **“Peter went out and wept bitterly.”** The convicting look from Jesus broke Peter’s heart and, with it, his pride. He would be a different man in the future. God often allows failure in our lives to teach us humility and to make us more dependent upon Him.

**22:63–65 “Now the men ... mocked Him and beat Him ... saying, ‘Prophesy!’”** This conduct was forbidden both by Jewish and Roman law. With this abuse, the physical suffering of Jesus begins.

**22:66–69 “If You are the Christ, tell us ... Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.”** There had been many before Jesus came who claimed to be the Christ (Acts 5:33–39). What Jesus said here went beyond claiming to be the Christ. He made it clear that He was God in human flesh and would be their judge (Psalm 110:1; Dan. 7:13–14; John 5:19–30; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:1–3; 8:1).

**22:70 “Are You then the Son of God?”** These leaders realized that Jesus was claiming equality with God (John 5:18). When Jesus answered, **“You rightly say that I am,”** they were enraged, for He convicted them of the crime of killing Him because of who He was, not for what He had done.

## LUKE CHAPTER 23

The crucifixion of Jesus for the sins of the world.

### The Trials of Jesus

Luke 23:1–25 (Matt. 27:1–2, 11–26; Mark 15:1–15; John 18:28–39, 19:5–16)

**23:2 “We found this fellow ... saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”** The religious authorities accused Jesus of three things: the first two are absolute lies, the third is stated in such a way as to make Jesus seem to be a threat to Rome. They do not mention the charge of blasphemy (22:71; Matt. 26:65).

**23:3 “Are you the King of the Jews?”** Pilate focuses on the only true charge against Him. Jesus answers that what he had asked was true (see 22:68–70). In John 18:36, Jesus told Pilate, **“My kingdom is not of this world.”**

**23:4 “I find no fault in this Man.”** Pilate was objective in his examination of Jesus, where the religious leaders were totally dishonest. In this chapter, Jesus is declared innocent five times (vv. 4, 14, 15, 22, 41).

**23:5–7** *“Beginning from Galilee ... Herod’s jurisdiction.”* Pilate thought he saw a way out of his dilemma—not wanting to condemn an innocent man—by sending Jesus to Herod for judgment.

**23:9** *“Then he questioned Him ... but He answered him nothing.”* Having heard about Jesus, Herod simply wanted Him to perform some miracle, to satisfy his curiosity. Jesus maintained a dignified silence (Isa. 53:7).

**23:11** *“Then Herod ... treated Him with contempt and mocked Him.”* Angered at Jesus’ silence, Herod makes a joke of His claim to be a king, putting a royal robe on Him.

**23:12** *“That very day Pilate and Herod became friends.”* Throughout history, many former enemies have become friends over their shared hatred and contempt for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**23:14–16** *“You have brought this Man to me ... I have found no fault in this Man.”* Rome was famous for its impartial justice. Pilate makes the right judgment, but due to his own weakness, he will be overruled by the religious leaders.

**23:18** *“Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas.”* It was customary for Pilate to release one prisoner to the people at the Feast of Passover. Though he tries to release Jesus, both the leaders and the people ask him to release Barabbas, a revolutionary and a murderer. *“Barabbas”* means “son of the father.” The Jews rejected the one and only Son of the heavenly Father and chose instead a son of the father (*“the devil,”* John 8:44). Jesus died in the place of a murderer, a symbol of His death for all sinners.

**23:21** *“Crucify Him, crucify Him!”* Only Pilate had the authority to impose the death penalty. The religious leaders used both blackmail (John 19:12) and flattery (John 19:15) to move Pilate. The blackmail suggests that they would have sent a report to Rome accusing Pilate of supporting treachery against Caesar.

**23:24–25** *“So Pilate gave sentence ... delivered Jesus to their will.”* Jesus was declared innocent both by Pilate and Herod. The frenzy of the crowd and the threats of the religious leaders overcame Pilate’s sense of justice so as to satisfy the crowd.

### The Crucifixion of Jesus

Luke 23:26–49 (Matt. 27:32–56; Mark 15:21–42; John 19:17–24, 30)

**23:26** *“A certain man, Simon a Cyrenian.”* This man was from North Africa. He had probably saved all his life to attend one Passover. His sons became known disciples (Mark 15:21). The Rufus mentioned by Paul may be the same man (Rom. 16:13). In his carrying of the cross, Simon demonstrated the disciples sharing of Christ’s sufferings (Luke 9:23).

**23:29** *“Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore.”* In the coming days of the destruction of Jerusalem, women without children would be blessed by not having to watch their children slaughtered.

**23:30** *“‘Fall on us!’ ... ‘Cover us!’”* These words come from Hosea 10:8 where the judgment is so terrible that immediate death is preferable. To sin knowingly is to incur the harshest form of punishment (Heb. 10:26–31; James 4:17; 2 Pet. 2:21).

**23:31** *“The green wood ... the dry.”* The point is, if Jesus, who was innocent, was being crucified, how much more severe would the punishment be of those who are guilty. This anticipates the coming judgment of Jerusalem by the Roman army in 70 AD.

**23:34** *“Father, forgive them.”* Even in the face of rejection and hatred, Jesus pleads for forgiveness for His enemies. This prayer shows the greatness of His compassion (Phil. 2:5–9), and the desire of God the Father that

## LUKE 23:35–56

none should perish (1Tim. 2:1–6). This forgiveness is available to everyone (Rom. 5:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2), but can only be received by faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

**23:35** *“He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ.”* This is a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy to the people of Nazareth (Luke 4:23). The hatred of these rulers of the Jews left no room for compassion on Him who healed so many (Psalm 22:7–8).

**23:38** *“An inscription ... in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.”* It was common to post a sign listing the criminal’s offences above their head. This placard was the charge for which He was crucified. Jesus’ true identity is proclaimed to the world: **“THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”** Israel and the world had rejected their Savior.

**23:40–42** *“Do you not even fear God ...?”* This thief first rebukes his fellow criminal, then confesses their guilt as opposed to Jesus’ innocence, and finally pleads with Jesus to remember him when He enters into His kingdom. This thief is a picture of the simplicity of saving faith. Nailed to a cross, he could do nothing but trust in the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

**23:43** *“Today you will be with Me in Paradise.”* In ancient thought, Paradise was “the garden of the King.” To be invited there to meet with the king was the highest honor. Jesus does more than offer this thief eternal life, He assures him of a place of honor in His kingdom.

**23:44–45** *“About the sixth hour.”* Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), which was 9 a.m. The sixth hour (12 noon) marks the beginning of the worst of Jesus’ agony. The darkening of the sun and the ripping of the veil both show God’s wrath upon Israel, as well as the opening of full and free access into the presence of God (Heb. 4:14–16; 10:19–23), ending the Old Testament system of worship under the Law.

**23:46** *“Father, into Your hands.”* Jesus quotes the words of David’s faith from Psalm 31:5, however, He adds the word, *“Father.”* Jesus entrusts His Spirit into the safekeeping of the Father.

**23:47** *“The centurion ... glorified God.”* This centurion honored God by recognizing Jesus as the Son of God (see Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39). This was the beginning of the fulfillment of Jesus’ words, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself”* (John 12:32).

**23:48–49** *“The whole crowd ... all His acquaintances.”* Some came to watch out of curiosity, but Jesus’ followers, standing at a distance, watched in sorrow and confusion (Luke 24:16–24).

### The Burial of Jesus in Joseph’s Tomb

Luke 23:50–56 (Matt. 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; John 19:38–42)

**23:50–51** *“Joseph, a council member ... he had not consented to their decision.”* This man was a member of the Jewish council—the Sanhedrin. Both he and Nicodemus had become secret believers (John 7:50–52; 19:38–42).

**23:53** *“A tomb ... where no one had ever lain before.”* Jesus’ body was honorably buried by Joseph and Nicodemus in an undefiled tomb, which would be the place of His resurrection (Isa. 53:8–9).

**23:54–56** *“The women ... observed the tomb ... and prepared spices.”* It was customary to anoint the body with special oils and spices. Because of the late hour and the coming Sabbath, this was not possible. These faithful women prepared to perform this final honor to the body of Jesus after the Sabbath was over. His resurrection would make this task unnecessary.

**LUKE CHAPTER 24**

The resurrection of Jesus; His appearances and instructions to His disciples.

**The Resurrection Morning**

Luke 24:1–12 (Matt. 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; John 20:1–10)

**24:1** *“Now on the first day of the week.”* This was Sunday morning. It was the beginning of the Feast of Firstfruits, which always began on the day after the Sabbath which followed Passover (Lev. 23:9–11). Both Firstfruits and Pentecost were always on Sunday (Lev. 23:15–17), which is why early Christians, and we today, celebrate Sunday as a memorial to the Lord’s resurrection and the beginning of the Church Age.

**24:2** *“They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.”* We are told in Matthew 28:2 that there was a great earthquake, the second since the crucifixion (Matt. 27:51), and that *“an angel of the Lord”* had rolled away the stone.

**24:5** *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* The women came to anoint a dead body, but the Lord was alive! *“He is not here, but is risen!”* This is the greatest proclamation of victory in history (Rom. 1:4; 4:23–25; 1 Cor. 15:1–4)!

**24:11** *“They [the disciples] did not believe them [the women].”* The persistent unbelief of the disciples, after having been told at least three times by Jesus that He would rise from the dead, shows how hard-hearted we can be (Mark 16:11, 13–14). See Jesus’ rebuke to them in Luke 24:25–26.

**24:12** *“Peter arose and ran to the tomb.”* John tells us that he also ran with Peter, and he believed (John 20:3–9)—the first of the disciples to do so without seeing the resurrected Christ. We should not be unsettled by the variations in the gospel accounts. None of them contradict the others but, as in any record by multiple witnesses, each will remember or will emphasize different aspects of the same story.

**Christ’s Appearance on the Emmaus Road**

Luke 24:13–35 (Mark 16:12–13)

**24:13** *“Behold, two of them were traveling ... to a village called Emmaus.”* See Mark 16:12–13 for the only other record of this event.

**24:15–16** *“Jesus Himself drew near ... they did not know Him.”* Jesus may have concealed His identity from them, or their unbelief may have blinded them. It is critical to see that one may believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life, and yet sometimes have a hardened heart of unbelief. This was true of all the disciples at this point.

**24:19** *“Jesus of Nazareth ... a Prophet mighty in deed and word.”* This Cleopas (v. 18) may be the same as Clopas in John 19:25. It may be that it was he and his wife Mary who were the two walking this road. Note their faith in Jesus’ deeds and words. Luke begins the book of Acts, *“The former account I made ... of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach”* (Acts 1:1). This also associates Jesus with Moses (Acts 7:22), who was a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15).

**24:21** *“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.”* Though they had not lost faith in His role as prophet, they had begun to doubt His role as Redeemer (Job 19:25–26; Luke 1:68–72; 2:38).

**24:22–23** *“Certain women ... said He was alive.”* These two were among those who heard of the Resurrection but did not believe it (vv. 9–11).

## LUKE 24:25–47

**24:25** *“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!”* Jesus rebukes their unbelief, reminding them that His mission is the central focus of all the prophets.

**24:26** *“Ought not the Christ to have suffered ... to enter into His glory?”* This question demands an affirmative answer from anyone familiar with the prophets (Psalm 22; Isa. 53; Zech. 11:12–13; 12:10; 13:6).

**24:27** *“He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”* What a Bible class this must have been—to have the central figure of all the Bible point out specific references to Himself throughout the Old Testament (John 1:14)!

**24:28** *“He indicated that He would have gone farther.”* Here, Jesus displays the common courtesy of His time. He would not intrude into their habitation without an invitation. In the same way, He will not force Himself into any life, but must be received and welcomed (John 1:10–13; 3:33; 1 John 5:9–13).

**24:29** *“But they constrained Him ... ‘Abide with us.’”* This reminds us of Jesus’ words in the Upper Room, *“Abide in Me, and I in you”* (John 15:4). True fellowship with Christ demands that we desire His presence, and seek it above all else.

**24:31** *“Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him.”* Jesus’ act of breaking and blessing the bread, which they had observed before, made Him known to them.

**24:32** *“He opened the Scriptures to us.”* Like these two disciples, we all must depend upon our Lord—through His Spirit—to open to us the meaning of the Scriptures (Zech. 4:6; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:10–13).

**24:33–34** *“So they rose up that very hour ... ‘The Lord is risen indeed,’ and has appeared to Simon.”* The long, seven-mile journey seemed as nothing for the joy they had to share. How gracious of our Lord that He would make a special appearance to Peter, in private, to show His compassion and forgiveness to him!

### Jesus’ Appearance and Instruction to the Disciples

Luke 24:36–49 (John 20:19–23; Acts 1:3–5; 1 Cor. 15:5–8)

**24:36–37** *“‘Peace to you’ ... they were terrified.”* How often Jesus comes to us to bring us peace, and we instead give in to fear (Matt. 14:25–27).

**24:38–39** *“Why are you troubled ... a spirit does not have flesh and bones.”* The resurrected body of Jesus is physical, and He retains the scars of His crucifixion (see John 20:20, 27). The resurrection body is *“flesh and bones”* but not *“flesh and blood”* (1 Cor. 15:50).

**24:41–43** *“Have you any food here?”* The resurrection body is able to eat but probably does not require food for sustenance. This was done as a final proof to them that He was not a spirit.

**24:44–45** *“All things must be fulfilled which were written.”* Again, Jesus *“opened their understanding,”* concerning Scriptures that related to Himself. Just as He enlightened these disciples, He desires to do for us, by His Spirit, if we are receptive (Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–21).

**24:46–47** *“Thus it is written.”* This is the third time in His post-resurrection appearances recorded by Luke that Jesus stresses that His crucifixion and resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures (vv. 27, 44). As the Apostles went out, they were to stress this truth (Acts 3:18; 17:2–3; 26:22–23). *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached.”* Repentance refers to a change of mind. The Jewish nation needed to turn from their reliance on lineage from Abraham as a basis of salvation (Matt. 3:9; John 8:33, 39). The Gentile world needed to turn from their trust in idols. However, repentance alone is not the basis of forgiveness.

It is the door that leads to faith in Jesus Christ, which is the only means of receiving eternal life (Mark 1:15; Luke 8:12; John 1:7; 3:16–18, 36; 5:24; Acts 16:31; 26:18).

**24:49** *“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father.”* Here, Jesus refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit, as promised in the prophecies of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:24–28; Joel 2:28–29). *“Endued with power from on high.”* The coming and personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is for the purpose of giving to each believer the supernatural power to learn God’s Word, in order to accomplish the plan of God for their life and ministry (John 14:26; 15:26–27; 16:13; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21; 5:18; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 4:5–7; Gal. 5:16, 22–23).

**24:51** *“While He blessed them ... He was ... carried up into heaven.”* Luke ends his Gospel at the point that He begins the book of Acts (Acts 1:2, 8).

**24:52–53** *“They worshiped Him ... with great joy ... praising and blessing God.”* The doubts and fears of the disciples had been erased by the truth of the Resurrection. The true worship of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit, should cause every believer to overcome the troubles of this world and to live a life of joy and praise to God (Rom. 5:1–5; 8:31–39; 2 Cor. 1:3–11; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 John 5:5).

## CONCLUSION

Though Luke never met Jesus and did not have the advantage of having travelled with the original disciple band, he was a highly trained man, a physician (Col.4:14), and a careful historian (Luke 1:1–4). This Gospel was originally written for only one reader (Luke 1:3) but has been a source of great instruction and blessing to multitudes. Luke was a Gentile who wrote to a Gentile world about the love of the Savior for the weak, the broken, and the outcast. There is greater emphasis in this Gospel on praise and prayer than in all the other laws combined. In fact, at the end, Luke leaves us with the picture of Jesus’ ascension and the disciples returning to Jerusalem: *“with great joy, and [they] were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.”* (Luke 24:52–53).



**The Gospel According to**  
***John***



## INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew was written primarily for the Jewish reader. The record in Mark had the Roman reader in mind. Luke was prepared for a wider audience—the Greek-speaking world. But the Gospel of John has a wider focus than all, as it was written for the whole world.

John explains his purpose for writing this book in John 20:30–31, “*And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*” By his own admission, the purpose of this book is to tell the reader how to enter into eternal life: there is only one way—to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So critical is this theme in the book that the word “believe” occurs about 99 times in this Gospel alone. I will be focusing on this theme of believing for eternal life as we go through the book.

Where the other Gospel writers focused on Jesus’ royal lineage, or His humanity, John presents Jesus in His deity. The Gospel of John presents the **signs** and the **sayings** of Jesus. Another way to put it is that John writes about the **works** and the **words** of Jesus (John 5:20, 24). He is presented as the second member of the trinity, who became man in order to die for us on the cross (Phil. 2:5–8). This is the central emphasis of the book. This of course ties into John’s point, that to believe in Him is to receive the gift of eternal life.

### **The Eight Signs:**

1. Water turned to wine (2:1–11),
2. Healing the nobleman’s son (4:46–54),
3. Healing the lame man (5:1–15),
4. Feeding the five thousand (6:1–14),
5. Walking on the sea (6:16–21),
6. Healing the blind man (9:1–7),
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1–45), and
8. The resurrection of Jesus (2:18–22; 20:1–31).

### **The Eight Sayings:**

1. “I Am *He*” (4:26).
2. “I Am the bread of life” (6:35, 41, 48, 51).
3. “I Am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5).
4. “I Am the door” (10:7, 9).
5. “I Am the good shepherd” (10:11, 14).
6. “I Am the resurrection and the life” (11:25).
7. “I Am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6).
8. “I Am the true vine” (15:1, 5).

Each “I Am” saying is Jesus’ claim to be God—the “*I AM*” (Exod. 3:14) of the Old Testament.



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

## JOHN CHAPTER 1

The deity of Jesus and the witness of John the Baptist.

### Jesus The Eternal Word

John 1:1–5

**1:1** *“In the beginning was the Word.”* The beginning here refers to eternity past. As the Living Word, Jesus is both the expression of the mind of God, and the living example of all scriptural truth. In the Person and work of Jesus Christ, we have the expression of the will of God, that all men might believe and be saved (1 Tim. 2:3–4; 2 Pet. 3:9). *“And the Word was with God.”* This speaks of the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son. *“And the Word was God.”* This is a declaration at the very beginning of the book of the deity of Jesus, which will be stressed throughout this Gospel (John 5:17–24; 8:56–58; 10:31–33).

**1:2** *“He was in the beginning with God.”* In Genesis 1:1, at the creation, Jesus was working with the Father (see John 1:3, 10).

**1:3** *“All things were made through Him.”* Jesus was the active agent of all creation, performing the will of the Father (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

**1:4** *“In Him was life.”* Life was not created but existed “in Jesus” before the creation. *“The life was the light of men.”* The earthly life of Jesus was the highest form of revelation from God to men (John 8:12; 9:5; 2 Cor. 4:6–7; Heb. 1:1–3).

**1:5** *“The light shines in the darkness.”* Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal God to men. *“The darkness did not comprehend it.”* This could mean either that the world did not understand Christ, or that the darkness could not overcome Him. Here, the darkness of the fallen world is seen to be hostile to the light of God.

### The Commission of John

John 1:6–13

**1:6** *“A man sent from God, whose name was John.”* This is speaking of John the Baptist, not John the disciple and the author of this book. The following three reasons for his commission are given in this section: to be a witness, that men might believe, and that by believing they might have eternal life.

**1:7** *“To bear witness.”* The mission of John the Baptist was to proclaim to men that Jesus was the promised Christ (see 1:23, 29, 32, 34, 36). *“That all through him might believe.”* Every member of the human race is included in the love of God, the saving work of Christ, and the opportunity to believe (John 12:32; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2). Rejection of Jesus Christ is the only basis for eternal condemnation (John 3:16–19).

**1:8** *“He ... was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* John pointed away from himself (see John 1:15, 26; 3:28–31) and to Jesus as the *“Light of the world”* (Isa. 2:5; 9:2; 49:6; John 8:12).

**1:9** *“The true Light which gives light to every man.”* The coming of Jesus Christ into the world has brought a *“light”* that is available to all and will never be extinguished (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:14–21).

**1:10–11** *“He was in the world ... His own ... did not receive Him.”* The response of the world to the coming of Jesus has been mostly rejection. John places the blame for rejecting Him on each and every unbeliever (see 3:17–19).

## JOHN 1:12–27

**1:12** *“As many as received Him ... who believe in His name.”* John shows that we receive Him, and His gift of eternal life, simply by believing in His name, that is, His true identity as the Son of God. The *“right to become children of God.”* signifies both the power and the authority from God to become His children.

**1:13** *“Who were born ... of God.”* Here, John contrasts the new birth by faith with three common misconceptions:

1. *“Not of blood,”* not by lineage to Abraham (John 8:39; Matt. 3:9),
2. *“Not of the will of the flesh,”* that is, not by human effort (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18),
3. *“Nor of the will of man,”* that is, by the efforts of anyone else (Luke 16:27–31). Each person must choose to either receive or reject Jesus Christ.

### The Word Became Flesh

John 1:14–18

**1:14** *“The Word became flesh.”* This speaks of the physical birth of Jesus to Mary (Phil. 2:5–8). *“We beheld His glory.”* John begins his epistle with this truth (1 John 1:1–4). This glory seen in Jesus was the glory of God seen in the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:34–35; Matt. 17:1–2). *“Full of grace and truth.”* This brings to mind what God said to Moses when He appeared to him (Exod. 34:6).

**1:16** *“Of His fullness we have all received.”* All mankind has received good things from God (Acts 14:17; 17:25–28; James 1:17).

**1:17** *“The law ... grace and truth.”* The Law was a revelation of God’s righteousness and man’s sinfulness, but the full revelation of God’s grace and truth came through Jesus Christ alone (Rom. 3:19–31; 5:20–21; 6:14; Gal. 3:21–29).

**1:18** *“No one has seen God.”* God is Spirit and no man can behold Him (Exod. 33:18–23; John 4:24; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17). *“In the bosom of the Father.”* Jesus Christ lives in perpetual intimacy and fellowship with the Father. *“He has declared Him.”* The word *“declared”* means “to fully expound or explain.”

### The Witness of John the Baptist

John 1:19–34 (Matt. 3:1–17; Mark 1:1–11; Luke 3:1–22)

**1:19–21** *“The Jews sent priests ... to ask him, ‘Who are you?’”* The religious authorities had heard of John and were alarmed: first, because many people in the first century were looking for the coming of the Messiah, second, because they wanted to keep peaceful relations with Rome. *“The Christ ... Elijah ... the Prophet?”* John immediately answered their first question—he denied being the Christ. The reference to Elijah refers to the prophecy in Malachi 4:5–6, which John partially fulfilled, but would not be totally fulfilled until the Second Coming. The reference to the *“Prophet”* is from Deuteronomy 18:15, which was a reference to the Messiah, though many in John’s day thought that the *“Prophet”* and the *“Messiah”* were two different people.

**1:23** *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness.”* This quote from Isaiah 40:3 should have alarmed the religious leaders, for it clearly declared that John was announcing the appearance of the Messiah. *“Make straight the way of the LORD.”* The word *“LORD”* in the Isaiah prophecy is *Jehovah*, again showing that Jesus is God.

**1:25–27** *“I baptize with water.”* John’s message and baptism required some form of authority. Later, Jesus would silence these very Pharisees by asking them where John’s authority came from (Matt. 21:23–27; Mark 11:28–33; Luke 20:1–8). The baptism of John was a symbolic baptism, but that of Jesus was spiritually transforming (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8).

**1:29 “Behold! The Lamb of God.”** John identifies Jesus as God’s Passover lamb (Exod. 12:3–14). *“Who takes away the sin of the world!”* Jesus Christ died for every member of the human race and paid the penalty for all sins of all time (Rom. 5:6–10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:24–25; 1 John 2:2). Because Jesus paid the penalty in full, only unbelief remains as a basis for eternal condemnation (John 3:17–19).

**1:31–33 “That He should be revealed to Israel ... I came baptizing.”** Though John and Jesus were cousins, and would have known each other, John did not realize that Jesus was the Messiah until the Word of God was fulfilled in the vision of the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus at His baptism. Thus, John revealed that, in addition to a symbol of repentance, his baptism was designed to reveal the true Christ. This may be what Jesus was referring to when he said to John, *“Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* (Matt. 3:15).

**1:34 “This is the Son of God.”** This speaks of Jesus again as the uniquely born Son of God (v. 18; Psalm 2:7; Prov. 30:4).

### The First Disciples Called John 1:35–51

**1:37 “The two disciples.”** One of these was Andrew (v. 40), who brought Peter to Jesus. The other was probably John, the author of this Gospel. We only see Andrew three times as a main character; in each of them, he is bringing someone to Jesus (here, and in John 6:8–9, and John 12:22).

**1:41 “We have found the Messiah ... the Christ.”** Whatever was discussed that afternoon and evening (v. 39) had convinced Andrew that Jesus was the Messiah.

**1:42 “You are Simon ... You shall be called Cephas.”** The word *“Cephas”* is Aramaic. We get “Peter” from the Greek word, *petros*, which also means a “rock” or “stone.” This “nick-name” from Jesus anticipates the prominent role Peter would play among the disciples.

**1:43 “The following day ... Jesus ... found Philip.”** This theme of the early disciples seems to be stressing that Jesus found some, but the early disciples then found others. It is a picture of how discipleship works.

**1:44 “Bethsaida ... the city of Andrew and Peter.”** Peter and Andrew knew James and John (Mark 1:16–20). They most likely would also have known Philip and Nathanael.

**1:45–46 “Philip found Nathanael.”** Nathanael is not mentioned in the other Gospels, and we believe he is the same as Bartholomew (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18). *“We have found Him of whom Moses ... wrote—Jesus of Nazareth.”* Here, Philip is referring to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15 about the *“Prophet”* (see v. 21). This shows early on that the disciples believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah and Savior. *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* The village of Nazareth was a small, out-of-the-way village in Galilee, also a scorned area. In Nathanael, He found a man like the one spoken of in Psalm 32:2. *“Before Philip called you ... I saw you.”* Jesus allows the disciples a glimpse into His ability to know all things.

**1:49 “Rabbi, You are the Son of God.”** Nathanael uses the Old Testament title for Messiah to proclaim his faith in Jesus (2 Sam. 7:14–16; Psalm 2:7; Dan. 7:13–14).

**1:50–51 “You will see greater things than these.”** The Gospel of John is composed around seven “signs” Jesus performs to demonstrate His identity and power. These “signs” culminate in the eighth great “sign,” which is Jesus’ resurrection from the dead (2:18–19). *“You shall see heaven open.”* This may refer back to the vision of Jacob (Gen. 28:12–17).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 2**

The first sign (miracle) of Jesus at the wedding at Cana and His first cleansing of the Temple—the first shows His joy among the common people, the second, His wrath at perverted religion.

### **Water Turned to Wine**

John 2:1–12

**2:1** *“There was a wedding in Cana ... and the Mother of Jesus was there.”* The prominence of Mary in this story suggests her relationship to the family of the groom.

**2:3** *“They ran out of wine.”* A wedding was one of the most joyous times among the people of Israel. To run out of wine would be a great humiliation. *“They have no wine.”* Mary takes the problem to Jesus. She had learned to rely on His wisdom. This embarrassing problem provides the opportunity for Jesus’ first great “sign” (see v. 11).

**2:4** *“Woman.”* In English, Jesus’ response seems unnecessarily harsh. However, the term “*woman*” was a term of endearment (John 19:26). We might paraphrase: “Lady, in what way does this affect Me?” Jesus knew this was designed to reveal His glory. *“My hour has not yet come.”* This refers to His final hour of crucifixion (see John 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1). Jesus’ response suggests that the work of turning water into wine is a foreshadowing of the greater work of transforming lives that would result from His crucifixion.

**2:5** *“Whatever He says ... do it.”* It is obvious that Mary took Jesus’ response far differently than we do, showing that she knew He would solve the problem, is simply leaving the matter in His hands.

**2:6** *“Six waterpots.”* Because the number seven in Jewish thought is the number of perfection, six implies imperfection—as if something is missing. *“The manner of purification of the Jews.”* This reference to ceremonial cleansing hints that what is imperfect is the Jewish law. What is missing is the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

**2:7** *“Fill the waterpots ... to the brim.”* Jesus came into the world to bring fullness of life, and that in abundance (John 10:10; Eph. 3:19–20). In everything He does, we see the extravagance of His grace!

**2:8–9** *“Draw some out now.”* This word “*draw*” is only used in John’s Gospel, and only in chapters 2 and 4. Its use in 4:15 shows that 2:8–9 is illustrating the living water of eternal life. *“But the servants ... knew.”* Jesus’ first miracle was known by the servants but not the master of the house.

**2:10** *“You have kept the good wine until now!”* Normally at a wedding, the best wine was set out first, then later, the common wine. Here again we see a parallel to the truth that the “*old wine*” of the Law could not compare to the “*new wine*” which Jesus brought into the world (Matt. 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37–39). This anticipates the replacement of the “*old*” covenant by the “*new covenant*” (Matt. 26:26–29; Heb. 8:6–13; see also Jer. 31:31–34).

**2:11** *“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana ... and manifested His glory.”* The Gospel of John is built around eight “*signs*” that reveal Jesus to be God in the flesh (John 2:1–11; 2:18–22; 4:46–54; 5:1–15; 6:1–41; 11:1–45; 20:1–31). See Introduction on page 7 for a list of the eight signs. Mixed with these signs are “sayings” or teachings that make the same point. *“His disciples believed in Him.”* Many of them had already believed in Him as the Messiah (John 1:41, 45, 49). For some, this may have been the beginning of that belief, but for the others, it was a continuation in the progress of their faith (Rom. 1:17).

**2:12** “*After this He went down to Capernaum.*” The town of Capernaum would become the center of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. John’s family accompany Him and witness His miracles, but His brothers did not believe in Him until after His resurrection (John 5:7; 1 Cor. 15:7).

### **Jesus Cleanses the Temple the First Time**

John 2:13–25 (Matt. 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48)

**2:13** “*The Passover ... was at hand.*” This is the first of three Passovers in Jesus’ three-year ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55). Here, He will declare the purpose of His coming, and His greatest “*sign*.” The Passover spoke of the sacrifice of the lamb for the redemption of God’s people (Exod. 12:3–14).

**2:15–16** “*He made a whip of cords, He drove them all out.*” Jesus was enraged at the perversion of true worship into a money-making business. “*Take these things away!*” By these actions, Jesus is showing that both the Temple and the sacrifices would soon pass away. He also demonstrates that He is the authority over the Temple.

**2:18–19** “*What sign do You show us?*” The religious authorities demand a sign that would confirm His claim of authority. Jesus then predicts His eighth sign—the resurrection of His body from the dead in three days (Matt. 12:39–40; John 20).

**2:21** “*He was speaking of the temple of His body.*” Although they accepted Him as the Messiah, the disciples did not understand this saying until after His resurrection (v. 22).

**2:23** “*At the Passover ... many believed in His name.*” To believe in His name means to believe in who He claimed to be—the Messiah/Savior. Note the repetition of the word, “believe,” which is the theme of this Gospel (John 20:30–31).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 3**

Jesus explains the new birth to Nicodemus; John the Baptist proclaims the superiority of Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus Instructs Nicodemus**

John 3:1–21

**3:1** “*Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*” This identifies Nicodemus as a member of the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin.

**3:2** “*This man came to Jesus by night.*” Nicodemus did not want to be seen in his visit to Jesus. As the hatred of the council increased against Jesus, Nicodemus became increasingly convinced of His claims (John 7:47–51; 19:38–39). “*No one can do these signs ... unless God is with him.*” The signs of Jesus are beginning to lead this religious leader to believe in Him, again emphasizing John’s theme (John 20:30–31).

**3:3** “*Born again.*” This can also be translated “born from above.” This is what the Bible calls “*regeneration*” (John 1:12–13; Titus 3:5). The work of regeneration creates a “*new man*” or a “*new creation*” (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:23–24).

**3:5** “*Born of water and the Spirit.*” This could be contrasting natural birth versus spiritual birth, or the “*water*” may refer to the Word of God (Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:23). In the Old Testament, water is often associated with the working of the Spirit of God in using the Word of God to bring about new birth (Jer. 31:31–33; Eze. 36:22–28).

## JOHN 3:6–19

**3:6 “That which is born of the flesh ... of the Spirit.”** This statement may explain v. 5, as distinguishing between natural birth versus spiritual birth. Nicodemus is confused regarding the difference between physical and spiritual birth (v. 4).

**3:7 “You must be born again.”** If one desires to “enter the kingdom of God,” there is no hope apart from the new birth by faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior.

**3:8 “The wind blows where it wishes.”** The word for “wind” and for “Spirit” in the Greek (*pneuma*) are the same. The Holy Spirit, like the wind, moves among men in such a way that we can only see the effects of His working. Those “born of the Spirit” will show the effects of His working.

**3:9 “How can these things be?”** This question is the key to all that follows. Nicodemus has asked how the Spirit can produce the new birth. In the following section, Jesus uses the word “*believe*” seven times from v. 12 to v. 18. Seven is the number of perfection or completion in the Bible and believing is the perfect response to the truth about Jesus Christ.

**3:10 “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?”** Nicodemus was considered the premier teacher of the Old Testament, yet he did not understand its message (Gen. 15:6; Job 19:25–27; Psalm 2:6–12; 106:12, 24; Isaiah 53).

**3:11–12 “You do not receive Our witness ... you do not believe.”** In v. 2, Nicodemus said, “*we know*,” including other Pharisees. In this verse, the word “*you*” is plural, speaking of Nicodemus and the other Pharisees.

**3:13–14 “The Son of Man ... so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”** Jesus compares His coming crucifixion to the serpent on the pole in the wilderness (Num. 21:7–9; John 8:28; 12:34; 19:18). The serpent in Numbers 21 represented sin and its judgment. On the cross, Jesus became sin for us and bore our judgment, that we might receive life and righteousness by faith in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

**3:15 “Whoever believes in Him should not perish.”** In the wilderness incident (Numbers 21), all the people could do was look to the serpent on the pole. To do this, they had to believe what God had said (Num. 21:8). Deliverance from eternal death comes only by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone (Eph. 2:8–9). To add anything to Jesus’ message here is to refuse to believe in His Word.

**3:16 “For God so loved the world.”** This is often called the most loved verse in all the Bible. It is also one of the simplest. “*Whoever believes in Him should not perish.*” This is the message of the Gospel in brief. Faith alone in Jesus Christ as Savior delivers the soul from eternal judgment. “*But have everlasting life.*” The moment one believes, they possess eternal life (1 John 5:10–13). Since that which is eternal never ends, the gift of life can never end (John 11:25–26).

**3:17 “Not ... to condemn ... but that the world ... might be saved.”** The coming of Jesus into the world was a rescue mission from the Father to save the world (Luke 19:10; John 12:47). If His offer of deliverance is rejected, then men stand self-condemned.

**3:18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned.”** Faith in Jesus Christ delivers us from all condemnation. “*He who does not believe is condemned already.*” To live in unbelief is to live under the wrath of God (v. 36).

**3:19 “This is the condemnation.”** The basis of judgment is the rejection of Jesus Christ. “*Men loved darkness rather than light.*” Darkness is the world of unbelief and sin. The light is Jesus Christ (John 1:4–5; 8:12; 9:5; see Rom. 13:12–14).

**3:20 “Everyone practicing evil hates the light.”** The ultimate act of evil is the rejection of Jesus Christ. Those who do not love Him, hate Him (Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23). **“Lest his deeds should be exposed.”** Everyone who comes to Jesus Christ in faith is admitting that they are a sinner and that they have been living in the darkness of this world.

**3:21 “That his deeds ... have been done in God.”** No one can see faith in the soul of the believer. But once having believed in Jesus Christ, his deeds, like the effects of the wind of the Spirit, show that he has been born again.

### **John the Baptist Proclaims the Superiority of Jesus**

John 3:22–36

**3:22 “Jesus and His disciples ... baptized.”** In John 4:2, we are told that Jesus personally did not baptize. This was probably to avoid people claiming a superior baptism because they received it directly from Jesus. The disciples baptized under Jesus’ authority.

**3:23–26 “Now John was also baptizing ... then there arose a dispute.”** The increasing popularity of Jesus, and the fact that **“all are coming to Him!”** created some jealousy in the disciples of John. These **“Jews”** (v. 25) are the **“Pharisees”** of John 4:1, who started the debate, seek to create/stir up jealousy in John and his disciples.

**3:27–36** This is an astounding section, where John the Baptist demonstrates total submission to the will of God, and complete support of Jesus as the only source of eternal life. The following ten points about Jesus are made clear by John:

1. No one but God can truly exalt or promote someone (v. 27).
2. John identifies himself as the forerunner of Jesus, who is the Christ (v. 28).
3. Jesus is **“the bridegroom;”** John is only **“the friend of the bridegroom”** (v. 29).
4. Jesus will continue to **“increase,”** while John must continue to **“decrease”** (v. 30).
5. Because Jesus came **“from heaven,”** He is **“above all”** other men (v. 31).
6. What Jesus teaches is that which **“He has seen”** in the Father’s presence (v. 32).
7. Those who receive the message of Jesus declare **“that God is true”** (v. 33).
8. Jesus **“spoke the word of God”** by the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit (v. 34).
9. **“God the Father uniquely loves the Son,”** and has delivered everything into His hands (v. 35).
10. Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life now, those who do not believe in Him will never **“see life,”** but live under the **“wrath of God”** (v. 36).

**3:28–29 “You yourselves bear me witness.”** John calls on those who heard him to acknowledge three truths:

1. John sought no promotion that did not come from God (v. 27).
2. John had openly said that he was **“not the Christ”** (1:19–20).
3. As the friend of the Bridegroom, John’s job was to bring the Groom and the Bride together, and then to depart. This he had done, and his work was almost finished (v. 24).

**3:30–36 “He must increase ... He who comes from above.”** In these verses, John makes two clear contrasts:

1. between himself and Jesus (vv. 30–32), and
2. between those who believe and those who do not (vv. 33–36). Jesus was **“From above,”** but John was **“of the earth.”**

Therefore, Jesus’ message was infinitely superior to that of John’s message. Because of this, it is Jesus alone whose word can give **“everlasting life.”** Here, John reinforces the truth that runs throughout this Gospel—that eternal life is gained solely through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8–9).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 4**

Jesus and the woman at the well; lessons to the disciples; healing the nobleman's son.

### **Jesus and the Samaritan Woman**

John 4:1–26

**4:1–3** *“When the Lord knew ... He left Judea.”* Jesus did not want to be drawn into the controversy over baptism, so He left for Galilee. We must learn that some things are not worth disputing and creating divisions.

**4:4** *“He needed to go through Samaria.”* Normally, Jews crossed over the Jordan River and went north to avoid going through Samaria, but Jesus had a divine appointment.

**4:5** *“He came to ... Sychar.”* This area was famous for the land bought by Jacob (Gen. 33:18–20), for Joseph's burial ground (Gen. 50:24–25; Josh. 24:32), and for Jacob's well (John 4:6).

**4:6** *“It was about the sixth hour.”* The Jewish day was measured from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. This makes Jesus' meeting with the woman about 12 noon.

**4:7–8** *“A woman ... came to draw water.”* The well was about one-half mile from the village. Normally, the women would draw water in early morning or evening, in the cool of the day. However, this woman, because of her reputation, came when the other women were at home. *“Give Me a drink.”* It was forbidden for a Jewish Rabbi to even speak to a woman in public. *“His disciples had gone ... to buy food.”* Normally, Jews would not buy food from Samaritans. Jesus' influence on the disciples, and His conversation with the woman, show He is breaking down barriers of legalism and prejudice.

**4:9** *“How is it You ... a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman.”* Jesus surprised the woman by breaking two taboos: first, that He would even speak to a Samaritan, second, that He would stoop to speak to a woman. The Samaritans were a mixed race from remnants of the ten Northern tribes and the Assyrians. The Jews considered them to be “unclean.”

**4:10** *“If you knew the gift of God.”* Jesus had come to bring the gift of eternal life to this Samaritan village. Salvation is a free gift that only needs to be received by simple, childlike faith (Matt. 18:3). *“And who it is who says to you.”* The power of Jesus to save is based on His identity as the Son of God. *“He would have given you living water.”* Jesus leads this woman from her physical need to see her spiritual need. Jesus is speaking in terms familiar to Old Testament readers (Psalm 1:3; 36:9; 42:1; Isa. 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Zec. 13:1; 14:8). This same figure of the water of life is used in the New Testament (John 7:38; Rev. 7:17; 21:6).

**4:12** *“Are You greater than our father Jacob?”* This is the ultimate question. Men tend to respect and honor those great men of history. Yet, Jesus Christ is in a class above all the great men of history combined. The Samaritans claimed their lineage came through Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

**4:14** *“Whoever drinks ... I shall give ... will never thirst.”* One drink of faith in Jesus Christ satisfies the thirst for eternal life forever (Isa. 49:10; John 6:35). *“A fountain of water ... everlasting life.”* Jesus promised life in never-ending supply. He is speaking of life from the source of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).

**4:15–16** *“Sir, give me this water.”* The woman is still thinking in physical terms. *“Go, call your husband.”* Since the woman had been thinking only in terms of physical need, Jesus' words force her to see her spiritual need for forgiveness. We will never come to the Savior until we see our need for salvation.

*“There are two revelations in Christianity; there is the revelation of God  
and the revelation of ourselves.”*  
– William Barclay

**4:17–18** *“I have no husband.”* The woman tries to evade Jesus’ conviction by a half-truth. *“You have had five husbands ... in that you spoke truly.”* Jesus’ purpose here is not to shame or humiliate the woman, but to reveal both her spiritual need and His own true identity.

**4:19** *“Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.”* Little by little, her perception is growing that Jesus is no ordinary man. See the same process of growing awareness in the man born blind incident:

1. *“A Man”* (9:11),
2. *“He is a prophet”* (9:17),
3. *“this Man ... from God”* (9:33), and
4. *“The Son of God”* (9:35–38).

**4:20** *“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain.”* The mountain was Mt. Gerizim. Like many under conviction of sin, (John 16:8) the woman tries to change the subject to avoid her own situation. She refers to an ongoing theological debate (location of worship) to avoid her own condition.

**4:21–22** *“Woman, believe Me ... salvation is of the Jews.”* Jesus calls the woman to believe in Him, as the source of salvation promised to the Jewish nation through the coming Messiah (Gen. 15:6; 22:14–18; Rom. 3:1–2; 9:4–5; Gal. 3:16).

**4:23** *“The hour is coming, and now is.”* Jesus is telling the woman that the Messianic promise is now fulfilled in Him. *“The Father is seeking such to worship Him.”* Jesus is the human embodiment of the fact that God is seeking to bring all men to Himself (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 2:3–5; 2 Pet. 3:9).

**4:24** *“Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* True worship is not based on a geographical location. It is a matter of the human spirit receiving the truth of God’s Word by faith. True worship is when we believe and act on (obey) God’s Word.

**4:25–26** *“I know that Messiah is coming ... I ... am He.”* The woman shows a belief in the Old Testament promise. Jesus declares that He is the fulfillment. His actual words were, *“I AM,”* identifying Himself as the God who appeared to Moses (Exod. 3:14). In this Gospel, John gives us eight “I AM” sayings of Jesus:

1. *“I am He”* (4:26).
2. *“I am the bread”* (6:35, 41, 48, 51).
3. *“I am the light”* (8:12; 9:5).
4. *“I am the door”* (10:7, 9).
5. *“I am the good shepherd”* (10:11, 14).
6. *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (11:25).
7. *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* (14:6).
8. *“I am the true vine”* (15:1, 5).

Each of these eight statements declares His deity!

### Jesus Instructs the Disciples on the Harvest

John 4:27–38

**4:27** *“No one said ... ‘Why are You talking to her?’”* In speaking to the Samaritan woman, Jesus had violated social protocol for any man, much less a Rabbi. Yet, the disciples are learning that Jesus acted on His own

## JOHN 4:29–45

authority. We also need to learn not to question His dealings in our lives. He always acts with eternal ends in mind.

**4:29** *“Come see a Man ... Could this be the Christ?”* The woman left her waterpot (v. 28), either in haste to tell her neighbors, or because she fully intended to return. Her witness in the form of a question implies a positive answer.

**4:32–34** *“I have food to eat ... to do the will of Him who sent Me.”* Jesus appears to be restored from His weariness (v. 6) by His ministry to the woman. Repeatedly, throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus stresses that the Father sent Him, and that His delight is to do the Father’s will. To know God’s will and not do it is sin (Heb. 5:12–14; James 4:17).

**4:35** *“Lift up your eyes ... the fields ... are already white for harvest!”* Jesus urges the disciples to look at the white-robed people coming out of the city (v. 30). Under normal conditions, there were four months between sowing and harvesting. Jesus declares that in the spiritual realm, one can sow and harvest at the same time. This was also a prophetic picture of the glorious Kingdom Age (Lev. 26:3–5; Amos 9:13).

**4:36–38** *“He who reaps receives wages.”* In these verses, there are some vital truths for all disciples:

1. Every believer who wins others to Christ will be eternally rewarded (Prov. 11:30; Dan. 12:3; Matt. 19:29).
2. *“Both ... rejoice together.”* Both the sower (faithful witness) and the reaper (one who wins someone to Christ) will share in the eternal joy.
3. *“One sows and another reaps.”* Many who sow the Gospel-seed will not see the harvest. Still, they share in the reward.
4. *“Others have labored.”* When we are privileged to win a soul to Christ, we should remember others have labored for that soul in preparation for our spiritual harvest. The law of sowing and reaping especially applies in the spiritual realm (Gal. 6:6–9).

### Christ, the Savior of the World

John 4:39–42

**4:39–41** *“Many ... believed ... many more believed.”* Over the next two days, more and more people believed in Jesus. *“Because of His own word.”* Jesus spoke with convicting power and authority (Luke 4:32).

**4:42** *“The Christ, the Savior of the world.”* Only John uses this phrase (1 John 4:14). This is significant, in that the disciples were gaining their own insight from people’s reactions to Jesus. This statement shows that Jesus came for all mankind (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2) and reveals great insight on the part of these new Samaritan believers.

### Jesus Heals the Nobleman’s Son

John 4:43–54

**4:44** *“A prophet has no honor in his own country.”* Since Jesus had been rejected in Nazareth (Matt. 13:57), He went to Capernaum. While Jesus resided in Capernaum, *“Cana of Galilee”* (v. 46) is where He went after dealing with the Samaritan women.

**4:45** *“The Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did ... at the feast.”* Those Galileans who went to the Passover (2:13–23) welcomed Him. Note again John’s two-fold emphasis on Jesus’ **words** and **works** (vv. 42, 45).

**4:46** “*A certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.*” This royal officer would have served Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist killed (Luke 9:7–9; 23:6–8).

**4:47** “*He ... implored Him to come down and heal his son ... at the point of death.*” Cana is up in the mountains, about 20 miles from Capernaum. The nobleman was determined to seek Jesus’ help—an act of faith.

**4:48** “*Unless you people see.*” This was addressed to the crowd, who would have followed Jesus to Capernaum to witness the miracle. It is a rebuke to those who need to see in order to believe.

**4:49–50** “*‘Sir, come down before my child dies!’ ... ‘Go ... your son lives.’*” Here, John ties together the **words** of Jesus with His **works**. As in the first sign in Cana (John 2:11), the work was the result of Jesus’ word. This nobleman believed (had great faith) even before he saw (v. 53).

**4:51** “*Your son lives.*” The servants used the very same words Jesus used in v. 50. Jesus prophetically anticipated this good news.

**4:53** “*He himself believed, and his whole household.*” The inclusion of his household is similar to Acts 16:31–32. Faith often spreads from one family member to the rest of his/her household.

**4:54** “*This ... is the second sign.*” See John 2:1–11 for the first sign. John is recording Jesus’ signs in order to convince people to believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life (John 20:30–31).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 5**

Jesus heals on the Sabbath; is persecuted by the Jews; and declares His unity with the Father.

### **Healing the Lame Man**

John 5:1–18

**5:1** “*There was a feast.*” John does not specify this feast, but there were three feasts that every man was required to attend: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16).

**5:2** “*The Sheep Gate ... Bethesda.*” This gate was near the Temple, where the sheep were brought for sacrifices. Bethesda means “*house of mercy.*”

**5:3–4** “*An angel went down.*” This may have been mere superstition. The last half of v. 3 and all of v. 4 does not appear in many ancient Greek manuscripts.

**5:5–6** “*A certain man ... had an infirmity thirty-eight years ... ‘Do you want to be made well?’*” The Lord Jesus deals with people as individuals, and tailors His grace to their needs.

**5:7** “*Sir, I have no man.*” Jesus’ question in v. 6 reveals the helplessness and loneliness of this poor man, who had been hoping for a cure for 38 years (v. 5).

**5:8** “*Rise, take up your bed and walk.*” Jesus commands the man to do, what to him, must have seemed impossible (Luke 18:27). The man’s willingness to obey is the human key to the miracle.

**5:9** “*Immediately.*” There was no hesitation on the lame man’s part. “*That day was the Sabbath.*” Jesus often chose to do His healings on the Sabbath so as to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Mark 3:1–4; Luke 6:6–10; John 7:23; 9:13–16).

## JOHN 5:10–26

**5:10–13 “*The Jews.*”** This refers to Jewish leaders, members of the council. ***“It is not lawful.”*** Jewish oral traditions had amassed thousands of regulations about the Sabbath. Jeremiah did prohibit such activity (Jer. 17:21–22), but Jesus declared that He was the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8), and that the Sabbath was made for man—not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). People are more important than regulations, customs, and culture.

**5:14 “*Sin no more, lest a worse thing come.*”** All suffering is the result of the sin of Adam (Gen. 3:16–19), but not all suffering is the result of personal sins (John 9:1–3). However, in this case, the man’s sins may have caused his condition and prompted Jesus’ warning (see John 8:11).

**5:15 “*The man ... told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.*”** Many, who have been blessed by Jesus Christ, still seek to please the authorities of this world.

**5:16 “*For this reason.*”** The first mention of hostility and persecution by John is in relation to this incident. The Jewish leaders valued religious ritual over the souls of men (Mark 7:8).

**5:17 “*My Father has been working ... and I have been working.*”** The Jewish idea was that, once creation was finished, God continued to rest. Jesus declares that God was continually at work, and that His works and those of Jesus God the Father were the same. Jesus makes a direct claim of equality with the Father.

**5:18 “*Making Himself equal with God.*”** These Jewish leaders clearly understood Jesus’ claim (see John 10:33).

### Jesus Confronts the Leaders with His Identity

John 5:19–47

**5:19 “*Whatever He does, the Son also does.*”** In this section, Jesus declares two great truths:

1. that He and the Father are united in person and work (vv. 19–23), and
2. that the only hope of eternal life is by faith in Him (vv. 24–47).

**5:21 “*The Son gives life to whom He will.*”** The Jewish leaders would not deny that God raised the dead (1 Kings 17:17–23; 2 Kings 4:32–37). Here, Jesus claims the authority to give spiritual life, but only to those who believe in Him (vv. 24, 34, 40, 46–47).

**5:22 “*The Father ... has committed all judgment to the Son.*”** Because Jesus bore the penalty of sin for all men on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 2:9), He has the right to judge all who reject His sacrifice on their behalf (John 3:19).

**5:23 “*That all should honor the Son ... as they honor the Father.*”** Once again, Jesus is claiming the right to be worshiped equally to that of the Father (1 John 2:23).

**5:24 “*He who hears ... and believes ... has everlasting life.*”** Faith comes by hearing God’s Word and receiving it in faith (Rom. 10:17). ***“Believes in Him who sent Me.”*** Jesus’ point is that if we believe in the Father, we will also believe in His Son. At the moment we believe two things occur:

1. We possess “*everlasting life,*” and
2. We pass from the realm of death into life. These effects of believing in Jesus Christ happen in an instant and can never be reversed (Col. 2:13).

**5:26 “*For as the Father ... so ... the Son.*”** Jesus continues to declare His equality with the Father. Here, He states that He shares in the very life of the Father (John 10:30).

**5:29 “Those who have done good.”** This could be translated, “those who have done the good thing,” referring to faith (see John 6:28–29; Rom. 2:6–7). The Bible makes it clear that no one is saved by good works (Rom. 3:10–12, 28; Eph. 2:8–9). **“The resurrection of life ... the resurrection of condemnation.”** These are the only options following death. Believers will live forever with Christ, but unbelievers will endure eternal punishment.

**5:30 “The will of the Father.”** Jesus continues the theme of v. 19. He declares that His actions are righteous because they originate from the Father (John 8:29).

**5:31–39 “If I bear witness of Myself.”** According to Jewish law, every fact must have at least two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). In this section, Jesus sets forth three witnesses to His identity:

1. John the Baptist (vv. 32–33),
2. His miracles (v. 36), and
3. The Father’s word in the Old Testament (vv. 37–39). To these can be added that of Moses (vv. 46–47).

**5:34 “That you may be saved.”** In spite of the hatred of these Jews, Jesus loved them and sought for their salvation (Luke 19:10).

**5:39 “You search the Scriptures ... these ... testify of Me.”** See Luke 24:27, 32, 44–45. All throughout the Old Testament, Jesus is the central figure—in types, pictures, and prophecies (Heb. 1:1–3).

**5:40 “You are not willing to come to Me.”** This verse reinforces v. 38. Their unbelief was due to their own unwillingness to receive the truth (lack of humility). Both faith and/or unbelief are a free-will decision.

**5:42 “You do not have the love of God in you.”** In this section, Jesus proves that God loves these leaders (v. 34), but because they do not love God, neither will they love the Son.

**5:43 “You do not receive Me ... him you will receive.”** Those who reject Jesus will always believe one false teacher or another (Matt. 24:5, 11). This statement is prophetic, because when “*the Antichrist*” comes, the majority of men will receive him (2 Thess. 2:8–12; 1 John 2:18, 22).

**5:44 “How can you believe?”** Those who crave the honor of men are unwilling to bear the reproach of Christ (1 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 11:26; 13:13). God honors those who are reproached for Christ’s sake (Matt. 5:10–12; 1 Pet. 4:14).

**5:46 “If you believed Moses.”** The Jewish religious leaders prided themselves on being disciples of Moses (John 9:28–29). However, the books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy) are filled with references to the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; 49:10–11; Num. 21:9; 24:15–17; Deut. 18:15, 18). By rejecting the testimony of Moses, their hearts were hardened to the One greater than Moses (Heb. 3:3–19).

**5:47 “If you do not believe his writings.”** See the words of Abraham in Luke 16:29–31.

## **JOHN CHAPTER 6**

Jesus feeds the five thousand; walks on the sea; teaches on the Bread of life; is rejected by man.

### **Feeding the Five Thousand**

John 6:1–14 (Matt. 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17)

**6:1–2 “Because they saw His signs which He performed.”** There are three words that are used for supernatural acts: miracles, wonders, and signs. John prefers to use the word “*signs*,” as it speaks of the spiritual lesson

## JOHN 6:4-21

behind the work. The works that Jesus performed were designed to teach something about His Person. While Jesus and the disciples crossed “*the Sea of Galilee*,” “*a great multitude*” went around the north end—a journey of ten miles or so.

**6:4** “*Now the Passover ... was near.*” This gives the context for the next sign. As “*the lamb of God*” (John 1:29, 36), Jesus is also the “*bread of life*” (John 6:33, 35, 41). Just as the Jews on Passover night ate of the lamb (Exod. 12:8), so we are to feed on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:54–58).

**6:5–7** “*Where shall we buy bread?*” John tells us that Jesus was testing Philip’s faith. Moses was tested in much the same way (Num. 11:21–23). “*Two hundred denarii ... of bread ... is not sufficient.*” This was over a half-year’s wages. To Philip, it was hopeless to feed the people.

**6:8–9** “*Andrew ... said ... there is a lad here.*” Philip sees an impossible task. Andrew finds what little he can. The little boy gives all he has, and Jesus makes it more than sufficient (Luke 1:37). “*Barley loaves*” were the food of the very poor.

**6:10** “*The men sat down ... about five thousand.*” This did not include the number of women and children (Matt. 14:21).

**6:11–12** “*When He had given thanks He distributed.*” Here, Jesus acts as the father of a household. Though He had creative power to multiply the food, still He thanks the Father in Heaven for it. “*As much as they wanted ... they were filled.*” The people ate until they could hold no more. (See Elisha, in 2 Kings 4:42–44). “*Gather up ... so that nothing is lost.*” Again, even though He had creative power, He did not waste anything.

**6:13** “*They ... filled twelve baskets.*” Each of the disciples likely carried a woven bag. In the ancient Near East, it was common for guests to leave their fragments of food as a “tip” to those who served them. “*Little is much in the hands of Christ*” (William Barclay).

**6:14** “*This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.*” They are referring to Moses’ prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19. Although this Prophet and the Messiah are one and the same, the Jewish Rabbis thought they were two distinct persons (John 1:20–21).

### Jesus Walks on the Sea

John 6:15–21 (Matt. 14:22–33; Mark 6:45–52)

**6:15** “*Jesus perceived that they were about to come ... by force to make Him king.*” This crowd saw in Jesus one who could heal all their diseases and keep them fed. They wanted a king who would keep them all on welfare! “*He departed ... by Himself alone.*” Jesus withdraws both from the crowd and from the disciples. He will now test what the disciples had learned from the experience.

**6:16–17** “*His disciples ... went over the sea toward Capernaum.*” We are informed in Mark 6:45 that they did this at Jesus’ command.

**6:19** “*They saw Jesus walking on the sea ... they were afraid.*” This is Jesus’ fifth “sign” and demonstrated His authority over the natural realm. Each “sign” is but another evidence of His deity.

**6:20–21** “*It is I; do not be afraid.*” Jesus performed four mighty works here:

1. He walked on the sea.
2. He called Peter to come to Him on the water (Matt. 14:29).
3. He calmed the storm (Matt. 14:32).
4. They were immediately at the land (John 6:21).

### Jesus Teaches About the Bread of Life

John 6:22–40

**6:22–25** *“Rabbi, when did You come here?”* The multitude realized that Jesus had done something amazing but could not understand what it was.

**6:26** *“You seek Me ... because you ate ... and were filled.”* Note that Jesus says, *“Not because you saw the signs.”* They did not gain the spiritual insight that He desired. Instead, they simply wanted Him to keep feeding them.

**6:27** *“Do not labor.”* People work for their daily food, but that is not life’s ultimate goal. Further, eternal life cannot be gained by works (Rom. 3:28; 4:1–5; Eph. 2:8–9). *“Which the Son of Man will give you.”* Eternal life is a free gift (John 4:10; Rom. 6:23), which only Jesus Christ can give. It is a gift that can only be received by faith (John 1:12–13; Heb. 11:6).

**6:29** *“This is the work of God, that you believe.”* Faith in Christ is not a *“work,”* but it allows God to work in us (Eph. 3:7, 20; Phil. 2:12–13). Faith is an acknowledgment of our sinfulness and helplessness, therefore, of total reliance on the grace and power of God to save us because of the work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:6–11).

**6:30** *“What sign will You perform?”* These people, rebuked for their selfish motives (vv. 26–27), now begin to harden their hearts. They understand Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, so they challenge Him to show them a sign, even after all the signs they had seen!

**6:31–34** *“He gave them bread from heaven.”* They refer back to the manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16:4; Neh. 9:15; Psalm 78:24–25). *“The bread of God is He who ... gives life to the world.”* Jesus declares that the manna in the wilderness pointed to Him—the true Bread of God. He corrects their thinking, by showing that it was God the Father, and not Moses, who provided for Israel in the wilderness.

**6:35–36** *“I am the bread of life.”* This bread is “eaten” by faith (vv. 54–56) and gives eternal life to those who believe. *“Shall never hunger ... shall never thirst.”* Those who believe in Him will never lack eternal life. *“Yet do not believe.”* After all they had witnessed, they still rejected Him.

**6:37** *“All that the Father gives Me ... I will by no means cast out.”* Three great truths are contained here: the sovereignty of God, the responsibility of the believer, and the security assured by Jesus Christ.

**6:38–40** *“The will of the Father.”* Jesus summarizes the will of the Father in three areas:

1. That all who believe in Christ have eternal life (v. 40),
2. That all who believe would be eternally secure (v. 39a; 10:28–29), and
3. That all who believe would be resurrected (v. 39b).

### Jesus Rejected by the Religious Leaders

John 6:41–59

**6:41–43** *“The Jews then complained [murmured] ... is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph.”* These religious leaders begin to turn the people against Jesus. They offered this as proof that He could not have come from Heaven because they knew His earthly family (see also Mark 6:3). Murmuring was the constant sin of the Exodus generation (Exod. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num. 14:2; 16:41; Deut. 1:27; 1 Cor. 10:10).

**6:44** *“No one can come to Me unless the Father ... draws him.”* Both the Father and the Son draw all men to “come” (Jer. 31:3; John 12:32; 14:6), but men “resist” or reject the drawing power of God’s grace (John 3:19; Acts 7:51).

## JOHN 6:45–71

**6:45** *“They shall all be taught by God.”* This roughly quotes Isaiah 54:13 (see Jer. 31:34).

**6:46** *“He has seen the Father.”* No man has seen God (John 1:18), but He is revealed through His Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:7–9; Heb. 1:1–3).

**6:47** *“He who believes in Me has everlasting life.”* This is the main message of the Gospel of John. We enter into eternal life the moment we believe in Him (John 14:6).

**6:48–51** *“Your fathers ... are dead.”* The physical manna could not provide spiritual life. *“If anyone eats this bread, he will live forever.”* Jesus gave His body on the cross for us so that by simple faith in Him, we could enter eternal life. Jesus uses eating and drinking as a picture of faith in His sacrifice. *“Which I shall give for the life of the world.”* Jesus Christ died for the whole human race (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:3–4; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2).

**6:54–56** *“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life ... abides in Me, and I in him.”* The figurative language of Jesus here was made clear to the disciples in the Upper Room (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:17–20). The Lord’s table is a memorial of our faith in His death and resurrection. The phrase *“abides in Me”* sets the stage for John 15:1–8.

**6:58** *“He who eats this bread will live forever.”* Jesus has stated this truth in repetition for emphasis. His desire is that they would believe in Him for eternal life.

### Many Disciples Turn Away

John 6:60–71

**6:60** *“Many of His disciples.”* The word “disciple” simply means a learner or a follower. It does not necessarily indicate they had believed in Him. Jesus makes it plain that some, including Judas, had never believed in Him for eternal life (v. 64). At the same time, some who had believed “fell away” in the same way the eleven disciples would later do. (“made to stumble,” Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27; see Zec. 13:7). How many believers have left the church because the pastor taught a “hard saying?”

**6:63** *“The Spirit ... gives life; the flesh profits nothing.”* Jesus is still trying to get them to think in spiritual terms, just as He did with Nicodemus (John 3:1–8) and the woman at the well (John 4:10–15). The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to bring life to those who receive it (Rom. 10:17).

**6:64** *“There are some of you who do not believe.”* Among those who followed Jesus, there were unbelievers. *“For Jesus knew from the beginning ... who did not believe, and who would betray Him.”* This is a general statement but has specific meaning with regard to Judas (vv. 70–71). It is the turning point in this Gospel. From now on the hostility to Jesus will only increase.

**6:67** *“Do you also want to go away?”* Jesus asks the twelve to take a stand, or to go. We are all tested in this way many times in our Christian life (Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23).

**6:68–69** *“You have the words of eternal life.”* How Peter’s confession must have cheered the heart of our Lord—Peter loved the Word of God! How could He forsake the source of it? *“You are the Christ.”* Here, Peter strikes on the theme of the Gospel of John (John 20:30–31).

**6:70–71** *“One of you is a devil.”* Jesus reveals the true character of Judas, who had never believed in Him (v. 64). *“Judas Iscariot”* had a flirting relationship with Satan himself. Like Satan, he was a thief (John 10:1, 10a; 12:6). Judas surrendered to Satan’s prompting (John 13:2) and was ultimately indwelt by him (John 13:27). Judas is called *“The son of perdition”* (John 17:12), as is the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 17:8, 11).

**JOHN CHAPTER 7**

Jesus in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Jesus' Unbelieving Brothers**

John 7:1–9

**7:1 “*The Jews sought to kill Him.*”** The religious leaders in Jerusalem had now committed to a plot to destroy Jesus. Jesus knew their plans, and ordered His actions accordingly, in preparation for His destined hour.

**7:2 “*The Feast of Tabernacles.*”** This is one of the three mandatory feasts the men of Israel were required to attend (Deut. 16:16–17). At this feast, seventy-one bulls were offered (Num. 29:12–32, 36)—one for Israel and seventy for the Gentile nations listed in the Table of Nations (Gen. 10). This was the one feast that Gentiles were welcome to and often attended.

**7:3–5 “*Depart from here ... show Yourself to the world.*”** This is a mocking challenge by Jesus' brothers (Matt. 13:55), because “*His brothers did not believe in Him.*” Apparently, it was not until after the resurrection that James and Jude believed in Him (1 Cor. 15:7; James 1:1; Jude 1).

**7:6 “*My time has not yet come.*”** Here, Jesus used the word *kairos*. This is the only time He ever used this word, and it speaks of “an opportune or appropriate time.” His plan was to attend the feast, but He would wait for precisely the right time (v. 10–14, 37). However, many have been troubled by this section, assuming that Jesus lied to His brothers. He is not saying the same thing He said to Mary in John 2:4. There, when Jesus spoke of His “*hour*,” He used the word *hora* to refer to His coming crucifixion—a time ordained by the Father (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:27). Here, He is speaking of the appropriate time for His arrival at the feast.

**7:7 “*The world ... hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.*”** Jesus' brothers were under no danger. Jesus was hated by this world because of the light He shined on its evil (John 3:19).

**Jesus Teaches in the Temple**

John 7:10–36

**7:10 “*He also went up to the feast ... in secret.*”** Jesus is acting according to the plan of the Father—the timing of which was crucial (see v. 14 note).

**7:11–12 “*The Jews sought Him.*”** This shows that the religious leaders were hoping to trap Him at the feast. “*He is good ... He deceives the people.*” Once again, there were many views of who Jesus was among the multitude (John 9:16; 10:19–21).

**7:13 “*For fear of the Jews.*”** The religious authorities threatened or punished those who openly spoke in favor of Jesus (John 9:22; 12:42; 19:38).

**7:14 “*Jesus went up into the temple and taught.*”** This was the “opportune time” (see note in 7:6) Jesus had been waiting for in order to fulfill prophecy: “*The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to His temple.*” (Mal. 3:1, see also Psalm 22:22).

**7:15 “*The Jews marveled.*”** Jesus had not been formally trained by a great Rabbi such as Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3). His insight into the Scriptures and His authority always amazed people (Matt. 7:28–29; John 7:46).

**7:17 “*If anyone wills [desires] to do His will, he shall know.*”** Here, Jesus makes it clear that the condition of the heart is the key to biblical understanding. The desire to know is not enough; there must be a desire to do His will (John 13:17; James 1:21–25; 2:14–17).

## JOHN 7:19–37

**7:19 “Why do you seek to kill Me?”** Jesus reveals the secret plot of the religious leaders to put Him to death (vv. 11, 13).

**7:20 “Who is seeking to kill You?”** Though they act offended at His revelation of their plot, it was well known in Jerusalem (v. 25). One of the Pharisees’ favorite charges against Jesus was that He was demon-possessed (John 8:48, 52).

**7:21 “I did one work.”** Here, Jesus refers to the healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–8). Up to this time, almost all of His miracles had been done in Galilee.

**7:22–24 “You circumcise a man on the Sabbath.”** The male child was circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Gen. 17:9–14; Lev. 12:3). If that day fell on a Sabbath, the ritual was still performed, although technically, it was a violation of the Sabbath prohibition of all work. **“I made a man completely well on the Sabbath.”** Jesus’ act of mercy involved no work, but simply His word (John 5:8). They could not deny His miracle, so they attacked Him for violating their petty rules and regulations. Jesus revealed the hypocrisy and totally corrupt nature of their phony religion (Matt. 6:1–2, 5, 7, 16; 23:13–33).

**7:25–26 “Do the rulers know ... this is truly the Christ?”** (John 4:26). The reluctance of the leaders to seize Jesus appeared to be evidence to the people that He was indeed the Christ.

**7:27 “We know where this Man is from.”** At this time, He was known as “*Jesus of Nazareth*” (Matt. 21:11; Mark 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; Luke 18:37; 24:19). However, many would not know that He was born in Bethlehem, in fulfillment of prophecy (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1–6; John 7:42).

**7:28–29 “Jesus cried out ... you know where I am from ... He who sent Me ... you do not know.”** This was a loud cry of rebuke at the assumptions of the crowd (v. 27). He declares that they do not know God, who sent Him. He is claiming that they could only know God through believing in Him (1 Tim. 2:5).

**7:30–32 “They sought to take Him ... His hour had not yet come.”** The plan of God would be fulfilled according to His perfect timing, on the Passover (John 13:1). **“Many ... believed in Him.”** Jesus’ sudden appearance and teaching had convinced many of His identity. **“The Pharisees heard ... and ... sent officers to take Him.”** The speculations of the crowd that (maybe) Jesus was the Messiah drove the religious leaders to desperation.

**7:33–34 “I shall be with you a little while longer.”** Here, Jesus addresses those who have believed in Him. **“You will seek Me and not find Me.”** His crucifixion and resurrection would remove Him from Earth. This was again a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Hosea 5:6; Matt. 5:20).

**7:36 “You will seek Me and not find Me.”** While those who seek the Lord in humility and faith will always find Him (Jer. 29:13), those who seek Him out of mere curiosity will never find Him!

## Jesus Again Offers Living Water

John 7:37–53

**7:37 “On ... that great day of the feast.”** This was a special Sabbath that concluded the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:36). On each day of the feast, water was carried by the high priest from the Pool of Siloam and was poured out on the altar. This was done to recall the miracle of the water from the rock in the wilderness (Exod. 17:5–7; 1 Cor. 10:4). On the eighth day, no water was carried, making Jesus’ offer of water, where there was none, more powerful. **“If anyone thirsts.”** This again, like v. 17, shows the need for personal appropriation of the gift of life (John 4:14; 6:35).

**7:38 “He who believes in Me.”** Jesus repeatedly emphasizes this one and only condition for entering into eternal life. *“As the Scripture has said.”* Many passages are suggestive of Jesus’ words here (Deut. 18:15; Isa. 12:3; 55:1; 58:11; Jer. 2:13; Zec. 14:8). *“Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* This represents the never-ending supply of life from the Holy Spirit (Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:8).

**7:39 “This He spoke concerning the Spirit.”** John explains here, in a parenthetical verse, that the Spirit could not come until Jesus was glorified (John 14:16–18; 25–26; 15:26; 16:7–14).

**7:40 “Truly this is the Prophet ... this is the Christ.”** Again, the people show the confusion of the Rabbis, who believed that the *“Prophet”* (Deut. 18:15) and the *“Christ”* were two different people (John 1:20–21).

**7:42 “The Christ comes from the seed of David and from ... Bethlehem.”** The majority of this crowd is ignorant of Jesus’ lineage (Matt. 1:1–17) and of the place of His birth (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1–6). See the note on v. 27.

**7:44–45 “Some of them wanted to take Him.”** This refers to the Temple officers (guards) who had been sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to seize Jesus (v. 32).

**7:46 “No man ever spoke like this Man!”** The very power and authority of Jesus’ words caused these Temple guards to cower (John 18:4–6).

**7:48–49 “Have any of the rulers ... believed in Him?”** Actually, there were two secret believers in their ranks—Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:38–40). *“This crowd ... is accursed.”* The Pharisees despised the common people, calling them “people of the land,” which is the Greek term used here.

**7:50–51 “Nicodemus said ... ‘does our law judge a man before it hears him?’”** Here, Nicodemus speaks in Jesus’ defense. He refers to the law that judges must be impartial, and only judge based on evidence from witnesses (Deut. 1:16–17; 19:15–20). Scripture demanded that judges show no partiality, because this reflects the justice of God (Deut. 10:17–18; Acts 10:34–35; Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25).

**7:52 “No prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”** In this they were wrong. Jonah, Hosea, and Nahum, all came from Galilee. It is also possible that Elijah and Elisha were from there. Further, the Scripture prophesied that Messiah would minister there and bless the people of Galilee (Isa. 9:1–2; Matt. 4:15–16).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 8**

Jesus disputes with the Pharisees; declares His deity, again.

### **Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery**

John 8:1–12

**8:1 “Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.”** By ignoring the break between the end of Chapter 7 and this verse, we see the contrast. Everyone else went home, but Jesus, who had nowhere to lay His head (Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58), spent the night out under the stars, wrapped in His cloak.

**8:2–5 “A woman caught in adultery ... what do You say?”** According to the Law of Moses, both the man and the woman were to be stoned (Exod. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). If the woman was *“caught ... in the very act,”* the escape of the man was inexcusable, and therefore, the case was unjust from the start.

**8:6 “Testing Him ... to accuse Him.”** The Pharisee’s thought they had Jesus in a trap. If He said to stone her, He could be accused of partiality. If He showed mercy, then they would accuse Him of violating Moses’ Law. *“Jesus stooped down and wrote ... with His finger.”* The Scriptures declared that the Law of Moses, written

## JOHN 8:7–28

on the stone tablets was written by the finger of God (Exod. 31:18; Deut. 9:10). That same finger now writes in the dust (see also Dan. 5:5, 24–28). Perhaps it was a reference to Deuteronomy 19:16–19, which declared that a false witness should bear the very punishment they sought to bring on another.

**8:7–9** *“He who is without sin ... being convicted by their conscience.”* Whatever Jesus wrote, that and His words convicted even these hard-hearted religious hypocrites, causing them to leave.

**8:10–11** *“Has no one condemned you? ... Neither do I.”* Here, Jesus fulfills His own words in John 3:17, stating that God did not send Him to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. *“Go and sin no more.”* The compassion and mercy of Jesus does not condone sin. Jesus is not referring to all kinds of sin but is specifically telling her not to commit adultery again.

**8:12** *“I am the light of the world.”* This is another one of the “I Am” sayings of Jesus (see the note on 4:25–26). This is clearly a claim to be the Messiah (Psalm 27:1; Isa. 60:19; Micah 7:8). *“He who follows Me.”* Jesus is speaking here of a believing disciple (Luke 9:23; John 9:5; 11:9–10; 12:35–36). *“Shall not walk in darkness.”* Believers have the light of God’s Word, and the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit to guide their lives (Matt. 5:14–16; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:17–18; 5:8; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7). *“Shall ... have the light of life.”* That is the light that comes from the life of Jesus Christ (Gen. 1:3; John 1:4–9).

### Jesus Defends His Claims

John 8:13–29

**8:13** *“Your witness is not true.”* The Pharisees declare Jesus’ witness invalid, due to the legal requirement to have two or three witnesses (see notes on John 5:31–47).

**8:14** *“My witness is true.”* Jesus knew the Father who sent Him. The Pharisees did not know God, and therefore rejected Jesus’ witness (John 5:19–23, 37–39; 7:28–29).

**8:16–18** *“My judgment is true, for I am not alone.”* Jesus declares that the witness of the Father, through the mighty works that He did, was His co-witness (John 5:19–21).

**8:19** *“You know neither Me nor My Father.”* Jesus makes it clear that those who reject Him could never know the Father in Heaven (John 14:6).

**8:20** *“His hour had not yet come.”* The Father’s plan for the crucifixion of Jesus would be carried out with perfect timing (John 13:1, 3).

**8:21–24** *“You will seek Me, and will die in your sin.”* Even after Jesus’ resurrection, these hard-hearted Pharisees would continue to seek for the Messiah, but they would die in the sin of unbelief (John 3:18–19). *“If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”* Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:2). Anyone who dies in the sin of unbelief (v. 21), rejects His payment, and therefore stands guilty of all their sins. The penalty is eternal condemnation and separation from God (Rom. 4:7–8).

**8:25** *“Who are You?”* Jesus had just identified Himself as the “I Am” in v. 24. This was the designation that God gave to Moses of Himself (Exod. 3:14).

**8:28** *“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He.”* Jesus is speaking in the treasury—a very busy part of the Temple. Many of the people hearing His message would come to believe after the crucifixion. The words “lift up” implies not just crucifixion, but also glorification (John 3:14; 12:16, 23; 13:31–32; see Num. 21:9).

**8:29** *“I always do those things that please Him [the Father].”* Jesus’ sinless life was the strongest witness to His unity with the Father (John 10:30).

### Jesus Deals with Believers and Unbelievers

John 8:30–47

**8:30–32** *“Many believed in Him.”* Many in the crowd believed in Jesus at this point in the discussion. *“If you abide in My word.”* It is one thing to believe in Jesus Christ and to receive eternal life. However, a life of discipleship requires dedication to the learning and doing (obedience) of the Word of God (Ezra 7:10; Luke 11:28; John 13:17; James 1:22–25). *“The truth shall make you free.”* Here, Jesus refers to the truth of God’s Word, which has an ongoing effect of liberating the believer from the snares and pitfalls of this world.

**8:33** *“They answered Him.”* This refers back to the “they” in vv. 13, 19, 25, 27, who were unbelieving Pharisees. It is not speaking of those who had believed. *“We are Abraham’s descendants.”* A favorite idea of the Jews was that descent from Abraham would save them (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8). *“Have never been in bondage.”* Historically, the Jews had been slaves of Pharaoh, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and were now subjects of Rome. More than this, they were always enslaved by sin.

**8:34–36** *“A slave of sin.”* All men are born enslaved to sin (Rom. 5:12). *“A son abides forever.”* This was a proverb: slaves come and go, but the son remains. *“If the Son makes you free.”* Jesus is the Son of the Father, and the only one who can set us free from sin and death. *“You shall be free indeed.”* True discipleship brings spiritual freedom (Gal. 5:1), not slavery to a dead religious system of rules and regulations!

**8:38** *“You do what you have seen with your father.”* Here, Jesus begins to turn the argument away from their physical lineage (vv. 33, 37) to their spiritual lineage from the devil (v. 44; Eph. 2:2–3; 1 John 3:8–10).

**8:39–40** *“If you were Abraham’s children ... do the works of Abraham.”* The greatest work of Abraham was to believe in the Lord (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:6, 8).

**8:41** *“We were not born of fornication.”* They are referring to Jesus’ unusual birth, suggesting that He was conceived outside of marriage.

**8:44** *“You are of your father the devil ... he was a murderer.”* Their desire to kill Jesus was a reflection of the murderous intent of the devil (see Matt. 23:15).

**8:46** *“Which of you convicts Me of sin?”* No one but the Lord Jesus Christ could throw out such a challenge (1 Pet. 2:22). Even His enemies could not find any sin in Him!

**8:47** *“He who is of God hears God’s words.”* To reject the gospel message about Jesus Christ is to deny the whole of God’s Word (John 3:33; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 John 2:5; 4:6).

### The Hope of Abraham

John 8:48–59

**8:48** *“You are a Samaritan and have a demon.”* In addition to the charge of being illegitimate (v. 41), they accuse Him of being a demon-possessed Samaritan. Their hatred of Him moved them to slander Him in every way possible.

**8:51** *“If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”* In spite of their hatred, Jesus continues to offer life to them. Here, “My word” refers to His testimony regarding His true identity as the Son of God and Savior of the world (John 4:42).

## JOHN 8:53–9:14

**8:53 “Are You greater than our father Abraham?”** Jesus will answer this question in v. 56. **“Who do you make Yourself out to be?”** These Pharisees understood Jesus to be claiming superiority to all of the Old Testament saints and prophets (Matt. 12:6, 41, 42; Luke 11:31–32).

**8:56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day.”** Jesus refers to their physical ancestor, though not their spiritual father (v. 39–40). When Abraham offered up Isaac, he saw a preview of the sacrifice the Father would make of His Son and of His resurrection (Gen. 22:1–18; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 11:17–19).

**8:58–59 “Before Abraham was, I AM.”** This is a clear declaration of His deity (see Exod. 3:14; John 1:1–4, 14–18). **“Then they took up stones.”** Because they understood His message clearly, they sought to stone Him for claiming to be God. **“Jesus hid Himself ... and so passed by.”** Our Lord had supernatural power to conceal Himself from their sight and pass by them unnoticed.

## JOHN CHAPTER 9

Jesus heals a man born blind on the Sabbath.

### **The Man Born Blind Receives Sight**

John 9:1–12

**9:2 “Who sinned, this man or his parents?”** It was a common teaching in Jesus’ time that all suffering was connected to sin. Jesus refutes this teaching. This was based on faulty interpretations of Exodus 20:5; 34:7; and Numbers 14:18. These passages teach that when the sins of the fathers are perpetuated by the sons, they will suffer judgment for them. See Ezekiel 18:1–19.

**9:3–4 “Neither ... but that the works of God ... be revealed.”** Jesus instructs the disciples in a totally new way of thinking about suffering. God can use our trials and afflictions for His glory (Romans 5:3–5; James 1:2). **“I must work ... while it is day.”** Jesus knows that His time is near. He must finish the work the Father gave Him to do (John 5:16–17; John 19:30).

**9:6–7 “He spat ... and made clay.”** Only here and in Mark 7:33 did Jesus spit and make clay. Both the act of making clay and the act of healing were considered work by the Pharisees. This day was the Sabbath (v. 14). **“Go, wash in ... Siloam.”** This would also be considered work. Jesus is provoking the Jewish authorities intentionally. His time is near. **“Which is translated, Sent.”** Jesus had just claimed to be sent by God (John 8:29). Also, Jesus sent the blind man. God is about to glorify Himself.

**9:9 “Some said, ‘This is he.’ Others said, ‘He is like him.’”** Their difficulty was in accepting that a man born blind could be given sight.

**9:11 “A Man called Jesus.”** The blind man’s estimate of Jesus develops through the passage:

1. **“A Man”** (v. 11),
2. **“a prophet”** (v. 17),
3. **“Man ... from God”** (v. 33), and
4. **“the Son of God”** (v. 35–38).

This process occurs for many people who come to Jesus Christ in faith.

**9:13–14 “They brought him ... to the Pharisees.”** The people probably did this to get the Pharisees’ judgment about healing on the Sabbath. **“It was the Sabbath.”** John introduces this fact in connection with the Pharisees, as it sets the stage for what follows.

**9:16** *“This Man is not from God.”* Some of these Pharisees may have been in the crowd in the Temple (John 8:13–59). *“How can ... a sinner do such signs?”* This was the conclusion that brought Nicodemus to faith (John 3:2). This was Jesus’ sixth sign in this Gospel (John 20:30–31).

**9:17** *“He is a prophet.”* The man born blind concludes that only a true prophet could affect such a miracle.

**9:18–23** *“The Jews did not believe.”* Rejecting the supernatural sign, they sought the man’s parents. *“This is our son, and ... he was born blind.”* The parents identify the man as their son. *“He will speak for himself ... because they feared the Jews.”* Having identified their son, the parents, out of fear of religious reprisal, let the man speak for himself.

**9:24–25** *“We know this Man is a sinner.”* They say this because He healed on the Sabbath. *“One thing I know ... now I see.”* The man refuses to be intimidated by these religious tyrants.

**9:27–28** *“Do you also want to become His disciples?”* This indicates that the man now considers himself a follower of Jesus, though he does not yet know His true identity. *“We are Moses’ disciples.”* In fact, they were not (John 5:46–47).

**9:30–33** *“If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”* The healed man now gives the Pharisees a short course on sanctified logic. Using their own teaching that God did not hear sinners, he forces the point that Jesus must be from God. Healing the blind was a predicted sign of Messiah (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7; Matt. 11:1–6).

**9:34** *“You were completely born in sins.”* Here, the Pharisees fall back on the doctrine that Jesus had refuted (v. 2).

**9:35** *“Do you believe in the Son of God?”* As with the woman at the well (John 4:26), Jesus slowly reveals Himself to this man. This again is the key theme of John (John 20:30–31).

**9:37–38** *“It is He who is talking with you ... Lord, I believe!”* In that very moment, this man entered eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 1 John 5:10–13).

**9:39** *“That those who do not see may see.”* Much greater than the healing of the blind man was the work of Christ giving spiritual sight to blind souls. *“That those who see may be made blind.”* The Pharisees claimed to have spiritual vision (Rom. 2:19), but their rejection of Jesus blinded them to the truth (see John 11:37; 2 Pet. 1:9).

**9:41** *“Therefore your sin remains.”* Their spiritual blindness to the light of Jesus Christ, and their persistent unbelief, have kept them in a state of sin (John 8:24; Rom. 5:12, 1 Cor. 15:22).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 10**

Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

### **The Shepherd and His Sheep**

John 10:1–30

**10:1–2** *“A thief”* represents the Pharisees (John 9:40–41), as well as all false teachers (Jer. 23:1–2; Eze. 34:1–16; Matt. 7:15–23). Anyone who *“Climbs up some other [another] way,”* shows by their actions that they are false pretenders and/or deceivers. But Jesus *“enters by the door,”* showing that His true identity is known to both the *“doorkeeper”* (v. 3) and to *“the sheep.”* In the Old Testament, God is often pictured as the Shepherd of His people, Israel (Psalm 23:1; 77:20; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3). This was also the picture of the promised Messiah

## JOHN 10:3–29

(Isa. 40:11). Jesus uses both figures of *“the door”* and *“the shepherd”* for Himself (v. 7, 9, 11, 14, see Matt. 9:36; 18:10–14; Luke 15:4–7).

**10:3–4** *“To him the doorkeeper opens.”* The *“doorkeeper”* may be a reference to God the Father, who is the guardian of the flock, or God the Holy Spirit, since the doorkeeper is the *“under shepherd.”* *“The sheep hear his voice ... he calls his own sheep by name.”* The relationship of the Good Shepherd to His sheep is intimate—He knows each one by name (3 John 14; Rev. 3:5, 12).

**10:5** *“They will by no means follow a stranger.”* In Israel at this time, the shepherd lived with the sheep. They would develop special calls and songs that only their sheep knew. The sheep would flee from any other shepherd.

**10:7–9** *“I am the door of the sheep.”* Here, the Lord Jesus presents Himself as the only way to enter into eternal life (John 14:6; Eph. 2:18; Heb. 10:20). This is Jesus’ fourth *“I AM”* figure used in this Gospel (see John 4:26; 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 9:5; 10:7, 9). *“If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.”* Entrance into eternal life comes only by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:40).

**10:10** *“That they may have life ... more abundantly.”* Eternal life is received by faith once and for all. Abundant life is experienced by those who abide in Christ (John 6:56; 8:31–32; 15:1–5; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 2:24–29).

**10:11–15** *“I am the good shepherd.”* Where the false shepherd comes *“to steal and to kill”* (v. 10), Jesus comes to give life. *“Gives His life.”* Here, Jesus is looking forward to the cross. *“The hireling.”* This is one who has no love for the sheep, but only works for wages. Any pastor who enters the ministry for personal gain is a hireling. *“A hireling does not care about the sheep.”* In time of danger, the man who works for gain will forsake the flock. Every flock faces danger from the outside (the *“wolves”*), and from within the fold (*“the hireling”*). (See Acts 20:28–31).

**10:16** *“Other sheep I have.”* This is a reference to the Gentile church (Matt. 16:18—the first use of *“church”* in the New Testament; Eph. 2:14–22). *“There will be one flock and one shepherd.”* Ultimately, Israel and the Church will be united into one flock (Rom. 11:25–31).

**10:17–18** *“I lay down My life ... No one takes it from Me.”* The cross did not kill Jesus. When the penalty for sin was paid, He released His spirit into the Father’s hands (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30).

**10:19–21** *“There was a division ... among the Jews.”* Here, the words of Jesus are fulfilled—that He came to bring division (Luke 12:51–53). This division is between those who hate Him, and those who believe in and love Him.

**10:22** *“The Feast of Dedication.”* This feast was not given by Moses but was an eight-day feast celebrating the cleansing of the Temple after it was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. Today, this feast is called Hanukkah and is celebrated in December.

**10:24** *“If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.”* Jesus had already made His claims clear and *“the Jews [who] surrounded Him”* rejected those claims (John 4:25–26; 9:37; 10:11 with Psalm 23:1).

**10:25–29** *“I told you, and you do not believe.”* Rejection of the truth blinds the soul (Eph. 4:17–19; John 12:40; 2 Cor. 4:4). *“My sheep hear My voice ... I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”* Here, Jesus uses the strongest negative possible, *ou me*, in the original language. This is one of the *“Never”* passages in John, where this absolute negative is used (John 4:14; 6:35; 8:51–52; 10:28; 11:26). This is also the strongest possible declaration of our security in Christ once we believe. *“My hand ... My Father’s hand.”* Our security is based on the faithfulness of God, not our faithfulness (2 Tim. 2:13).

**10:30 “I and My Father are one.”** This is an undeniable claim of deity. To the Jews, there was no greater statement about the nature of God than, “*The Lord is one!*” (Deut. 6:4; James 2:19). The Jewish leaders could not have misunderstood Jesus’ claim here. This theme has run from John 5:17–18 through 10:33.

### Jesus’ Claim Rejected Again

John 10:31–41

**10:31–33 “The Jews took up stones.”** They had just recently tried to stone Him (John 8:59). As before, their attempt to kill Him failed. “*For a good work we do not stone You, but ... because You, being a man, make Yourself God.*” They had asked Him to identify Himself (v. 24). Now He has, and they are outraged.

**10:34–36 “I said, ‘You are gods?’”** Here, Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6, which refers to human judges (Psalm 82:6), who were like God’s council of angels in Heaven (Psalm 82:1). Both are called “*gods*” because they are to represent God before men (2 Sam. 14:17; 19:27). “*The Scripture cannot be broken.*” This would be an irrefutable argument to a Jewish Rabbi. The unity and authority of God’s Word was absolute. “*Him whom the Father sanctified.*” The idea is that God set the Son apart from all other men for His unique task. This uniqueness was shown by His mighty signs (vv. 32, 37–38).

**10:38 “Believe the works ... that the Father is in Me, and I in Him.”** Jesus continues to appeal to them to judge His claims based on His works. Were they of God or not?

**10:39 “They sought again to seize Him.”** The hardness of heart they displayed was both willful and against all evidence. Like all who reject Jesus Christ, they are “*without excuse*” (Rom. 1:20; 2:1).

**10:40 “He went away ... beyond the Jordan.”** Jesus has aroused such hatred among the religious leaders that He goes away to await the hour ordained for Him.

**10:41–42 “Many came to Him ... and many believed in Him.”** The ministry of John the Baptist now bears much fruit in this area (see Matt. 19:1–2; Mark 10:1). Even in the very shadow of the cross, Jesus continues to bring many into eternal life.

## JOHN CHAPTER 11

Jesus raises Lazarus; the Jewish authorities finalize plans to kill Him; the Passover draws near.

### The Death of Lazarus

John 11:1–16

**11:1 “Lazarus of Bethany.”** The name “Lazarus” is related to “Eleazar” and means “God is my help.” Jesus comes out of seclusion to raise Lazarus in Bethany—just two miles from Jerusalem. The raising of Lazarus is Jesus’ last sign before the crucifixion and stimulates the religious leaders to put the plot to murder Him in action (vv. 47–53).

**11:2 “Mary who anointed the Lord.”** Here, John identifies the unnamed woman of Luke 7:37–38.

**11:3 “Lord ... he whom you love is sick.”** There was no need to request Him to come. His love for them gave assurance that He would. His plan however was greater than they could imagine.

**11:4 “This sickness is ... that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”** Jesus often spoke of being glorified, and He always tied it to the cross (John 7:39; 12:16, 23; 13:31–32). In going to raise Lazarus, Jesus was assuring the Passover plot that led to His crucifixion (John 13:1–3).

## JOHN 11:5–27

**11:5–6** “*Now Jesus loved ... He stayed two more days.*” Jesus’ actions must have seemed to the disciples as the opposite of love. In fact, it was due to His love that He delayed His coming. God so often has a higher purpose in our sufferings (Romans 5:3–5; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 4:12–14). Jesus always acts according to His own initiative and for His own ends.

**11:8** “*Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You.*” The disciples may have concluded Jesus’ delay was for the sake of safety. Now they are alarmed that He would return. The danger to Him was very real.

**11:9–10** “*Are there not twelve hours in the day?*” This is the same concept found in John 9:3–4. Jesus is secure while He walks in the light of His Father’s will, as we are taught to do (1 John 1:7). Jesus worked during the day; Judas did his work at night (John 13:30).

**11:11–14** “*Lazarus sleeps ... Lazarus is dead.*” Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus used language that His hearers took in physical terms, but which He intended in spiritual terms:

1. **Birth** (3:3, 7),
2. **Water** (4:10, 13–14),
3. **Food** (4:30–34; 6:26–27), and
4. **Flesh and blood** (6:54–58).

Here, Jesus uses “sleep” to refer to the death of a believer—one who would awaken again (Matt. 9:24; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor. 15:6, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13–15).

**11:15–16** “*I am glad for your sakes.*” The raising of Lazarus would be a final strengthening of the disciples’ faith. “*Thomas, who is called the Twin [Didymus].*” The second name means “Twin.” Some suggest he was a twin of Matthew, as their names are often linked (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). Others suggest it referred to his nature, which wrestled between faith and unbelief (John 20:24–25; James 1:8). “*Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*” Thomas was willing to die with Jesus at this point.

### Jesus Meets Martha and Mary

John 11:17–37

**11:20** “*Martha ... went and met Him.*” As we see in Luke 10:38–42, Martha was a woman of action; Mary was more reserved.

**11:21–22** “*Lord, if You had been here.*” This may have been a mild rebuke. It was obvious that Jesus had delayed His coming. “*But even now.*” Here, Martha appears to show faith that Jesus could raise Lazarus if He so desired.

**11:23** “*Your brother will rise again.*” Jesus is speaking about today; Martha thinks He is speaking of the final resurrection (Job 19:25–27; John 5:28–29).

**11:25–26** “*I am the resurrection and the life.*” The idea, based on what He says next, is that He is the resurrection for those believers who have died, and the life for those on this earth who believe in Him (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10). “*Though he may die ... whoever lives.*” The body may die, but the soul of the one who believes will never die. “*Do you believe this?*” Jesus challenges the faith of Martha.

**11:27** “*I believe that You are the Christ.*” This affirmation is in keeping with the theme of this Gospel (John 20:30–31) and with Peter’s great confession (Matt. 16:16).

**11:28 “*The Teacher has come.*”** Every time we see Mary, she is seated at Jesus’ feet—the posture of a student (v. 32; Luke 7:38; 10:39; John 12:3). **“*Lord, if You had been here.*”** (v. 21) She makes the same statement as Martha but does not show the same faith.

**11:33–35 “*Jesus saw her weeping ... Jesus wept.*”** Jesus was not weeping for Lazarus but entered into the sorrow of those present. It is also possible that He wept due to their general unbelief (v. 37; Matt. 23:37).

**11:37 “*This Man, who opened the eyes of the blind.*”** They remember the miracle of the healing of the blind man in John 9.

### **The Raising of Lazarus**

John 11:39–44

**11:39 “*Take away the stone.*”** This would have been a shocking violation of both custom and law, for to have contact with a dead body was cause for defilement (Lev. 21:11; Num. 6:6; 9:6; 19:11). **“*He has been dead four days.*”** Martha, as always, is thinking in the most practical of terms.

**11:40 “*Did I not say ... if you would believe.*”** What Jesus had said earlier (vv. 23–26) was meant for that day. **“*The glory of God.*”** God’s glory is shown in His power over sin and death (Rom. 5:2; 6:4; 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17).

**11:41–42 “*Father, I thank You ... that they may believe.*”** Jesus’ great concern was always that men might come to faith in Him (2 Pet. 3:9; 1Tim. 2:3–5).

**11:43 “*Lazarus, come forth!*”** If Jesus had not called Lazarus by name, other believers in nearby graves would have come forth!

**11:44 “*Loose him, and let him go.*”** This recalls Jesus’ teaching on the “Son setting us free” (John 8:36). The dead were wrapped in a shroud. Lazarus came forth alive, but not yet free. Many have believed in Christ and have life, but they remain bound by entangling sins (Gal. 5:1, 13; Heb. 12:1).

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

John 11:45–57

**11:45–46 “*Then many ... believed in Him. But some ... went away to the Pharisees.*”** There is always the division between those who believe and those who resist the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, the unbelievers, in the face of absolute proof of His power over death, go to inform the religious leaders of His presence nearby.

**11:48 “*If we let Him alone ... everyone will believe ... and the Romans will come.*”** The members of the Jewish council were mostly of the aristocratic, priestly class and were collaborators with Roman authority. In the end, the Romans did precisely this in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

**11:50–52 “*It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people.*”** Caiaphas’ intent was that it was better for one man to die than for the nation to be destroyed. However, in the sovereign design of God, his words take on a much greater meaning: “that Jesus would die not only for the nation, but also to *gather together* God’s believing children all over the world” (see 1 John 2:2). The high priest was to speak for the nation (Num. 27:18–21). Caiaphas spoke the truth, but from an unbelieving heart (Matt. 7:21–23).

**11:53 “*Then ... they plotted to put Him to death.*”** They have now cast off all restraint and are determined to kill the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world (John 4:42).

## JOHN 11:54–12:11

**11:54** “*Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews.*” Again, this was not due to fear. Jesus was working according to plan, awaiting the Passover (v. 55).

**11:55** “*The Passover of the Jews was near.*” This was the third Passover of Jesus’ ministry. “*To purify themselves.*” True purification could come only by faith in Jesus Christ (Mal. 3:1–3; Titus 2:14; James 4:7–10).

**11:56** “*Then they sought Jesus ... what do you think—that He will not come to the feast?*” The common people wondered if Jesus would come. This was His hour—His crucifixion was near.

**11:57** “*The chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command ... that they might seize Him.*” The time had come for the “Son of Man to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men” (Matt. 17:22–23).

## JOHN CHAPTER 12

Jesus in Bethany; the Triumphal Entry; Jesus’ final messages.

### Jesus Comes to Bethany

John 12:1–11 (Matt. 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9)

**12:1** “*Six days before the Passover.*” The final week of Jesus’ earthly life begins here. This is the third Passover during His ministry (John 2:13; 6:4; 12:1). Four events lead to the climax of the Upper Room (Chapters 13–17) and the crucifixion:

1. The anointing in Bethany (vv. 10–11),
2. The Triumphal Entry (vv. 12–19),
3. The coming of the Greeks (vv. 20–36), and
4. In the face of mass rejection, many of the rulers believe in Him (vv. 37–50).

**12:2** “*Martha served.*” Perhaps, in light of Luke 10:38–42, she now served joyfully and without distraction. “*Lazarus ... sat at the table with Him.*” Lazarus is a living example of Jesus’ power over death and the grave.

**12:3** “*Mary ... anointed the feet of Jesus.*” Both Matthew and Mark tell us that she anointed His head. The only logical conclusion is that she did both, thus anointing Jesus for His burial (v. 7). “*The house was filled with the fragrance.*” Just as her sacrificial act filled the house with fragrance, so it has blessed the history of all who believe (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9).

**12:4–6** “*Judas Iscariot ... who would betray Him.*” Where Martha and Mary are transformed by the love of Christ, the character of Judas remains the same. “*Three hundred denarii.*” This was the equivalent of one year’s wages. Judas wondered how Mary, a poor village woman, who labored over three years of Jesus’ ministry could earn this gift? “*Because he was a thief.*” Jesus was aware of Judas’ treachery and unbelief (John 6:64, 70–71). His love sought to win Judas; His commitment to the Father’s plan tolerated him (John 13:21–30).

**12:7–8** “*She has kept this for ... My burial.*” The word “*kept*” means to “guard or protect.” It implies that Mary had this moment in mind as she saved up this large amount, and that she was probably the only disciple who understood what was about to happen.

**12:9–11** “*That they might also see Lazarus.*” He was a living “sign” of Jesus’ power over death (vv. 17–18). “*Put Lazarus to death also.*” Their hatred of Jesus now includes Lazarus, whose living witness led many to believe in Jesus. In their unbelief, they were willing to “*suppress the truth*” (Rom. 1:18).

### The Triumphal Entry

John 12:12–19 (Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–40)

**12:12–15** *“A great multitude ... went out to meet Him.”* This was five days before Passover. It was on this day that Israel was to set aside the Passover lamb (Exod. 12:3–8). During these five days, the lamb was examined to be sure there was no blemish on it. *“Hosanna!”* This word means “Lord, save us!” and is from Psalm 118:25–26. *“Your King is coming.”* This quote is from the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

**12:16** *“His disciples did not understand.”* Not until after the resurrection did these events make sense to the disciples (Luke 18:34; John 14:26).

**12:17–18** *“Therefore the people ... bore witness.”* The story of Lazarus’ raising had spread far and wide. *“The world has gone after Him!”* The Pharisees are in a panic because they feel the growing number of believers is out of their control.

### The Greeks Come Seeking Jesus

John 12:20–36

**12:20–22** *“Certain Greeks ... came up to worship.”* These were most likely Jewish proselytes, who had heard the stories of Jesus’ signs. This is an indication of the coming spread of the faith to the Gentiles. *“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”* This humble request prompted Jesus to exult in His coming glorification (see John 17:1–5). Only John, who wrote his Gospel to the whole world, tells us of this incident.

**12:23–24** *“The hour has come.”* Jesus uses the spiritual hunger of the Greeks to predict His crucifixion for the world. His whole life was lived in anticipation of this hour (Matt 26:18, 45; Luke 2:49; John 2:4). *“The Son of Man”* was an Old Testament figure for the promised Messiah (Dan. 7:13–14). In that passage, Daniel predicts His victory and dominion over all nations. However, to Jesus, to *“be glorified”* meant crucifixion followed by resurrection (John 13:31–32). *“If it dies, it produces much grain.”* Jesus looked at His death as the planting of a seed that would bear a rich harvest (1 Cor. 15:36; Heb. 2:10).

**12:25–26** *“He who loves his life will lose it.”* Those who love and serve themselves will waste their lives. *“He who hates his life ... will keep it for eternal life.”* Here, Jesus addresses a life of discipleship, where one surrenders his life to the plan and purpose of God (Mark 8:35; Luke 9:23; 14:26–33). A life lived in service to Christ will have eternal ramifications (1 John 2:15–17; 1 Cor. 3:9–15). *“If anyone serves Me ... him My Father will honor.”* This honor will be in the form of eternal rewards (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; James 1:12; Rev. 3:10).

**12:27–31** *“Now My soul is troubled.”* From exultation over the effect of His crucifixion, Jesus goes to mental agony at what is to come. *“For this purpose I came ... Father, glorify Your name.”* In the face of extreme inner struggle, Jesus’ humble submission to the Father’s will is evident. *“I have glorified ... and will glorify.”* The voice of the Father was great encouragement to Jesus and witness to the people with Him. Three times, the voice of the Father spoke to Christ:

1. at His baptism, (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11),
2. at the transfiguration, (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7), and
3. at His surrender to the cross, (John 12:28).

**12:31–32** *“Now the ruler of this world will be cast out ... if I am lifted up ... will draw all peoples to Myself.”* The two major effects of the cross will be the judgment of Satan (2 Cor. 4:3–4) along with the unbelieving world, and the drawing of all men to come to Him in faith (John 3:14–16). This drawing effect is a cooperative effort between faithful disciples and the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God (John 15:26–27; 16:7–15).

## JOHN 12:35–13:1

**12:35–36** “*Believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.*” Jesus Christ is “*the light of the world*” (John 1:4–9; 8:12; 9:5). Those who believe in Him are to walk (live) in the light of His Word (Psalm 27:1; Matt. 5:16; Eph. 5:8–10; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7).

### Hardened Hearts and Opened Eyes

John 12:37–50

**12:37** “*Many signs ... they did not believe in Him.*” This again confirms John’s theme (John 20:30–31), but in the negative. With so much evidence, many refused to believe. This mass unbelief by the nation of Israel did not take God by surprise (Isa. 42:8–9; Rom. 1:18–23).

**12:38** “*Lord, who has believed our report?*” This quote is from Isaiah 53:1. In the most detailed passage on the crucifixion in the Old Testament, Isaiah had pointed to “*the LORD*” who would die for His people, yet they rejected His message (see Rom. 10:16).

**12:39–41** “*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart.*” This was not predestination, but rather God’s response to continued unbelief and rejection. Rather than promoting the idea of predestination, Romans 9–11 shows that God had given Israel every spiritual privilege (Rom. 9:1–5) and opportunity to believe (Rom. 9:6–10:18), and yet they refused to believe (Rom. 9:30–33; 10:1–4; 11–21; 11:7–10). Rejection of revealed truth results in the blinding of the eyes, hardening of the heart, and closing of the ears (Prov. 29:1; Jer. 7:23–26; 2 Cor. 3:14–16; 4:3–4; Eph. 4:17–19; Heb. 3:12–13; 5:11; 2 Pet. 2:21).

**12:42** “*Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him.*” We know of Joseph and Nicodemus (John 19:31–42), but here John says “*many*” of the rulers believed.

**12:43** “*They loved the praise of men.*” John plainly declares that it is possible to believe, but due to fear of men, some fail to become obedient disciples. Such believers have eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 5:24), but fail to have the effective and abundant life that is available (John 10:10), and thus will lose much in eternal rewards (1 Cor. 9:24–27; 1 John 2:28; Rev. 3:11).

**12:44–46** “*He who believes in Me.*” Here, Jesus gives three results of faith:

1. By faith, we come through Jesus to the Father (John 14:6).
2. By faith, we see the Father revealed in Jesus (John 14:9).
3. By faith, we leave the darkness and enter the light (Col. 1:13).

**12:47–50** “*If anyone ... does not believe ... I do not judge him.*” Jesus Christ did not come “*into the world to condemn [judge] the world*” (John 3:17–18; 8:15). Isn’t it amazing that the only perfect man who ever lived did not judge others! “*The word that I have spoken will judge.*” All who have rejected Christ will be judged by the Gospel that they rejected. “*His command is everlasting life.*” This is the ultimate command we must obey to have eternal life (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). This command can only be obeyed by faith.

## JOHN CHAPTER 13

From Chapters 13 to 17, we have the Upper Room Discourse. In this section, Jesus teaches the disciples in preparation for the coming Church Age.

### Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet

John 13:1–20

**13:1–3** “*Jesus knew that His hour had come.*” John relates four things Jesus knew:

1. that He would depart to the Father,
2. that Judas would betray Him,
3. that all things were given into His hands, and
4. that He had come from God and was going to God.

As Dr. Radmacher used to say, “*Jesus did what He did because He knew what He knew.*”

**13:1b** “*Having loved His own ... He loved them to the end.*” Though Judas would betray Him, Peter would deny Him, and all would forsake Him.

**13:4–5** “[Jesus] *took a towel ... poured water ... and began to wash the disciples’ feet.*” Here, Jesus takes the place of the lowliest servant (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:26). The disciples would not do this humble task, for when they entered the Upper Room, they were arguing over which of them would be greatest (Luke 22:24).

**13:6–9** “*Lord, are You washing my feet?*” At first, Peter questioned Jesus’ action, then he resisted outright (v. 8). Jesus apparently saved Peter until last so as to teach the spiritual truth behind His actions. “*You will know after this.*” Before the night was over, Peter would understand his great need for spiritual cleansing and forgiveness (v. 7). “*If I do not ... you have no part with Me.*” The word “*part*” does not signify relationship to Christ, but rather fellowship with Him. Believers who do not receive the daily cleansing of Christ do not have ongoing fellowship with Him (1 John 1:7–9; 2 Tim. 2:20–21).

**13:10** “*He who is bathed ... is completely clean.*” The word “*bathed*” speaks of our overall cleansing from sin at salvation (John 15:3; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5). The washing of the feet represents our walk and daily cleansing by confession and correction (Psalm 51:3–7, 10; 1 John 1:7–9). Being spiritually bathed by faith in Christ establishes our eternal relationship with God. Daily “foot washing” (Psalm 51:3–4, 7; 1 John 1:9) maintains our fellowship with Him day-by-day.

**13:10b–11** “*Not all of you. For He knew who would betray Him.*” In the case of Judas, this washing was merely a ritual without reality (John 6:64, 70–71). It is the same as when unbelievers get baptized or partake in communion; it is nothing but a religious show that has no real meaning.

**13:12–15** “*You also ought to wash one another’s feet.*” Jesus was not only teaching our need to seek forgiveness and cleansing from God for our daily sins, but also that we need to be forgiving of the sins of fellow believers (Matt. 6:14–15; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). “*I have given you an example.*” Though the disciples were called to be leaders (Luke 6:13), He wanted them to serve in an attitude of humility (1 Pet. 5:1–6).

**13:17** “*If you know ... blessed [happy] are you if you do them.*” To know God’s will is not enough. There must be a willingness to do it (Luke 11:28; John 7:17; James 1:21–25).

**13:18** “*That the Scripture may be fulfilled.*” Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 as a prophecy of Judas’ coming betrayal.

**13:19** “*I tell you ... that ... you may believe.*” Jesus wanted the disciples to see that all that led to His crucifixion was part of the perfect plan of God.

**13:20** “*He who receives Me.*” Just as Jesus represented the Father in Heaven, even so, the disciples would go out to represent Him to the world (Matt. 10:40). Those who receive the message of His messengers receives it as His Word.

## JOHN 13:21–14:3

### The Traitor Identified

John 13:21–30 (Matt. 26:21–25; Mark 14:18–21; Luke 22:21–23)

**13:21** “*Jesus ... was troubled ... one of you will betray Me.*” Judas’ treachery in the face of the love and mercy of Jesus toward him was like a thorn in Jesus’ heart. This was the beginning of His agony.

**13:23** “*One of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.*” This is how John, the author of this Gospel, identifies himself (John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20).

**13:26** “*He gave it to Judas Iscariot.*” In ancient Israel it was an honor for the host to offer the dipped bread to a guest. In the very act of showing His love for Judas, and Judas’ rejection of that love, Satan now fully enters into Judas (John 13:2; Luke 22:3).

**13:30** “*He then went out ... And it was night.*” At the first Passover, God warned the people not to go out after dark to avoid the death angel (Exod. 12:12–13). Judas going out into the darkness is symbolic of the eternal destiny of those who reject Jesus Christ (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; Luke 13:28, John 3:19).

### Glory, Love, and Denial

John 13:31–38

**13:31–32** “*Now the Son of Man is glorified.*” Jesus always saw the cross as the path to glory (John 12:23). The obedience of the Son would also bring glory to the Father. We glorify Jesus Christ by our obedience to His Word (1 Pet. 4:11).

**13:33–35** “*A new commandment I give to you.*” This has often been called the eleventh commandment. In reality, the love produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit brings the fulfillment of all commandments (Gal. 5:22–23; Matt. 22:37–40; Rom. 13:9–10). “*By this all [men] will know.*” Our greatest witness to the world is the love of Christ in us (2 Cor. 5:14–21; 1 John 2:5; 3:11, 16; 4:11–12, 16–19).

**13:36–38** “*I will lay down my life.*” Peter had the desire to be faithful. Unfortunately, he underestimated the strength of his own faith. Later, tradition tells us that Peter did indeed lay down his life for His Lord. We can only be strong when we are in step with the plan of God. Peter’s timing was off. “*Till you have denied Me three times.*” Even believers who desire to be faithful will often fail (James 3:1–2). Yet God works through our failures—to bring humility and further growth (Psalm 119:67, 71, 75). It may be that Peter’s later faithfulness was in some way the result of his failure here. Three times he denies Jesus, and three times he will be restored (John 21:15–17). God does not change His plan for us because we fail. He calls us to rise up and finish the race (Prov. 24:16; Heb. 12:1–3)!

## JOHN CHAPTER 14

Jesus is the way, the truth, the life; promise of the Holy Spirit.

### Jesus, the Way to the Father

John 14:1–15

**14:1** “*Let not your heart be troubled.*” Just after warning Peter of his coming denials, Jesus offers comfort for the troubled disciples (Psalm 27:13). “*Believe also in Me.*” The disciples’ conception of who Jesus really is continues to develop.

**14:2–3** “*Many mansions.*” Our Lord is preparing eternal dwelling places for all who believe in Him (Rev. 21:1–4). “*I go to prepare a place.*” Jesus goes before us as “*the forerunner*” (Heb. 6:20). “*That where I*

**am, there you may be also.**” The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf has the ultimate goal of us being eternally united with Him (John 12:26; Rom. 8:32; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:17).

**14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”** This is the seventh of Jesus’ “*I Am*” sayings in this Gospel. He is “*the way*” to God, “*the truth*” about salvation, and “*the life*” that is eternal (Psalm 86:11; 16:11; Isa. 30:21; John 10:7–9; 1 Tim. 2:5–6; Acts 4:12).

**14:8–11 “Lord, show us the Father.”** Just like Thomas later (John 20:24–25), Philip wants a visual revelation of the Father. This is contrary to true faith (2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:8). **“He who has seen Me.”** All we need to know about the Father is revealed to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. Both the words and the works of the Father are seen in the Son (John 5:24, 36).

**14:12 “He who believes ... greater works ... he will do.”** These humble disciples were soon to be empowered by the Holy Spirit—which would affect/change the whole world. Consider the impact of these disciples’ prayers on the Day of Pentecost alone (Acts 1:12–14; 2:1–2, 41)! Jesus gave sight to the blind and raised the dead. We can open the eyes of the soul (2 Cor. 4:4–6; Gal. 3:1; Eph. 1:18).

**14:13–15 “Whatever you ask in My name.”** This is not a promise that all prayers ending with “In Jesus’ name” will be answered. Four conditions are laid down by Jesus for prevailing power in prayer:

1. It must be in keeping with His character (“*In My name*”).
2. It must be such that it will glorify the Father.
3. It must be offered in love.
4. This love must result in a faithful, obedient believer (Matt. 7:7; John 15:16; 16:23, 24; Luke 10:17; 11:9; 1 John 2:5–6; 3:22; 5:3–4).

### The Promise of the Coming of the Spirit

John 14:16–31

**14:16 “Another Helper.”** The word “*another*” means “another of the same kind.” The Holy Spirit is just like Jesus Christ. In this verse, all three members of the Trinity are mentioned (see Isa. 61:1). The word “*helper*” speaks of one who works to comfort, guide, and strengthen. **“That He may abide with you forever.”** The Holy Spirit will indwell us throughout eternity!

**14:17 “The Spirit of truth.”** This phrase is used three times in the Upper Room discourse, revealing three great truths:

1. In Old Testament times, the Spirit worked upon believers—now He would indwell them (14:17; 1 John 2:27).
2. His work in believers is to testify about Jesus Christ (15:26–27).
3. He works to guide believers into the truth of God’s Word (16:13) and, specifically, to guide the disciples in the writing of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:16–21). Every believer today is indwelt by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

**14:19 “You will see Me.”** Here, Jesus refers to His appearances after the resurrection (Luke 24:15, 34, 36; 1 Cor. 15:4–8).

**14:21–23 “He who loves Me.”** Jesus indicates that love for Him is shown by obedience. **“I will ... manifest Myself to him.”** The obedient believer will experience the Father’s love and the presence of Jesus Christ in their lives. **“We will ... make Our home with him.”** This promise not only answers Philip’s request (v. 8), but also anticipates Jesus’ teaching on “abiding” in Him (John 15:1–8). The word “*abide*” is a key to this Gospel

## JOHN 14:24–15:4

(John 8:31, 35; 12:46; 14:16; 15:4, 6, 7, 9, 10) and is used extensively in 1 John, which is in essence John's commentary on the Upper Room discourse. The word suggests active fellowship.

**14:24** *“He who does not love Me.”* Lack of love for the Lord is demonstrated by disobedience to His Word (1 John 3:18–19, 23–24; 4:20–21).

**14:26–27** *“The Helper, the Holy Spirit ... He will teach you ... Peace I leave with you.”* In these verses, Jesus again presents three works of the coming Holy Spirit:

1. He is our teacher.
2. He brings God's Word to our memory.
3. He brings us peace (Rom. 5:1–5; Phil. 4:7).

In the highest sense, these promises were made to the apostles, who would write the New Testament Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:16–21).

**14:28** *“My Father is greater than I.”* Jesus is no less God than the Father but, even in the Godhead, there is order and authority (1 Cor. 11:3). In resurrection, Jesus is given greater authority by the Father (Psalm 110:1–4). God the Father is the Author of the plan of salvation. God the Son is the Executer of this plan, and God the Holy Spirit is the Agent who empowers the believer (Zec. 4:6; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18).

**14:30** *“The ruler of this world is coming.”* Satan was actively working to bring about the crucifixion (John 13:2; 27). His judgment was drawing near (John 12:31). The battle of the ages was about to reach its climax. *“And he has nothing in Me.”* Throughout His entire life, Jesus had overcome all the temptations of the devil (Matt. 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13; Heb. 2:18; 4:15).

**14:31** *“That the world may know that I love the Father.”* Jesus' submission to the plan of God to go to the cross was the greatest display of His love for the Father (Phil. 2:8). *“Arise, let us go.”* They did not actually leave the Upper Room until John 18:1. It may be that one of the disciples asked another question, which led to Jesus' teaching and prayer in Chapters 15–17.

## JOHN CHAPTER 15

The vine and the branches; purified in Christ and persecuted by the world.

### **The Vine and the Branches**

John 15:1–17

**15:1** *“I am the true vine.”* Israel had become a false vine (Isa. 5:1–7; Jer. 2:21). The sacrifice of Christ would create a new vine (the Church). Compare this with the olive tree analogy in Romans 11:11–25. *“My Father is the vinedresser.”* The Father works to bring the branches to fruitfulness.

**15:2** *“He takes away.”* The verb here would better be translated “He lifts up.” While the vine is touching the ground, it cannot produce. It must be lifted up—away from the earth—to become fruitful. *“He prunes.”* The second action taken by the Father is to prune the branch, removing hindrances to fruitfulness. The word translated “prunes” literally means “to cleanse or purify.”

**15:3** *“You are already clean.”* This refers to the once-for-all cleansing resulting from saving faith (John 13:10; 17:17; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5).

**15:4** *“Abide in Me.”* The command here is to maintain daily fellowship with Jesus Christ. This involves both daily cleansing (John 13:8; 2 Tim. 2:20–21; 1 John 1:9) and daily obedience (John 8:31; 12:46; 13:34–35;

14:21, 23; 1 John 1:7). ***“The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.”*** The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Christ (Gal. 5:16; 22–23; Rom. 8:29; 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18). The secret to an effective spiritual life is intimate connection to Jesus through His Word (v. 7) and His Spirit (v. 26).

**15:5 *“He who abides ... bears much fruit.”*** The progression is fruit, more fruit, much fruit, and fruit that remains (vv. 2, 5, 16; Matt. 13:8). ***“Without Me you can do nothing.”*** Human effort cannot bear spiritual fruit (2 Cor. 3:5; Gal. 5:22–23). Fruit is dependent on abiding/fellowship (1 John 1:7).

**15:6 *“If anyone does not abide.”*** This refers to any believer who does not maintain fellowship with God. There are four consequences of failing to maintain fellowship with God:

1. ***“Cast out as a branch.”*** They are cut off from the Source (Holy Spirit) of fruit (Gal. 5:4, 16, 22–23).
2. They are ***“withered.”*** Their spiritual life dries up.
3. ***“They gather them.”*** The world (*“they”*) rejects *“them”* as useless. They are salt without flavor and lamps without light (Matt. 5:13–17).
4. ***“They are burned.”*** This refers to loss of reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15). In no way does this verse imply loss of salvation. Abiding is always about fellowship and fruitfulness.

**15:7 *“If you abide ... My words abide in you ... it shall be done.”*** Jesus declares the secret to effective prayer is simply to live and pray according to His Word. His Word living in us will guide us to pray according to His will (John 14:13–14; 1 John 5:14–15).

**15:8 *“By this My Father is glorified.”*** Effective prayer from faithful and obedient believers is one of the greatest ways that the *“Father is glorified”* (James 5:16b; Rev. 5:8b; 8:3).

**15:9–10 *“Abide in My love.”*** The love of Christ for each believer is total and unconditional (John 13:1). However, that love will not be felt or experienced by the believer who breaks fellowship through disobedience; rather, they will experience the severe discipline of God (Heb. 12:3–11). ***“If you keep My commandments.”*** Any love relationship demands reciprocal love, that is, love in return (John 13:17, 34; 14:15). Jesus Christ reveals Himself in the lives of obedient disciples (John 14:21–23; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3).

**15:11 *“That your joy may be full.”*** Obedience to Christ’s Word brings fullness and abundance to life (John 10:10; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4).

**15:12–13 *“Love one another.”*** This is the command that fulfills all other commands (John 13:34–35; 1 John 3:11, 18, 23–24; 4:7–11). ***“Lay down one’s life.”*** This is to imitate Christ to the fullest degree (Eph. 5:1; 1 John 3:16).

**15:14–15 *“You are My friends.”*** Obedience to His Word brings us to a point of maturity where we can be called *“friend of God”* (Exod. 33:11; 2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23). Jesus’ change from calling the disciples *“servants”* (John 12:26; 13:13–16) to *“friends”* is based on their deepening understanding of His plans (Gen. 18:17–19).

**15:16 *“I chose you and appointed you.”*** Here, Jesus is speaking specifically to the eleven remaining disciples who, after the resurrection, would begin their apostolic ministry (Matt. 10:2; Mark 6:30; Luke 6:13). In much the same way, we who believe today are called *“ambassadors for Christ”* (2 Cor. 5:20).

**Meeting the Hatred of the World with the Witness of the Spirit**

John 15:18–27

**15:18–19** *“If the world hates you.”* The indication here is that the world will indeed hate the growing and obedient believer. *“Because you are not of the world.”* We are aliens and strangers in this world (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 11:8–10; 1 Pet. 2:11; 1 John 4:4–6).

**15:20–21** *“If they persecuted Me.”* The Lord Jesus Christ was sinless, and yet was accused of being demon-possessed (John 7:20; 8:48). *“They will do to you for My name’s sake.”* Though the world attacks any real or perceived faults of believers, they do it out of hatred for Jesus Christ (John 15:18; 17:12–16).

**15:22–25** *“They have no excuse for their sin.”* God revealed Himself to men through His Son. He brought the light of God into this world, and this world—for the most part—rejected Him. For this there is no excuse (John 1:9–12; 3:16–19; 14:9–11; Rom. 1:18–21; 2:1). *“They hated Me without a cause.”* This quote contains references from Psalm 35:19; 69:4; 109:3.

**15:26–27** *“The Helper ... the Spirit of truth ... He will testify of Me.”* Both the Father and the Son are active in sending the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 15:26). The trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit are all active in the work of redemption. *“He will testify of Me.”* Just as Jesus Christ testified of the Father (John 5:19–23, 36–37; 8:18–19), so the Spirit would testify of Christ. *“You also will bear witness.”* The Holy Spirit would speak through the apostles to bring us His completed Word (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:16–21). *“From the beginning.”* This is referring to the beginning of His public ministry, not the beginning of John 1:1.

**JOHN CHAPTER 16**

Further instructions on the Ministry of the Holy Spirit.

**Persecution and Sorrow**

John 16:1–6

**16:1** *“That you should not ... stumble.”* Jesus used this very word (*skandalizo*) of the disciples’ conduct that night (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27). Here, He uses it to speak of a permanent “falling away,” such as with many of the disciples in John 6:60, 66. Many believers fall, only to rise again stronger. Tragically, others fall and never recover (2 Tim. 4:10). See Ephesians 4:17–19; James 4:6–10; 2 Peter 1:5–7.

**16:2–3** *“Whoever kills you will think ... he offers God service.”* Jesus never hid the dangers of discipleship (Matt. 5:10–12; Mark 13:9–13; Luke 21:12–19). Saul of Tarsus thought he was serving God by persecuting the Church (Acts 26:9–11).

**16:6** *“Sorrow has filled your heart.”* The gravity of what was coming begins to dawn on the disciples. Jesus seeks to strengthen them for the night.

**The Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

John 16:7–15

**16:7–8** *“It is to your advantage that I go away.”* How strange this must have sounded to the disciples! While Jesus was on the Earth, He could only be in one place at a time. After His death, burial and resurrection, the Holy Spirit would indwell each believer. *“The Helper ... I will send Him to you.”* Some of the many advantages of the coming Holy Spirit were:

1. His convicting power (v. 8),
2. His revelation of New Testament truth (v. 13),

3. His continued glorification of Christ (v. 14),
4. His power to bring joy out of sorrow (vv. 20–22), and
5. His empowering in prayer (vv. 23–24).

**16:8–11** *“He will convict the world.”* The word “convict” is a legal term that means “to bring conviction through cross-examination.” Working first through these disciples—and now through all believers—the Holy Spirit brings conviction in three areas:

1. *“Sin,”* specifically the sin of unbelief (John 3:17–19),
2. *“Righteousness,”* the reality of Christ’s victory over sin, and
3. *“Judgment,”* of all who reject Christ—because they will share the judgment of Satan and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

**16:13–15** *“The Spirit of truth.”* Three times this designation is used of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In all His works, He uses the Word of God. *“He will guide you ... He will tell you ... He will ... declare it to you.”* These words specifically apply to the apostles regarding the revelation of New Testament truth. In a general sense, they also apply to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in opening our eyes to the truths of Scripture (2 Cor. 3:16–18; Eph. 1:17–20; 3:16–19).

### The Promise of His Return

John 16:16–24

**16:16–18** *“A little while ... because I go to the Father.”* Here, Jesus begins to reveal the plan of God for the future. He must go to the Father before final victory could be gained (Psalm 110:1–4). What may seem to the disciples—and to us—as a long time, was only “a little while” compared to eternity (2 Pet. 3:8). This refers to the time between the First and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**16:20–22** *“A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow.”* This idea of travail, or birth pangs, is a common Old Testament figure, brought over into the New Testament, for the convulsions of Earth prior to the final coming of the Messiah to reign (Isa. 13:8–9; Jer. 4:31; Joel 2:1–2; Micah 4:9–10; 1 Thess. 5:2–3; 2 Pet. 3:10). *“I will see you again ... your heart will rejoice.”* The joy of the disciples, upon seeing Jesus after His resurrection, is a preview of our joy at His coming (1 Thess. 4:13–18; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:13).

**16:23** *“Whatever you ask the Father in My name.”* The order of prayer that is most honoring to God is to pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit (Zec. 4:6; John 14:13–14, 16; Eph. 1:16–17; 3:14; 6:18). Again, to pray “in Jesus’ name” means to ask for those things that are glorifying to Him.

**16:24** *“Ask ... that your joy may be made full.”* One of the great joys of the Christian life is that, when we pray according to God’s Word and will, He answers us in mighty ways.

### Power and Peace through Christ’s Victory

John 16:25–33

**16:25** *“I have spoken to you in figurative language.”* Jesus refers to the figure of the vine and branches (John 15:1–8), and that of birth pangs (John 16:20–22). *“I will tell you plainly.”* Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, new and clearer revelation will be given (John 14:21; 15:26–27; 16:13–15).

**16:26–27** *“I do not say ... I shall pray the Father for you.”* Jesus wants the disciples to know that after His crucifixion and resurrection, they can go directly to the Father for their needs (Matt 27:51). Our Lord, however, does indeed intercede for us before the Father (Rom. 8:26, 34; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:24–25). *“The Father Himself loves you.”* Every believer in Christ is loved by the Father just as He loves Jesus (Eph. 1:6).

## JOHN 16:30–17:6

**16:30** “*Now we are sure ... we believe.*” Comforted by His words, the disciples declare their assurance and faith. However, their confidence will be short-lived. They do declare three great truths for us to remember:

1. Jesus knows all things.
2. We do not need to question Him.
3. He came to us from God.

**16:32** “*The hour is coming ... you will be scattered.*” The fact that they would desert Him in no way diminished His love for them. “*Yet I am not alone.*” On the cross, Jesus was forsaken by all men (Isa. 53:3–6), yet His strength was in the Father’s faithfulness to Him (Heb. 12:2).

**16:33** “*In Me ... peace ... In the world ... tribulation.*” This is the seeming contradiction of the Christian life. We can have inner peace in the midst of outer persecution (2 Cor. 4:7–11; 6:4–10; Phil. 4:6–9). “*I have overcome the world.*” It is due to our trust in the total victory of Jesus Christ that we are able to “*be of good cheer.*” If we rely on our own experience, we will often be discouraged. It is only as we rely on His finished victory (John 19:30) that we are also enabled to be overcomers (1 John 5:4–5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11).

## JOHN CHAPTER 17

This is the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus Christ.

### **Jesus Prays for Himself**

John 17:1–5

**17:1** “*Father, the hour has come.*” In the Gospel of John, this “*hour*” refers to the cross (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1). “*Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You.*” The Son is glorified by His sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 1:4). The Father is glorified in that His will is done (v. 4, Matt. 26:39, 42); and His love for the world is displayed through the cross (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

**17:2** “*As many as You have given Him.*” Four things the Father gives to His Son:

1. The work to do (v. 4),
2. “*All things*” (v. 7),
3. God’s Word (v. 8), and
4. Those who believe (vv. 6, 9, 11, 12).

**17:3** “*This is eternal life.*” Eternal life in its simplest form is to know the Father through faith in the Son (John 3:33–34; 6:29, 40; 14:6).

**17:4–5** “*I have finished the work.*” This speaks of the crucifixion as a completed work (John 19:30). By Jesus’ obedience, the Father is glorified as the Author of the plan of salvation, and the Son is glorified by His humble submission (Phil. 2:5–11). “*The glory which I had ... before the world was.*” Jesus anticipates His resurrection and ascension back to the Father (John 1:1–4). While the cross showed the world’s rejection of Christ, the resurrection showed the Father’s approval.

### **Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

John 17:6–19

**17:6** “*I have manifested Your name.*” The use of the word “*name*” indicates the nature, character, and reputation of the Father, in the same way that it is used of the name of Christ (Psalm 101:2; John 14:13–14; 1 Pet. 4:14; 1 John 5:13; Rev. 2:13). “*They have kept your word.*” God’s Word is “*kept*” through “*faith*” and

obedience (2 Tim. 4:7; Rev. 3:8, 10). It means to “guard” and “treasure up” God’s Word in the soul (Prov. 4:23; Psalm 119:11; Luke 2:19).

**17:8 “They have believed.”** Faith in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Word of God is the only criteria for entering eternal life. Continued faith in His Word after we have believed in Him is the key to spiritual growth (Rom. 1:17; Col. 2:6–7; 2 Pet. 1:5–11).

**17:9 “I pray for them ... not ... for the world.”** In this portion of His prayer, Jesus is specifically praying for His immediate disciples. Later (vv. 20–21), His prayer will include the whole world.

**17:10 “Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine.”** All believers are the joint possession of the Father and the Son (John 10:28–29).

**17:11–12 “Keep ... those You have given Me.”** All believers are secure because of the faithful character of the Father (2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:5). **“I kept them in Your name.”** Jesus Christ had secured the disciples in the faith, with the exception of Judas, who never believed (John 6:64, 70–71). **“The son of perdition.”** This term means “destruction” and is used only of Judas and the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 17:8, 11).

**17:13 “That they may have My joy fulfilled.”** The joy of Christ is an essential part of the life of faith and obedience, even in the face of trials (Neh. 8:10; Rom. 5:11; Gal. 5:22; 1 Thess. 1:6; Heb. 12:2; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:8). This joy is based on the assurance of ultimate victory through Christ.

**17:14–16 “they are not of the world ... I am not of the world.”** Being united with Christ, we are now children of God and “citizens of heaven” (John 8:23; 15:19; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:13). This is why we are not to love the world (1 John 2:15–17).

**17:17 “Sanctify them by Your truth.”** The word “sanctify” means “to purify, to set apart.” In following v. 16, “sanctify” implies being set apart from the world to God for His plan and purpose. Only continued growth in the Word of God can achieve this goal (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 5:23).

**17:18 “As You sent Me ... I also have sent them.”** Just as Jesus came to represent the Father to the world, so His disciples are to represent Him to the world (Luke 9:23; 2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Pet. 3:15).

**17:19 “For their sakes I sanctify Myself.”** By the dedication of Jesus to fulfill the plan of the Father, we are set apart to God (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14).

### Jesus Prays for All Future Believers

John 17:20–26

**17:20 “For those who will believe in Me.”** The witness of the early apostles, recorded for us in the New Testament, would lead multitudes to faith in Christ. By this prayer, He includes each of us who believe in Him today. He continues to pray for us from the right hand of the Father (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

**17:21–23 “That they all may be one.”** All who believe in Jesus are united into one heavenly family (Eph. 3:15; 4:3–6). This essential spiritual unity should be reflected in our love for one another. **“That the world may know that You have sent Me.”** The greatest witness to the world is the love that displays this essential unity (John 13:34–35; Eph. 4:4–6; Col. 3:14). Division and hostility among believers are the greatest hindrance to ministry and missions.

**17:24 “Father, I desire that they ... may be with Me where I am.”** This request anticipates our final union with Christ in eternity (John 14:3). Once we depart from this world, we will always be with Him (1 Thess. 4:17).

## JOHN 17:25–18:24

**17:25–26 “O righteous Father!”** In v. 11, Jesus speaks of the Father as “*Holy*,” referring to His perfect, sinless nature. Here, “*righteous*” speaks of His works, which bear witness to His character (Rom. 1:17). “*The world has not known You.*” The world is actively hostile to God (John 1:10; Rom. 1:18–23). “*These have known that You sent Me.*” Only by the faithful witness of those who know Christ can those who are in the world be won (1 Cor. 9:18–23).

## JOHN CHAPTER 18

The betrayal and arrest of Jesus.

### Jesus Betrayed and Arrested

John 18:1–14 (Matt. 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–52; Luke 22:47–53)

**18:1–3 “There was a garden ... Jesus often met there with his disciples.”** Even though John does not report Jesus’ agony in the garden, Matthew, Mark, and Luke did document these events. “*Then Judas ... came there.*” Both Temple officers and a Roman cohort (which could include 200 to 600 men) accompany Judas!

**18:4 “Jesus ... knowing all things ... went forward.”** Knowing that His hour had come, Jesus boldly goes out to meet His destined end.

**18:5–6 “I am He.”** This phrase, used repeatedly by Jesus in this Gospel, is a declaration of His deity. “*They ... fell to the ground.*” Simply by stating His true identity (Exod. 3:14), Jesus’ enemies are completely overwhelmed! This displays, once again, that He willingly went to the cross to die for our sins (Matt. 26:53–54).

**18:8 “Let these go.”** Even as He surrenders to the cross, Jesus defends His disciples (John 13:1; 17:12).

**18:10 “Then Simon Peter ... struck.”** Jesus would later declare that, because His kingdom was not of this world, it could not be established by force of arms (John 18:36). Luke tells us that Jesus healed the servant’s severed ear (Luke 22:51).

**18:11 “The cup which My Father has given Me.”** This was the cup of wrath for the sins of the world (Matt. 20:22; Rom. 5:6–10). Jesus wanted the disciples to know that the cross was the Father’s plan for Him (Isa. 50:7).

**18:12–13 “The captain ... led Him away to Annas.”** Although Annas was the previous high priest, he was granted honorary status by the Jews, as a priest emeritus with Caiaphas (Luke 3:2), sharing both his office and his authority.

### Peter Denies Knowing Jesus

John 18:15–27 (Matt. 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:54–62)

**18:15 “Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple.”** The unnamed disciple is no doubt John—the author of this Gospel.

**18:17 “I am not.”** The three denials of Peter come in quick succession (vv. 17, 25, 27).

**18:19–24 “I spoke openly ... Ask those who have heard Me.”** Here, Jesus appeals to well-known Jewish law, which forbade the conviction of anyone without competent witnesses (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6–7; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). “*Bear witness of the evil.*” Jesus calmly demands that the officer who slapped Him bring forth evidence. If a witness was found to be giving false testimony, they were to suffer the fate of the one they were accusing (Deut. 19:16–19).

**18:27 “Immediately a rooster crowed.”** Here, John confirms the prophecy of Jesus regarding Peter’s denials (John 13:38). Where John refers only to the final “rooster” crowing, there were actually two rooster crows (Matt. 26:34, 74b–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:34, 60–61).

### Jesus in the Court of Pilate

John 18:28–40 (Matt. 27:11–26; Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:1–25)

**18:28 “They led Jesus ... to the Praetorium.”** This was the residence of Pilate in Jerusalem. **“It was early morning.”** A Roman court could not sit until after 6 a.m. The Jewish court before Annas and Caiaphas were illegal by Jewish law, having occurred at night. **“That they might eat the Passover.”** These religious Jews, in the act of condemning their true Messiah, were concerned about ritual purity. There were many ceremonial feasts during the week of Pentecost and Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:4–14).

**18:29–30 “What accusation do you bring?”** Pilate is requesting them to lodge a formal charge against Jesus. **“If He were not an evil doer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.”** The religious leaders are evasive, having no real case against Jesus.

**18:31–32 “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death.”** Only the Roman authority had the power of execution. Here, the Jewish leaders reveal their goal—the crucifixion of Jesus. **“That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled.”** Jesus repeatedly told the disciples that He would be crucified (Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19; John 3:14).

**18:33–36 “Are You the King of the Jews?”** The Jews charged Jesus with claiming to be a king (Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:1–2). This was the only charge that would stand in a Roman court, for to claim to be a king was an act of treason against Caesar. **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** Jesus acknowledges that earthly kingdoms often have to fight for their survival. His kingdom needs no defense, because it is assured by the authority of God (Psalm 2:4–12; 110:1–4; Dan. 2:44–45; 4:34–35; 7:27).

**18:37 “You say rightly that I am a king.”** Here, Jesus acknowledges that He is the long-awaited Messiah—King of Israel (Psalm 45:6; 1 Tim. 6:13). So impressive was His claim and conduct before Pilate that this was the charge placed over His head on the cross (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19). **“Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”** All those who honestly seek the truth will find it in Jesus Christ (Jer. 29:13; John 3:21).

**18:38 “What is truth?”** Pilate was standing in the very presence of the Living Truth (John 14:6). Yet he did not wait for Jesus to give an answer. **“I find no fault in Him.”** Here, Pilate formally declares Jesus to be innocent.

**18:40 “Not this Man, but Barabbas.”** The religious leaders stirred up the crowd to request a murderer be released instead of Jesus (Luke 23:18–19; Acts 3:13–15). By this act, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, and Jesus died in the place of sinners (Isa. 53:1–12).

## JOHN CHAPTER 19

Jesus is crucified and buried.

### The Condemnation of Jesus

John 19:1–16 (Matt. 27:15–31; Mark 15:6–20; Luke 23:13–25)

**19:1 “Pilate ... scourged Him.”** Contrary to both Jewish and Roman law, Pilate had Jesus scourged before He was accused of any crime. A whip with nine lashes, tipped with bone and metal was used. This punishment was to be used only for those convicted of a capital crime, like murder.

## JOHN 19:2–27

**19:2–3 “The soldiers twisted a crown of thorns.”** These soldiers mocked Jesus’ claim to be King of the Jews with a thorny crown and a purple robe. The curse of sin brought sorrow, thorns, and death (Gen. 3:16–19). Jesus bore the penalty for the whole world (John 3:16–17; Rom. 3:23–25; 6:23; Heb. 2:9; 9:22; 1 John 2:2).

**19:5 “Behold, the Man!”** Perhaps Pilate still hoped the scourging would appease the crowd and make the crucifixion unnecessary. However, his statement sets Jesus before the eyes of all mankind to consider His claims and His later victory over sin, Satan, and death (Col. 2:13–15).

**19:6–7 “Crucify Him!”** The chief priests would be satisfied with nothing less than His death. **“He made Himself the Son of God.”** To the chief priests, this was a charge of blasphemy (Lev. 24:16; Matt. 26:63–66). This charge relates to His claim to be equal with God (John 5:18; 10:30–33).

**19:9 “Jesus gave him no answer.”** Here again is a fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 53:7). Pilate declared Jesus innocent three times (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). Pilate was fearful to hear of Jesus’ claim to deity, possibly in light of his wife’s dream (Matt. 27:19).

**19:11 “You could have no power ... unless it had been given you from above.”** Pilate had authority from Rome, but this “power” was ultimately given by God (Rom. 13:1). **“The one who delivered Me.”** This most likely refers to Caiaphas (John 18:24, 28).

**19:12 “You are not Caesar’s friend.”** The Jewish leaders shift from the religious charge of blasphemy (v. 7) to the political charge of treason against Caesar. They suggest that Pilate would be an accomplice of Jesus if he failed to crucify Him.

**19:14 “Behold your King!”** Though stated sarcastically, Pilate spoke the truth. **“We have no king but Caesar!”** With this statement, the religious leaders claim allegiance to an earthly king, rather than to the King of Glory (Psalm 24:7–10).

**19:16 “Then he delivered Him ... to be crucified.”** Against his own sense of justice, Pilate caved into the demands of the mob.

### The Crucifixion of the Lamb of God

John 19:17–30 (Matt. 27:32–50; Mark 15:21–41; Luke 23:26–49)

**19:17–18 “He, bearing His cross, went out.”** The place of crucifixion was outside the city walls (Heb. 13:11–14). According to Jewish law, any execution must take place outside the camp (Num. 15:35–36). **“Golgotha,”** also called “Calvary” in Latin, was a skull-shaped, rocky hill outside Jerusalem. **“They crucified ... two others with Him.”** His crucifixion with criminals (Luke 23:32–33) was also a fulfillment of Scripture (Isa. 53:9, 12).

**19:19–20 “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.”** It was common practice to place a sign above the head of the crucified person proclaiming their crime (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26). Pilate put up the sign, **“In Hebrew, Greek, and Latin”** declaring to the whole world the true identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel.

**19:23–24 “That the Scripture might be fulfilled.”** John is referring to Psalm 22:16–18. Mary most likely wove the **“tunic without seam”** for Jesus. It was the custom of Jewish mothers to give this as a gift when their son went out into the world.

**19:25–27 “Woman, behold your son! ... Behold your mother!”** One of the last earthly acts of Jesus was to commit His mother into the care and safekeeping of His beloved disciple John. The term “woman” as used by Jesus was a term of endearment (John 2:4).

**19:28–29** “*Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished.*” John has been stressing the foreknowledge of Jesus since the Upper Room (John 13:1, 3, 11; 18:4). “*That the Scripture might be fulfilled.*” This was another fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 22:15; 69:21; Matt. 27:48).

**19:30** “*It is finished!*” Here, Jesus is referring to the work of redemption. The payment for the penalty—for the sins of the world—was “paid in full.” This was the “loud cry” recorded in Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46. “*He gave up His spirit.*” Jesus died voluntarily because His work was finished (John 10:15, 18).

### **The Burial of the Savior**

John 19:31–42 (Matt. 27:57–61; Mark 15:42–47; Luke 23:50–56)

**19:31** “*The Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken.*” Sometimes those who were crucified could linger in agony for days. But because it was the “*Preparation*” for the Sabbath, and because Jewish law demanded that the bodies of those executed be removed before sunset (Deut. 21:23), they asked this to be done.

**19:33–36** “*They did not break His legs.*” This was another fulfillment of Scripture (Exod. 12:46; Psalm 34:20). “*One of the soldiers Pierced his side ... Blood and water came out.*” If He were still alive, only blood would come forth. Blood and water showed that death had occurred.

**19:37** “*They shall look on Him whom they pierced.*” John draws attention to another prophecy in Zechariah 12:10.

**19:38–40** “*After this, Joseph of Arimathea ... and Nicodemus.*” Both these men were members of the Jewish council (Mark 15:43; John 3:1). Both had become “*a disciple ... but secretly.*” In John 12:42–43, we are told that many among the rulers believed in Jesus, but would not confess Him, because “*they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*” “[*Joseph*] *asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus ... Pilate gave ... permission.*” This shame was now removed from these two men. “*Nicodemus ... bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.*” Myrrh was a very expensive gift and was usually reserved for the burial of kings. “*They ... bound the body of Jesus in strips of linen with the spices.*”

**19:41–42** “*A new tomb.*” This was the personal tomb of Joseph (Matt. 27:60). “*There they laid Jesus.*” Here again, is another prophecy fulfilled (Isa. 53:9).

## **JOHN CHAPTER 20**

The empty tomb and Jesus’ appearances to His disciples.

### **The Empty Tomb**

John 20:1–10 (Matt. 28:1–8; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–12)

**20:1–2** “*Mary Magdalene went to the tomb.*” She arrived early and was soon joined by other women (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55–24:1). Remember that the tomb had been under Roman seal with soldiers posted to guard it. (Matt. 28:1–4, 11–15).

**20:2** “*Simon Peter, and ... the disciple, whom Jesus loved.*” No doubt Mary went to Peter because of his role as leader, in spite of his denials. John had spent the three days and nights with Peter. See Matthew 12:38–40.

**20:4–7** “*So they both ran.*” John outruns Peter in his eagerness to see. Perhaps it was beginning to dawn on him what had occurred. “*He ... saw the linen cloths lying there.*” If the body had been taken, the winding/wrapping cloths would have also been taken. “*The handkerchief ... folded together in a place by itself.*” This indicated some care and attention that no thief would have shown.

## JOHN 20:8–23

**20:8–10** *“Then the other disciple ... saw and believed.”* John had already believed in Jesus as Messiah and Savior, but he now believed that Jesus had risen from the dead. *“They did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”* Though Jesus had told the disciples repeatedly, they did not understand the prophecy (Psalm 16:9–11; Matt. 16:21; 17:22–23; Luke 24:26–27, 32, 44–45; Acts 2:24–31). *“Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.”*

### Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

John 20:11–18

**20:11–13** *“Mary stood outside ... weeping.”* Peter left the tomb confused. John left the tomb believing. Mary, back at the tomb, cannot bring herself to leave and continues weeping. She sees the two angels, *“one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain”* who ask her, *“Woman, why are you weeping?”* One moment Mary looks in and the tomb is empty. The next moment she sees the angels. She still wonders where the body has been taken and is obviously overcome with grief—not thinking clearly.

**20:14–15** *“Woman, why are you weeping?”* Now Jesus appears and asks the same question, perhaps a mild rebuke at her unwillingness to believe. Like Mary, in times of great trial or grief, we have also refused to believe all that the Scriptures have told us.

**20:16** *“‘Mary!’ ... ‘Rabboni!’ (... Teacher)”* The personal address of Jesus opens her eyes, and she responds joyfully. In Hebrew/Aramaic, the “i” at the end of *Rabbon*, is possessive and means “My.” The response of Thomas in v. 28 may be more exalted, but Mary’s response is much more personal. Truly, His sheep hear His voice (John 10:3, 16, 27–28). This is the eighth and the greatest sign recorded by John (John 2:19). See the Introduction to this Gospel, “Eight Signs.”

**20:17** *“Do not cling to Me.”* Mary, in her joy, clung to the Lord. But there were other things both He and she must attend to. *“I have not yet ascended to My Father.”* The suggestion is that Jesus ascended to the Father, and then descended again to appear to the disciples. Either this, or He spoke of His future ascension (Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:9–11) and the new spiritual relationship that would exist between Him and those who believe in Him. *“Go to My brethren.”* To Mary was given the privilege of being first to proclaim the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 18).

### Jesus’ Appearances and Commission

John 20:19–29 (Luke 24:36–43; 1 Cor. 15:4–5).

**20:19–20** *“Jesus came and stood ... He showed them His hands and side.”* Jesus’ resurrection body could pass through locked doors and walls. Also, His body retained the marks of His crucifixion. *“The disciples were glad”* (John 16:20).

**20:21–23** *“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”* In Matthew, we have the commission to *“Make disciples”* (Matt. 28:18–20). In Mark, we have the commission to *“Preach the gospel”* (Mark 16:15). Here, Jesus includes four vital factors in His commission:

1. Our relationship of peace with God (vv. 19, 21; Rom. 5:1),
2. Our commission continues His ministry (v. 21),
3. This commission can only be effective through the work of the coming Holy Spirit (v. 22; Zec. 4:6; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1–4), and
4. We are to offer to the world the only means of forgiveness—the Gospel of Jesus Christ (v. 23; Matt. 18:15–20; Acts 13:38–39; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). This is not personal power, either in individuals or in the Church, to forgive personal sins. It is the offer of forgiveness to those who believe, and the withholding of forgiveness to those who reject

Jesus Christ. The fact that ***“He breathed on them”*** was a reminder of the original creation (Gen. 2:7) and the idea of being ***“born again”*** (John 3:3–8). However, here, our Lord anticipates His new creation—not only the individual believer but, collectively, the Church (Matt. 16:18–19; 2 Cor. 5:17).

**20:24–25** ***“Thomas ... said ... unless I see ... I will not believe.”*** Although he is often called “doubting Thomas,” he was no more doubtful than all the others (Mark 16:11, 13–14).

**20:27** ***“Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”*** These disciples all demonstrate that it is possible to believe in Jesus as Savior, and then to later fail to believe/obey new information. Such “unbelief” does not affect our initial salvation, but surely hinders our spiritual growth and effectiveness as witnesses (Luke 11:28, 12:48; John 13:17; James 4:17).

**20:28** ***“My Lord and my God!”*** If Jesus were not God, He would have rebuked Thomas (Isa. 42:8). Here, Thomas confesses the deity that Jesus had repeatedly claimed (John 5:17–18; 10:30–33).

**20:29** ***“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*** These disciples witnessed Jesus’ miracles, heard His lessons and parables, and witnessed His bodily resurrection. Here, Jesus declares a special blessedness to all who, without sight, believe in Him—by faith alone (2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:1; 1 Pet. 1:7–9; 2 Pet. 1:16–21).

### The Theme of John’s Gospel Summarized

John 20:30–31

**20:30** ***“Truly Jesus did many other signs.”*** John focused on eight signs to show the identity and power of the Lord Jesus (see the Introduction to this Gospel, “Eight Signs”). Also note his closing reference to these signs (John 21:25).

**20:31** ***“These are written that you may believe.”*** The Gospel of John is primarily evangelistic in nature. ***“That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”*** The power of faith is in its object. Because Jesus is indeed the promised Savior (Job 19:25–27; Isa. 42:1–9; 61:1–3) and the Son of God (Dan. 7:13–14), He alone is ***“able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him”*** (Heb. 7:25). ***“That believing you may have life in His name,”*** that is, by His authority (Matt. 28:18). The life that He gives is eternal life (John 3:15–16; 10:28; 17:2–3).

## JOHN CHAPTER 21

Jesus appears in Galilee; Peter is restored.

### Jesus Appears in Galilee

John 21:1–14

**21:1–2** ***“Jesus showed Himself again.”*** This was His third appearance to the disciples as a group (v. 14). ***“The sons of Zebedee.”*** These were James and John—the author of this Gospel (Matt. 4:21; 10:2; Mark 1:19; 3:17; Luke 5:10). Matthew, Mark, and John all purposely minimize their part in telling their stories.

**21:4–6** ***“The disciples did not know that it was Jesus.”*** Perhaps Jesus concealed His identity as before (Luke 24:15–16; John 20:14–15). ***“Children, have you any food?”*** They might have assumed he was a local man, looking to buy fish (see Luke 24:41; Psalm 33:9). ***“Children”*** could mean “young men.” ***“They answered Him, ‘No.’ ... Cast the net on the right side ... and you will find some.”*** This is similar to what Jesus had said to Peter when He called him to be a disciple (Luke 5:4–10).

**21:7** ***“That disciple whom Jesus loved.”*** This again refers to John—this Gospel’s author. He does not refer to himself in this way because Jesus did not love the other disciples; rather, it is because he was always amazed

## JOHN 21:8–25

that Jesus loved him. ***“Simon Peter ... put on his outer garment.”*** Peter is the focal point of this chapter. While fishing, they wore only a loin cloth. To us, it seems strange that Peter would put on his outer garment. However, in ancient Israel, it would have been a sign of disrespect to greet Jesus “unclothed.”

**21:8** ***“About two hundred cubits.”*** This is approximately one hundred yards.

**21:9–10** ***“They saw a fire ... and fish ... and bread.”*** Jesus demonstrates, once again, His ability to provide for every need. ***“Bring some of the fish which you have caught.”*** Our Lord’s supernatural provision is never such that it excludes our own contribution. The disciples’ labor adds to the Lord’s providential supply.

**21:11** ***“One hundred and fifty-three ... the net was not broken.”*** Many suggestions have been offered regarding John’s precise count here. In this Gospel, John does not give details without having a purpose. Perhaps the best meaning is that, in the Sea of Galilee, it is said that there are 153 kinds of fish. The catch of so many, without breaking the net, might suggest the future work of the disciples, and the Church—drawing men of all nations into the fold, which is capable of holding them all.

**21:14** ***“The third time.”*** Again, this refers to His appearances to the disciples as a group (John 20:19, 26). This does not include His appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–32), or to Mary (John 20:11–18).

### The Restoration of Peter

John 21:15–19

**21:15–17** ***“Simon ... do you love Me more than these?”*** Peter had boasted that his devotion to Jesus was greater than that of the other disciples (Matt. 26:31–35; Mark 14:29–31). ***“Lord, You know that I love You.”*** While Jesus uses the word *agapao* for “love,” Peter uses *phileo*. In Scripture, the first is used for the love of God for us, while the second generally refers to the affection of kinship, such as the Father’s love for the Son (John 5:20), and Jesus’ love for Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (John 11:3). It may be Peter’s way of showing awareness of his failure in denying the Lord, in spite of his devotion. ***“Feed My lambs ... tend My sheep.”*** Peter’s three affirmations of his love countered his three denials of Jesus. Jesus confirms His original commission to Peter to be an under-shepherd to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1–4), which involves care for both new believers and for the more mature. The practical point here is that our failures do not change the plan of God for our service to Him.

**21:18–19** ***“You will stretch out your hands ... where you do not wish.”*** Here, Jesus shows the difference between the young and impetuous Peter, and the older and more submissive man. In 2 Peter 1:13–14, Peter anticipates his martyrdom, as Jesus predicted. Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified upside down at his own request, as he did not think he deserved to die like his Lord. ***“Follow Me.”*** Though we all fail in a multitude of ways (James 3:1–2), the solution for every failure is confession, correction, and commitment to rise up and follow our Lord (Rom. 8:31–39; 1 John 1:7, 9; 2:2; Heb. 4:14–16; 7:22–27).

### To Each His Own Work

John 21:20–25

**21:20–21** ***“What about this man?”*** In light of vv. 18–19 and v. 23, Peter’s question must have implied whether John would also be martyred. It is easy for us to get distracted by the plan and purpose of God for others. We need to remember that each and every believer has a different work to accomplish (Matt. 25:15; Mark 13:34; Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

**21:24–25** ***“This is the disciple.”*** John is referring to himself as the author of this Gospel. ***“We know ... his testimony is true.”*** John includes the other apostles as witnesses to his truth (1 John 1:1–4). ***“Many other things that Jesus did.”*** Each of the Gospel authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16), selected those

events of the life of Christ that most supported their main theme. It is exciting to think that we may hear the whole story when we are with our Lord!

## **CONCLUSION**

John has presented Jesus to us as the Creator who became man that He might be our Savior (John 1:1–18). His presentation of the words and works of Jesus have one simple goal in mind; that we believe in Him for eternal life (John 20:30–31). Where the other Gospel writers focus mainly on Jesus' Galilean ministry, John includes much more about His ministry in Jerusalem and Judea. In building his story around the signs done by Jesus, John calls us to rest in the power of Him who overcame the world (John 16:33). John alone records the final teaching of Jesus to His disciples in the Upper Room, ending with His High Priestly Prayer (John 13–17). These chapters introduce us to much of the truth that would later be fully developed in the epistles.



# ***The Acts***

**of the Apostles**



## INTRODUCTION

Luke wrote the book of Acts as part two of his Gospel story. If we read Luke 1:1–4 with Acts 1:1–3 we see that both were addressed to “*Theophilus*.” The fact that Luke calls him “*most excellent Theophilus*” in Luke 1:3 indicates that he held some high government position. Because of this, some have suggested that Luke wrote this two-part story as a legal defense of Christianity, and particularly of the ministry of Paul, showing that the spread of the Christian faith was not a threat to the Roman Empire.

In the book of Acts, Luke gives a chronicle of the spread of the gospel message according to Jesus’ instructions (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:7–8). At the same time, Luke shows the birth and development of the Church (Matt. 16:18), made up of all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. The baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5; 2:1–12; 1 Cor. 12:13) created a new spiritual family and fulfilled the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–27; Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Heb. 8:6–12; 10:16–17; 12:24).

The foundation of the Church is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To this historical fact, the early apostles faithfully testified. These men were supernaturally gifted with power to perform signs and miracles as proof of their divine appointment (Rom. 15:18–19; 2 Cor. 12:12). The powerful ministry and mighty deeds of the apostles are recorded for us in the book of Acts, ending with the ministry of the Apostle Paul.



# THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

## ACTS CHAPTER 1

The promise of the Holy Spirit; the ascension of Jesus; the choosing of Matthias.

### **The Promise of the Holy Spirit**

Acts 1:1–8

**1:1** *“The former account.”* This refers to the Gospel of Luke. *“All that Jesus began both to do and teach.”* This implies that Jesus now continues to work through His Spirit-empowered Church.

**1:2** *“The apostles whom He had chosen.”* Here, Luke lays down the basis for the authority of the apostles. They were chosen by the Lord for the task of spreading the gospel message throughout the world.

**1:3** *“He also presented Himself alive ... by many infallible proofs.”* The foundation and validity of the Church is based on the historical reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. *“Things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”* Because of Israel’s rejection of her King, the earthly kingdom is delayed until the future (Matt. 23:37–39; Luke 21:31). In the meantime, God is building a spiritual kingdom, made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ (John 18:36; Luke 17:21; Col. 1:13).

**1:4–5** *“The Promise of the Father ... baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* John declared that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). Here, Jesus says that this Spirit baptism was soon. The coming of the Holy Spirit marked the transition from the Old to the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–28; Heb. 8:7–13).

**1:6–7** *“Lord, will You ... restore the kingdom.”* The disciples thought that Jesus Christ, now resurrected from the dead, would establish His reign over the Earth at that time. *“It is not for you to know.”* The unfolding of the plan of God, from the resurrection of Jesus until the earthly kingdom would be established, was not yet revealed. This revelation was part of the *“mystery”* that was later revealed to the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:25–27; Eph. 3:1–7; 1 Thess. 5:1–2). The kingdom will not come until after the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:13–18) and the Tribulation Period, during which the remnant of Israel will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith (Rom. 11:25–26).

**1:8** *“But you shall receive power ... and you shall be witnesses to Me.”* The power that would enable these normal men to spread the gospel message throughout the world came from *“the Holy Spirit.”* The mission of the apostles would spread geographically from *“Jerusalem ... Judea ... Samaria ... to the end of the earth.”* The book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome and his intention to focus on evangelizing the Gentiles (Acts 28:28–31).

### **The Ascension of Jesus into Heaven**

Acts 1:9–11

**1:9–11** *“While they watched.”* It is important to Luke’s purpose in writing this book that the apostles witnessed the ascension of Jesus into Heaven. *“Two men ... in white apparel.”* These are certainly angels (Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12). *“This same Jesus ... will so come in like manner.”* Just as the resurrected Jesus ascended, so one day He is coming again—at the Rapture—for those who believe in Him (1 Thess. 4:13–18). At His Second Coming to Earth, it will be the same Jesus, but in a much different way (Rev. 19:11–16).

### **The Choosing of Matthias**

Acts 1:12–26

**1:13** *“They went up into the upper room.”* This was probably the same room where they celebrated the Last Supper with Jesus (Luke 22:12; Mark 14:15). The original eleven apostles are named, to identify them as the ones chosen by Jesus (Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:13–16).

## ACTS 1:14–2:3

**1:14** *“These all continued with one accord in prayer.”* The disciples who slept in Gethsemane now have a sense of the work ahead of them and their need for God’s power (Matt. 26:40–45; Mark 14:37–41; Luke 22:40–46). *“And Mary ... with His brothers.”* The resurrection appearance of Jesus to His half-brother James must have convinced his brothers of His true identity (John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7).

**1:15** *“Peter stood up.”* From the very beginning of Acts, we see Peter still as the leader of the disciples.

**1:16** *“The Holy Spirit spoke ... by the mouth of David.”* Here, Peter expresses his conviction of the inspiration of the authors of Scripture by the Holy Spirit (1 Pet. 1:10–12; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; see also 2 Tim. 3:16). *“Concerning Judas.”* Peter realized that the Scripture anticipated the betrayal by Judas (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18).

**1:18–19** *“This man purchased a field.”* This refers to the burial ground bought with the wages of his betrayal (Matt. 27:3–10). *“Falling headlong, he burst open.”* Here, Luke gives us details about Judas not given in the Gospel accounts. Judas first hung himself, but apparently the rope broke.

**1:20** *“For it is written.”* This phrase declares the absolute accuracy and authority of the Word of God (Matt. 2:5; 4:4, 6, 7; 21:13; Mark 1:2; 11:17). Peter quotes Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 as the basis for selecting another apostle. *“Let another take his office.”* This is a direct fulfillment of Jesus’ warning in the parable of Matthew 25:24–30.

**1:21–22** *“One of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”* Peter stipulated that the man chosen must be a disciple that accompanied them from the time of John’s baptism until the resurrection of Jesus. Matthias (v. 23) was perhaps one of the seventy the Lord sent out (Luke 10:1).

**1:24** *“O Lord ... show which ... You have chosen.”* The disciples did not trust in their own judgment but prayed for God to make His will clear.

**1:25** *“That he might go to his own place.”* Based on Jesus’ revelation that Judas had never believed (John 6:64, 70–71), the disciples could be sure Judas was in Hades. It seems evident from the story of the rich man and Lazarus that the unsaved are totally alone in Hell (Luke 16:22–23).

**1:26** *“They cast their lots.”* This was a common way of relying on the sovereignty of God to guide their decision-making in biblical times (Josh. 18:6; Prov. 16:33; Jonah 1:7; see also 1 Sam. 23:9–12). *“Matthias ... was numbered with the eleven.”* This is the first and last time that we read of Matthias.

## ACTS CHAPTER 2

The coming of the Holy Spirit; the Church is born.

### **The Outpouring of the Spirit**

Acts 2:1–13

**2:1** *“The Day of Pentecost.”* Pentecost was fifty days after the Sabbath of the Passover (Lev. 23:15–16). Both Firstfruits and Pentecost fell on the day after the Sabbath (Sunday, Lev. 23:11, 16). Therefore, both the resurrection of Jesus and the birth of the Church occurred on a Sunday. On this day, the Lord Jesus began the work of building His Church (Matt. 16:18).

**2:2–3** *“A sound ... of a rushing mighty wind ... tongues, as of fire.”* Both wind and fire are often used as symbols of God’s presence and power (Exod. 3:2; Ezek. 37:9; Mal. 3:2–3; John 3:8).

**2:4 “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit”.** This filling followed the baptism of the Spirit, which places every believer into the Church—the Body of Christ (Acts 1:5; 11:15–16; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27). The coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:25–28). Though the baptism of the Spirit occurs only once, at the moment we believe in Jesus Christ, the filling of the Spirit, however, is repeated as we submit to Him in faith and purity (Eph. 5:15–21; 2 Tim. 2:20–21; 1 John 1:7, 9). **“And began to speak with other tongues.”** The apostles were supernaturally empowered to speak in the known languages of those who had come to Jerusalem from many other nations (vv. 5–11).

**2:5–11 “Devout men, from every nation under heaven.”** The nations listed covered the entire known world at that time. **“Everyone heard them speak in his own language.”** The miracle of tongues was the supernatural ability of the apostles to proclaim, **“The wonderful works of God”** (v. 11) in other known languages.

**2:12–13 “Whatever could this mean?”** This supernatural phenomenon created a desire in many to know what it (speaking in tongues) signified. **“They are full of new wine.”** Some of the mockers assumed they were drunk.

### Peter’s Message

Acts 2:14–36

**2:14–15 “Peter, standing up with the eleven.”** Again, the prominence and leadership of Peter is seen, backed up by the other eleven apostles. **“These are not drunk ... since [as] it is only the third hour of the day.”** Peter argues that it is too early (9 a.m.) to have become drunk.

**2:16–21 “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”** This prophecy by Joel (Joel 2:28–32) covers a wide array of events in the last days, but the primary focus is the coming of the Holy Spirit and the promise of salvation for all who call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13).

**2:19–20 “Wonders in heaven ... and signs in the earth.”** These events will occur at the end of the seven-year Tribulation Period, just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:29–31; Rev. 6:12–17).

**2:21 “Whoever calls on the name of the LORD.”** This “call” implies the faith that Jesus is both Lord and “the Christ”/Messiah (John 20:31). **“Shall be saved.”** The deliverance here includes both eternal salvation as well as deliverance from suffering the wrath of God during this life (Rom. 1:18–32).

**2:22–36 “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you.”** The miracles and ministry of Jesus were known by all who lived in Israel (John 3:2; 9:30–33). In this first message of the Church Age, Peter makes five great points:

1. **“Him, being delivered by the determined purpose [counsel] and foreknowledge of God.”** (v. 23a) The cross was no accident. It was the fulfillment of God’s plan for the redemption of men. Thus, we see the sovereignty of God in history.
2. **“You have taken by lawless hands ... and put to death.”** (v. 23b) They had acted willfully in rejecting Jesus Christ (Matt. 27:22–23; Mark 15:12–14; Luke 23:18–23; John 19:14–16). Here, we see the freedom of men to choose, and the consequences of that choice (Hosea 8:7; Gal. 6:7).
3. **“Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death.”** (v. 24) God the Father raised Jesus to life from the grave (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3–4). Because He is the Prince of Life, death could not hold Him (Acts 3:15; 5:30–31). Peter quotes Psalm 16:8–11 to show the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fulfillment of prophecy (vv. 25–28).

## ACTS 2:37–43

4. ***“This Jesus ... being exalted to the right hand of God.”*** (v. 32–35) The Lord Jesus now sits at the right hand of God—the place of honor and power (Psalm 2:7–12; 68:18; 110:1–4; Matt. 26:64; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20–22; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22).
5. ***“God has made this Jesus ... both Lord and Christ.”*** (v. 36)
  - a. He is the One to whom they will all answer for their sin;
  - b. He is the One who will judge them (Heb. 4:13); and
  - c. He is also the only one by whom they can be saved from that judgment.

### The Growth of the Church

Acts 2:37–47

**2:37** ***“They were cut to the heart.”*** This is the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit at work through the message of Peter (John 16:7–11). ***“What shall we do?”*** This same question was asked of John the Baptist regarding repentance and the acts that flow from it (Luke 3:8, 10–14).

**2:38** ***“Repent ... be baptized.”*** The call to repentance began with the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4–5; Luke 3:3). The word *“repent”* means “to change one’s mind.” The focus of this call to repent meant to stop thinking that descent from Abraham could save them (Matt. 3:9) and, instead, to confess themselves to be sinners (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5) and to trust in the Savior. It is only through faith that we receive ***“the remission of sins.”*** Baptism was the first act of public confession of faith in Christ, and the first step of discipleship (Matt. 28:19). ***“You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*** Jesus had promised the coming of the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room (John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26–27; 16:7–13). Every believer in Jesus Christ is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ at the moment they believe (1 Cor. 12:13).

**2:41** ***“Those who gladly received his word were baptized.”*** It is clear that faith precedes baptism and is the only basis for it (John 1:12–13).

**2:42** ***“They continued steadfastly.”*** Here, we are given a brief but complete picture of the life of the early believers. Luke lists four activities that were the heart of the Church:

1. ***“The apostles’ doctrine.”*** The first priority of the church is the teaching of sound doctrine. We are to preach the gospel message to the unsaved and teach the doctrines of the Bible to the saved.
2. ***“And fellowship.”*** This involved the sharing of personal goods with those in need (vv. 44–45). This was always voluntary, never forced (Acts 5:4, 2 Cor. 9:7). Those who claim this was an early form of socialism are either ignorant of Church history, or intentionally deceptive.
3. ***“Breaking of bread.”*** Refers to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20; 1 Cor. 11:23–26).
4. ***“And in prayers.”*** Prayer is the means by which we enter into God’s presence, praise Him, intercede for others, and make requests of our needs (Matt. 6:9–13; Eph. 6:18–20; 1 Thess. 5:17–18; Heb. 4:14–16).

**2:43** ***“Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”*** There are many today who think that all the early believers were miracle workers. The Bible, however, indicates that these powers were given only to the apostles (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3–4). These sign-gifts were evidence that they had been personally chosen by Jesus Christ to be apostles.

**2:44–45** “*Now all who believed were together.*” This speaks not so much of their physical gathering together, but their spiritual unity (Eph. 4:3–6). Their love for one another motivated their acts of sacrificial giving by those who had “*possessions and goods.*” They were simply living out the last and greatest of Jesus’ commandments (John 13:34–35).

**2:46–47** “*So continuing daily ... the Lord added to the church.*” The joyous and loving atmosphere of these early believers had a great impact on those around them, winning others daily to faith in Jesus Christ. Any church today that demonstrates the love of Christ as these did would have the same impact (John 13:35; 2 Cor. 5:14–21).

### **ACTS CHAPTER 3**

Peter heals a lame man; preaching in Solomon’s Porch.

#### **Peter Heals the Lame Man**

Acts 3:1–10

**3:1** “*The hour of prayer, the ninth hour.*” Twice daily a male lamb was sacrificed in the Temple (Exod. 29:38–42; Num. 28:3–4). The first sacrifice was at 9 a.m., the second, at 3 p.m. (the ninth hour starting from 6 a.m.). These sacrifices, offered for over 1400 years, anticipated the time Jesus would be on the cross (Matt. 27:45–46; Mark 15:25, 33–34; Luke 23:44–46). These two sacrifices were accompanied by a time of prayer.

**3:2** “*Lame from his mother’s womb.*” This man’s permanent condition magnified the miracle that was done in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. “*The gate ... called Beautiful.*” This gate gave entrance to the Temple from the women’s court.

**3:4–5** “*Look at us.*” One glance at Peter and John would show their poverty. It also demanded the man’s full attention for what was about to be said.

**3:6** “*Silver and gold I do not have.*” Here, Peter confirms what was obvious to the eye. “*What I do have I give you.*” Peter is following the instructions of Jesus (Matt. 10:8). We are not to offer for sale what God has freely given to us! “*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.*” The power to heal was not in Peter, but in the resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ. If we represent Jesus, how can we put a price on what He has given to us?

**3:7–8** “*His feet and ankle bones received strength.*” The author, Luke, was a physician, and identifies the inner working of the miracle. “*Walking, leaping, and praising God.*” It was the antics and praises of this joyful man that drew the crowd.

**3:10** “*They were filled with wonder and amazement.*” God used the lame man’s joyful praises and the amazement of the crowd, to provide for a ready audience.

#### **Peter’s Message**

Acts 3:11–26

**3:11–12** “*The lame man ... held on to Peter and John.*” The healed man naturally saw in these apostles the means of his healing. “*As though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?*” Peter at once denies that any healing power resided in himself or John, due to personal godliness (Zec. 4:6). Rather, he deflects the attention from himself and John, so as to point the crowd to Jesus Christ.

**3:13–14** “*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers.*” Peter links the man’s healing to the miracle-working God of Israel. “*Glorified His Servant Jesus.*” They all would have known of the miracle-working ministry of Jesus. The prophets often spoke of Him as the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 42:1–4; 52:13–14;

## ACTS 3:15–4:2

Zec. 3:8). ***“Whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate.”*** These events would have been fresh in their minds. ***“You denied the Holy One and the Just.”*** Peter accuses them of denying and rejecting their own promised Messiah.

**3:15 *“Killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead.”*** What a mystery that the Prince of life should be slain by His own creation! Yet, His resurrection showed Him to be victor over death and the grave (Acts 2:22–24, 30; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3–4).

**3:16 *“Through faith in His name.”*** Peter lays down the one and only condition for receiving the grace of God and that is faith in Jesus Christ. The faith that worked the miracle was not only in Peter and John, but also in the lame man.

**3:17 *“I know that you did it in ignorance.”*** Here, Peter confirms what Jesus prayed on the cross (Luke 23:34).

**3:18 *“Those things which God foretold ... He has thus fulfilled.”*** Peter wants the crowd to see that the events of the crucifixion and resurrection were a fulfillment of prophecy in God’s Word.

**3:19 *“Repent therefore and be converted.”*** The word *“repent”* means “to change your mind.” *“Converted”* means the outward turning from their previous rejection of Christ to a faith-reception of Him. When one has hardened their heart to the gospel message, they must come to a point where they change their mind from unbelief to faith. ***“Times of refreshing.”*** This included the immediate reception of the Holy Spirit and the consciousness of forgiven sins, as well as the anticipated future kingdom.

**3:20–21 *“That He may send Jesus Christ.”*** Here, Peter points them to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly kingdom. Without faith in Him, they would never share in this blessing. ***“Times of restoration of all things.”*** This speaks specifically of the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

**3:22–23 *“A Prophet like me.”*** The typical thinking in Israel at this time was that the *“Prophet”* and *“the Christ”* were two different people (Deut. 18:15; John 1:19–21). In reality, both referred to the promised Messiah. ***“Every soul who will not hear that Prophet.”*** Rejection of Jesus’ call to believe on Him would result in eternal condemnation (John 3:16–19; 3:36).

**3:25 *“In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*** God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Gal. 3:16).

**3:26 *“To you first.”*** Here, Peter anticipates that the message was to go to the Jew first and, after their rejection, to the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6; Acts 28:28; Rom. 1:16; 11:11, 25; Eph. 1:12–13; 2:11–18).

## ACTS CHAPTER 4

The beginning of persecutions; prayer for boldness; life of the early Church.

### **The Arrest and Defense of Peter and John**

Acts 4:1–12

**4:1–2 *“The priests, the captain ... the Sadducees came upon them.”*** Most of the priests came from the party of the Sadducees and were wealthy aristocrats. They sought the approval of Rome, for that accord afforded them wealth and power. The captain was head of the Temple police and was subject to the high priest’s orders. ***“Greatly disturbed that they taught ... and preached in Jesus the resurrection.”*** The Sadducees rejected the teaching of the resurrection, being wholly concerned with wealth, power, and influence in this world (Matt. 22:23, 31–32; Mark 8:36; Luke 20:27). Mark 8:36 shows the willingness of men to choose wealth over eternal life, which is precisely the attitude of the Sadducees.

**4:4** *“Many of those who heard the word believed.”* In spite of the continued opposition of the religious leaders, many continue to enter into eternal life by faith (Rom. 10:17).

**4:5–6** *“Rulers, elders, and scribes ... Annas the high priest.”* This was the Jewish high court, known as the Sanhedrin. *“Caiaphas, John, and Alexander.”* These were most likely former high priests, who were known as “chief priests.” This was the very council that condemned Jesus to crucifixion.

**4:7** *“By what power or by what name.”* What a perfect opening for Peter to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit! The same question was asked of Jesus (Luke 20:1–2). Peter had already answered this question earlier (Acts 3:12–13).

**4:8** *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Luke, from the start, attributes Peter’s boldness and wisdom, not to him, but to the enabling ministry of the Spirit of God (Acts 4:31; 6:3, 5; Eph. 5:18). Here, we see the fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy (Matt. 10:16–20).

**4:9** *“If we ... are judged for a good deed.”* Peter immediately puts the leaders on the defensive, showing that they are hostile to a wonderful miracle of God’s grace (Acts 3:1–10).

**4:10** *“By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified.”* Peter boldly accuses these leaders of the murder of the Messiah of Israel! *“Whom God raised from the dead.”* The resurrection of Jesus was a recent event, and these leaders could not refute it. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, all they had to do was to produce His dead body, and the message of the resurrection would be forever stopped—but they could not.

**4:11** *“This is the stone which was rejected by you builders ... the chief cornerstone.”* Here, Peter refers to Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16. Jesus also used these verses to affirm His identity (Matt. 21:42). See also 1 Peter 2:6–8.

**4:12** *“Nor is there salvation in any other.”* Apart from faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior sent from God, there is no hope of eternal salvation (John 3:16–19; John 14:6; Phil. 2:10; 1 Tim. 2:3–6).

### Preaching in Jesus’ Name Forbidden

Acts 4:13–22

**4:13** *“When they saw the boldness of Peter and John ... they realized that they had been with Jesus.”* These religious leaders saw the pure and holy courage of Jesus Christ reflected in Peter and John—poor and uneducated disciples.

**4:14–17** *“Seeing the man who had been healed ... we cannot deny it ... let us ... threaten them.”* In these few verses, we see the darkness and the hardness of heart in those who simply refuse to believe, no matter what evidence they have. Those who are like this will receive greater condemnation in the judgment. It is not proof that convinces men of the truth of Jesus Christ, it is humility (James 4:6–10; 1 Pet. 5:5–7).

**4:18** *“Commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”* This prohibition could have no power, for the Lord Jesus—the highest authority of all—had commanded them to preach the Good News (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).

**4:19–20** *“Whether it is right ... you judge.”* Peter places the accountability for this prohibition on the religious leaders. Then he boldly declares that they will continue to proclaim the Good News. Believers always have the obligation to obey God rather than men (Dan. 3:16–18; 6:10–13; Acts 5:29).

**4:21** *“The people ... all glorified God.”* The healing of the lame man, combined with the bold stand of Peter and John, resulted in many of the people coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

### The Church Prays for Boldness

Acts 4:23–31

**4:25–26** “*Why did the nations rage ... against the Lord and against His Christ.*” Here, they quote Psalm 2:1–2, a prophecy of the relentless antagonism of the unbelieving world against God and Jesus Christ.

**4:27–28** “*To do whatever ... Your purpose determined.*” Just as in Acts 2:23, the apostles see the mighty, sovereign hand of God at work. The sovereignty of God does not nullify the free-will decision of mankind. Rather, He works in and through man’s decisions to accomplish His perfect will. Both God’s mercy and His judgment result from the fact that He is no respecter of persons and is just in every way (Rom. 2:4–6, 11; 3:26).

**4:29–32** “*Grant to Your servants ... boldness ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke ... with boldness.*” Consider the power and effect of this prayer on the early Church, and what we can learn from it:

1. They prayed in humble submission to the will of God (v. 28; Matt. 6:10; 1 John 5:14–15).
2. They prayed in obedience to the Word of God (vv. 25–26, 29b; John 15:7).
3. They prayed in the authority and Name of Jesus Christ (v. 30; John 14:13–14).
4. They sought and received the enabling power of the Holy Spirit (v. 31; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).
5. They acted on their prayer in faith (v. 31b, James 2:17, 20).

### The Life of the Early Church

Acts 4:32–37

**4:32** “*Those who believed were of one heart and one soul.*” These early believers were living out the spiritual unity Paul later holds up as the ideal (Eph. 4:3–6, 13; Psalm 133:1). This outward unity and care came from the inner motivation of the love of Christ (John 13:34–35; 2 Cor. 5:14–21). “*They had all things in common.*” This was not, as some propose, an early form of socialism! This was voluntary giving to those in need by those who had wealth or possessions. Each person’s possessions remained their own until they chose to give them away (Acts 5:4).

**4:33** “*With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection.*” The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the central message of the early Church, since the fact that Christ was raised from the dead showed Him to be the true Messiah, and the Victor over sin, death/the grave, and Satan (Col. 2:13–15). “*Great grace was upon them all.*” God’s grace always goes where there is faith!

**4:34–35** “*Laid them at the apostles’ feet.*” The early Church trusted the apostles to distribute their offerings to those in need. This was, again, a recognition of the “*apostles*” authority, given to them by Christ.

**4:36–37** “*And Joses ... named Barnabas ... translated Son of Encouragement.*” Here, Luke introduces Barnabas, showing his gracious character and reputation. He will become an important figure in the life of Paul (Acts 11:22–26; 13:1–3).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 5**

Sin in the Church; the apostles' power; renewed persecution and deliverance.

### **The Sin of Lying to the Holy Spirit**

Acts 15:1–11

**5:1 “Ananias, with Sapphira ... sold a possession.”** As the story unfolds, we see that they craved the honor of Barnabas (Acts 4:36–37), without the personal sacrifice.

**5:2 “And he kept back part of the proceeds.”** The problem was not that he kept part of the proceeds for himself, but that he pretended that he was giving all that he had gained. His actions were a lie, designed to draw praise to himself and Sapphira.

**5:3 “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?”** There is no reason to doubt that both Ananias and Sapphira were believers. They were accepted as such by the apostles. However, it is possible even for believers to fall into temptation and sin. This was especially serious, because when we act in the name of service to the Lord, yet we are dishonest, we are lying not to men but to God (Num. 32:23; 1 Sam. 16:7).

**5:4 “Was it not your own control?”** Peter makes it clear that Ananias could have done whatever he wanted with the money if he had only been honest.

**5:5 “Ananias ... fell down and breathed his last.”** Here, we have a clear case of a believer dying the “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 5:1–5, 11–12; see Josh. 7:16–26). This can be any sin that is destructive to self and others, which is persisted in without confession or correction (1 John 1:9; 2:1–2), to the point of maximum divine discipline, resulting in death (Heb. 4:13).

**5:6–10 “How is it you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord?”** Sapphira had an opportunity to tell the truth, which she failed to do. This proved that they had conspired and agreed together to try to deceive the apostles and the Church.

**5:11 “Great fear came upon all.”** This act of Church discipline early in the book of Acts, serves to warn believers down through the ages of the seriousness of treating ministry and service in a casual fashion (Acts 2:43). To make a pretense of godliness is deadly (2 Tim. 3:5)!

### **The Apostles' Power**

Acts 5:12–16

**5:12 “Through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done.”** The New Testament record shows that it was the apostles, and those acting under their authority, who did these mighty signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). These “sign gifts” were never wide-spread, even in the early Church. The seeking of signs reflects an evil heart (Matt. 12:38–39).

**5:13–14 “The people esteemed them highly.”** Even though the persecution caused some to withdraw from them, the overall response was one of honor. **“Believers were ... added to the Lord.”** Again, the only criteria here, is that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31).

**5:15–16 “So that they brought the sick ... and they were all healed.”** The healings and miracles confirmed the power of the apostles as men chosen by Jesus Christ Himself. These signs demonstrated/proved that their message was indeed from God (Zec. 4:6).

**Renewed Persecution**

Acts 5:17–42

**5:17–18** *“The high priest ... the Sadducees ... put them in ... prison.”* Those who live in the freedom of faith and the Spirit always challenge religious authorities. They are a threat to their control over the people. Man-made religion always enslaves men, but faith in Christ always sets men free (John 8:32; Gal. 5:1, 13).

**5:19–20** *“An angel of the Lord ... said ... Go ... speak ... all the words of this life.”* The apostles are commanded to go and publicly proclaim the message of the life that is found only by faith in Jesus Christ (John 1:4; 14:6).

**5:25–28** *“Teaching the people ... Did we not strictly command you not to teach?”* This act of obedience to God and defiance of the religious leaders sets the stage for the apostles’ answer in v. 29. Believers must always give highest allegiance to God and His Word over all human authority.

**5:29** *“We ought to obey God rather than men.”* This statement answers the challenge of Acts 4:19. Like Daniel and his friends, the apostles would not bow to any human demands that violate the Word of God (Dan. 3:16–18; 6:10–17).

**5:30** *“God ... raised up Jesus whom you murdered.”* The apostles are absolutely fearless here, again accusing these religious leaders of the murder of the promised Messiah.

**5:31** *“Him God has exalted to His right hand.”* The resurrection of Jesus proved Him to be the Christ and fulfilled prophecy (Psalm 110:1). *“Prince and Savior.”* As Prince, Jesus awaits His coronation as King when He establishes His Kingdom (Psalm 2:6–12; 110:1–4; Rev. 19:16; Acts 3:15). The same Greek word translated *“Prince”* here, is translated *“captain”* in Hebrews 2:10 and *“author”* in Hebrews 12:2. In the ancient world, it spoke of one who was a “prince-leader” of His people. He alone can lead us to the way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

**5:34–37** *“A Pharisee named Gamaliel.”* This Rabbi was a famous and highly respected teacher in Israel. His most famous student was Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:3). He reminds them of both *“Theudas”* and *“Judas,”* two of the early false messiahs who perished with their followers.

**5:38–39** *“If this plan ... is of men ... but if it is of God.”* The wise counsel of Gamaliel was to let God be God, and so prove whether the apostles’ teaching was true or false.

**5:40–41** *“When they had ... beaten them ... they departed ... rejoicing.”* The apostles, here, fulfill the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:10–12. It is one of the highest honors a disciple can receive—to suffer for Christ’s sake (2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 4:1, 12–16).

**5:42** *“They did not cease teaching ... Jesus as the Christ.”* The apostles were not intimidated! To proclaim that Jesus was the Christ (Anointed One) meant that He was the promised Savior of the world (Psalm 2:2, 7–12; Matt. 16:16; John 20:30–31).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 6**

The first deacons and the arrest of Stephen.

### **The First Deacons Chosen**

Acts 6:1–7

**6:1** *“There arose a complaint [mumming] against the Hebrews by the Hellenists.”* In the time of the early Church, the Jews were divided into two groups: those living in the land who spoke Aramaic, known as Hebrews, and those from other lands who spoke Greek. The “*Hebrews*” saw themselves as superior to the “*Hellenists*” or Greeks. The earlier unity of the disciples (Acts 2:44–47; 4:34–35) gave way to division and discord.

**6:2** *“It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.”* The word “*deacon*” was originally used of a servant who was a “*table-waiter*.” Even at this early stage, the apostles recognized that some were called to minister/teach the “*Word*,” while others were to serve in practical ministry (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

**6:3** *“Seek out ... seven men ... full of the Holy Spirit.”* The evidence of the filling of the Spirit in the lives of these men was that they were of “*good reputation*” and they displayed “*wisdom*” from God’s Word. Knowledge of God’s Word must not only inform our thinking, but also our conduct (Ezra 7:10; Luke 11:28; John 13:17; James 1:21–22).

**6:4** *“We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* Those who are faithful in the ministry of God’s Word must take the task seriously, and not be distracted from diligent prayer and study (1 Tim. 5:17–18; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17).

**6:5** *“And they chose Stephen ... and Philip.”* All seven of those chosen had Greek names, thus they would not ignore the Greek widows (see comment on v. 1 above). Only Stephen and Philip have their actions recorded in chapters seven and eight. Stephen was the first Martyr and Philip was the first to go to the Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 1:8; 7:54–60; 8:5).

**6:7** *“The Word of God spread.”* The apostles’ resolution to the first division in the Church brought about a united outreach. *“Many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”* Thus, they would have left the obsolete Temple service (Matt. 27:50–51; Heb. 10:19–20) to serve under the new High Priest of the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20; Heb. 5:1–6; 8:1–6, 10, 13; 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:8–18).

### **The Arrest of Stephen**

Acts 6:8–15

**6:8** *“Stephen, full of faith and power.”* Here, early in the book of Acts, we see that the filling of the Holy Spirit is always manifested by faith, obedience, wisdom, and power (Acts 6:3, 8, 10).

**6:9** *“The Synagogue of the Freedmen.”* While the Temple was the place of worship for all Jews, many of the synagogues were dedicated to specific groups. This one was for Greek-speaking Jews who had been freed from Roman slavery.

**6:10** *“They were not able to resist.”* Just like the Jews had done to Jesus, when they could not prevail by scriptural arguments, they turned to devious and evil methods of attack.

**6:12–14** *“The elders, and the scribes ... seized him.”* The very people who had crucified Christ and rejected Peter’s message (Acts 2), now arrest Stephen, and use the same accusations against him that they used against

## ACTS 6:15–7:15

Jesus (Matt. 26:59–61; John 2:19; Mark 14:56–59). ***“This holy place and the law.”*** Stephen will use these very points of their arguments against them (Acts 7:44–53).

**6:15** ***“All who sat in the council ... saw his face as the face of an angel.”*** The supernatural radiance of Stephen’s face reflected the glory of the Christ whom he served (Exod. 34:29; 2 Cor. 3:9–10, 18; 4:6; Acts 7:2).

## ACTS CHAPTER 7

The martyrdom of Stephen.

### Stephen Reviews the Call of Abraham

Acts 7:1–8

**7:1** ***“The high priest.”*** This was likely Caiaphas, the high priest who orchestrated the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 26:3–4, 57; John 18:14, 24, 28–30). ***“Are these things so?”*** The accusation brought against Stephen is that he spoke against ***“this holy place and the law.”*** (Acts 6:13–14). In fact, Stephen was prophetically telling the truth, because in 70 A.D., Jerusalem and the Temple were completely destroyed, and the nation of Israel ceased to exist. This is why, through his message, Stephen stresses that God had worked in mighty ways in many other countries (vv. 2, 4, 6, 9, 16, 30).

**7:2** ***“The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham.”*** The history of the Jewish race begins with the call of God to Abraham to leave his home, family, and country (Gen. 12:1–9; Neh. 9:7–8). This was the beginning of the theme that the life of faith is not a settled existence, which is what the priests desired, but rather a pilgrimage (sanctification process) to the Kingdom of God (Heb. 11:8–10, 13–16).

**7:5** ***“God gave him no inheritance.”*** Again, Stephen is driving home the point that the life of faith is that of a sojourner (1 Pet. 2:11; Phil. 3:20). Although Abraham had no inheritance and no child, he believed God’s promise that he would father a great nation, and one day possess the land. This required faith in the resurrection.

**7:6–7** ***“His descendants would dwell in a foreign land.”*** God foretold Abraham of the slavery of the nation in Egypt (Gen. 15:13–14; Exod. 1:8–14). This was to show the sovereignty of God working out in the history of Israel (Hosea 11:1).

**7:8** ***“Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision.”*** The rite of physical circumcision (Gen. 17:1–14) is a sign of God’s covenant with Abraham, which spoke of justification by faith alone (Gen. 15:1–6; Rom. 4:1–5, 10–12, 22–25; Gal. 3:6–11). From Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the nation of Israel was born (Rom. 9:6–12), through whom the Messiah/Savior would come (Rom. 9:4–5).

### Joseph Rejected and Sold into Egypt

Acts 7:9–16

**7:9–10** ***“The patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph.”*** Joseph is in many ways a type or picture of Christ. At this point, Stephen begins to build his theme for his conclusion, which is that the current religious leaders were following a pattern of unbelief and persecution that characterized Israel’s entire history (Acts 7:51–53) and it was “envy” that ultimately motivated the religious leaders to crucify Jesus (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). ***“But God was with him ... and gave him favor and wisdom.”*** Just as the God of Abraham had shown His favor to Joseph by giving him wisdom and authority, so He had—to an even greater degree—favored the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus (Luke 2:52).

**7:14–15** ***“Seventy-five people ... went down to Egypt.”*** In Genesis 46:27 and Deuteronomy 10:22, we read that there were 70 people who went down to Egypt. Stephen is quoting from the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), which added some of the wives to the number.

**7:16 “*They were carried back to Shechem.*”** When Stephen spoke, Shechem was in Samaria—a place hated by the Jews. Again, he is stressing that God is not limited to any special place to do His work. Both Jacob and Joseph were carried back to Canaan to be buried (Gen. 50:5–14; 24–26; Josh. 24:32).

### **Moses, Israel’s Deliverer, Was Also Rejected**

Acts 7:17–36

**7:20–22 “*Moses was born ... and was mighty in words and deeds.*”** Next to Abraham, Moses was the most revered man in Israel’s history. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that he was a mighty commander and military leader. Both Joseph and Moses, like the Lord Jesus, were hated and rejected by their brethren. Yet, God used them both to deliver His people.

**7:23–30 “*When he was forty ... and when forty years had passed.*”** The life of Moses is divided into three periods of forty years: his life as a prince in Egypt (v. 23), his time in the wilderness as a shepherd (v. 30), and his leadership over Israel from the Exodus to his death (v. 36). The number 40 is common in Scripture to represent a time of testing (Matt. 4:1–2; Luke 4:1–2). **“*He supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them.*”** The mission of Moses as a physical deliverer was misunderstood, just as was the mission of Jesus Christ—Israel’s spiritual Deliverer.

**7:32 “*I am the God ... of Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob.*”** Here, Stephen links the call of Moses with the founders of the nation (v. 8). This quote (Exod. 3:6) was used by Jesus to prove the resurrection of the dead to the Sadducees (Matt. 22:31–32).

**7:33 “*The place where you stand is holy ground.*”** The incident of the burning bush occurred in the land of Midian (Exod. 3:1–2), again proving that it was not the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem that was holy, but that any place where God appeared and worked, was a holy place.

**7:34 “*I have ... seen ... I have heard ... and have come down ... I will send you.*”** Stephen clearly proves that God is actively involved in the affairs of men.

**7:35 “*This Moses whom they rejected.*”** Stephen continues to stress the historical hardness of heart and disobedience of Israel (Matt. 23:29–39). Their rejection of Jesus was simply a continuation of the nation’s rebellion against God.

### **The Prophecy of the Messiah and Israel’s Exile**

Acts 7:37–43

**7:37 “*The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me.*”** This prophecy, from Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19, spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was like Moses in that He was also a deliverer and lawgiver. But where Moses was a physical deliverer, Jesus delivers those who believe in Him from sin, death, and Hell (John 3:36; 5:24; Col. 2:13–14). Just as His deliverance is superior to that of Moses, so also is His law (Rom. 8:1–4; 13:8; Gal. 5:14; Heb. 7:12, 18, 22; 8:6–7, 13; 10:9–10).

**7:38 “*With the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai.*”** This “*Angel,*” who first appeared to Moses in the burning bush (v. 30–33; Exod. 3:1–10), was an appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. This is called a “Christophany,” meaning “a visible appearance of our Lord before He came in the flesh (John 1:14).”

**7:39 “*Whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected.*”** When the Israelites rejected the “*living oracles*” (v. 38) given to Moses by the “*Angel,*” they turned to the worship of the golden calf (v. 41; Exod. 32:1–6). Stephen is building the case that the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of his day was equivalent to idolatry when they continued Temple worship, after the rending of the veil (Matt. 27:51). **“*In their hearts they turned back to*”**

## ACTS 7:41–56

**Egypt.**” Rejection of the living oracles caused hardened hearts and the Israelites turned back from entering the promised land (Num. 13–14; Psalm 95:8–11; Heb. 3:7–19).

**7:41–43** *“Then God ... gave them up to worship the host of heaven.”* This shows how rejection of the truth always goes from bad to worse (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28; Eph. 4:17–19; Gal. 5:1–7). *“I will carry you away beyond Babylon.”* The exile of Israel from the land for 70 years was a preview of what was about to happen to Israel in 70 A.D. with the destruction of the city and dispersal of the nation throughout the world. The destruction of the Temple, spoken of in Acts 6:14, would surely come.

### The Blessing and Favor of God Rejected

Acts 7:44–53

**7:44** *“Our fathers had the tabernacle ... in the wilderness.”* Because the religious leaders made an issue of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem (Acts 6:13–14), Stephen shows that God was faithful to dwell among His people as they wandered in the wilderness.

**7:45–46** *“David, who found favor before God.”* David was called by God *“A man after His own heart”* (1 Sam. 13:14). His story and his kingdom were the highpoint of Israel’s history as a nation.

**7:48** *“The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands.”* The Jews had the idea that God dwelt in the Temple, therefore they were safe from any invading forces. Stephen makes the same point Solomon made when he dedicated the Temple: that God is omnipresent and is not bound to any geographic location (1 Kings 8:27–30). The wonder of the New Covenant is that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, every believer becomes a temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).

**7:49–50** *“Heaven is My throne.”* Here, Stephen quotes Isaiah 66:1–2 and Psalm 102:25 to prove his point that God cannot be confined to one place!

### Stephen Is Killed by the Mob

Acts 7:51–60

**7:51** *“You always resist the Holy Spirit.”* Although they were under the convicting power of the Spirit (Zec. 4:6; John 16:7–11; Rom 8:5–8), they hardened their hearts and resisted the truth.

**7:52** *“Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?”* Here, his accusation is very similar to that of Jesus’ condemnation (Matt. 23:34–39). *“Who foretold the coming of the Just One.”* The prophets all spoke of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—the only truly righteous Man who ever lived (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45; Acts 3:14, 18; 1 Pet. 1:10–11). *“Of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers.”* Stephen directly charges them with the guilt of the murder of their own Messiah! (see Acts 3:13–15).

**7:53** *“Who have received the law ... and have not kept it.”* Elsewhere, we are told that the law was given through the agency of angels (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). This is why the author of Hebrews declares Jesus to be superior to the angels (Psalm 2:7; Heb. 1:1–14) because Jesus Himself is the Living Word (John 1:14) and, therefore, the only true and perfect Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5).

**7:54** *“They were cut to the heart.”* This was deep conviction (John 16:8), which on the Day of Pentecost had brought many to faith in Christ (Acts 2:37–41). Here, however, they harden their hearts all the more. *“They gnashed at him with their teeth.”* This is an expression of intense rage and anger, such as those cast into hell will experience (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

**7:55–56** *“Being full of the Holy Spirit ... saw ... Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”* The filling of the Spirit, which characterized Stephen’s life (Acts 6:5, 8), sustained him through death. After the resurrection and

ascension, Jesus sat down at the Father's right hand (Psalm 110:1; Heb. 1:13). Here, Jesus stands to welcome Stephen into Heaven!

**7:58** *"They cast him out of the city."* Like his Lord, Stephen *"suffered outside the gate"* (Heb. 13:12). *"At the feet of a young man named Saul."* Here, Luke introduces us to the person who will become the main figure in the book of Acts. In Acts 8:1–3, we see just how dedicated Saul of Tarsus was to the destruction of the Church. The accusation of Stephen against the religious leaders (v. 52) applied especially to Saul, and yet the Lord sought and saved him (Acts 9:1–19; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6). God's grace is greater than all our sin!

**7:59–60** *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* Stephen knew that he would immediately pass into the presence of the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:6–8; Phil. 1:21). *"Lord, do not charge them with this sin."* Also, like his Savior, Stephen prayed for the forgiveness of his persecutors (Luke 23:34; Matt. 5:44). *"He fell asleep."* Sleep is used as a figure for the death of those who believe, because, while the spirit goes directly to God, the body rests in the grave—awaiting the awakening of the resurrection (John 11:11; 1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 8**

The Church scattered; the Gospel goes to the Samaritans and an Ethiopian; Jesus' commission in Acts 1:8 is being fulfilled through persecution.

### **Saul's Persecution Spreads the Gospel**

Acts 8:1–25

**8:1** *"Saul was consenting to his death."* Paul himself later affirms this truth (Acts 22:20). *"A great persecution arose against the church."* It was in his pursuit of this persecution that Saul/Paul came to know Jesus Christ (Acts 9:1–5). *"They were all scattered ... except the apostles."* The word *"scattered"* is *diaspeiro*, which pictures the sowing of seed in a field. The words *"Jerusalem ... Judea ... Samaria"* remind us of Jesus' commission to the apostles (Acts 1:8) and show us that God is at work fulfilling His plan even through the evil actions of those who hate Jesus Christ (John 15:18).

**8:3** *"Saul ... made havoc of the church."* First, he was a consenting bystander; now, his hatred of the Church is inflamed to full force. The phrase *"made havoc"* is a term that spoke of being mangled by a wild beast. *"Entering every house"* refers to the meeting places of the local church. Both men and women were imprisoned by Saul's hatred, a fact he later greatly regretted (Acts 22:19; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:12–17).

**8:4** The persecuted and scattered believers *"went everywhere preaching the word."* God worked through the evil of persecution to spread the message of the Good News (Gospel). Truly, God works all things together for good (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

**8:5** *"Philip went down to ... Samaria."* After the fall of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.), Assyrians intermarried with Jewish women, resulting in a mixed race—the Samaritans. They were despised by the Jews (John 4:9). They only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament and worshiped at Mt. Gerizim (Deut. 11:29; 27:12; John 4:20). This Philip was one of the original deacons (Acts 6:5).

**8:6–8** *"The multitudes ... heeded ... and there was great joy."* God confirmed the message of Philip with mighty works; his words and works brought great joy to those who received the truth by faith. Faith in Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and the assurance of eternal salvation always result in joy (Rom. 5:1–2; Phil. 4:4).

**8:9–10** *"Simon ... previously practiced sorcery... the great power of God."* The practice of *"sorcery"* suggests demonic powers being displayed by Simon. Satan always seeks to imitate and resist the true power of God (Exod. 7:10–12).

## ACTS 8:12–30

**8:12–13** *“When they believed Philip ... Simon himself also believed.”* Though many doubt the genuineness of Simon’s faith, no distinction is made between him and the others who believed. Steeped in sorcery as he was, it would be easy for such an immature believer to fall into the error of vv. 18–19.

**8:14** *“The apostles who were at Jerusalem ... sent Peter and John to them.”* During the formation of the early Church, it was necessary to show apostolic authority over events taking place. Therefore, the Holy Spirit was given through their direct involvement (vv. 15–16). Later, the normal means of Spirit-baptism was received at the moment of faith (Acts 10:43–44).

**8:17** *“They laid hands on them.”* This was an ancient custom showing the identification of one person with another (Acts 6:6; 13:3). In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, it showed that the offering was sacrificed in place of the one who offered it (Lev. 3:1–2, 8, 13). Peter and John identified these people as believers in Jesus Christ, sharing the faith that they preached.

**8:18–19** *“Simon ... offered them money.”* There is no indication that Simon did not receive the Holy Spirit along with the rest (vv. 12–13). Otherwise, he would not have desired the ability to give the Spirit to others. His grave error was to think that the grace of God could be bought with money.

**8:20–21** *“Your money perish with you.”* The sin of Simon is very similar to that of Ananias and Sapphira—two believers who had perished by misusing money in relation to the service of God (Acts 5:1–11). The implication is that Simon is extremely near to ending in the same fate. *“You have neither part nor portion.”* These words speak of inheritance and signify the unique position of the apostles who were directly chosen and commissioned by Jesus Christ. Simon is not one of them.

**8:22–23** *“Repent therefore of this your wickedness.”* Notice that Peter does not tell Simon to “repent and believe” because he had already trusted in Jesus Christ as his Savior. However, he needed to “repent” of his sin for cleansing (1 John 1:9).

**8:24** *“Pray to the Lord for me.”* In this request, Simon reveals three important facts: first, he believes that Jesus is the Lord; second, he acknowledges Peter’s apostolic position and asks for his intercession; and finally, his request demonstrates a repentant heart.

**8:25** *“They returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel.”* Many other Samaritan villages heard the gospel message proclaimed as Peter and John returned home.

### Philip and the Ethiopian

Acts 8:26–40

**8:26** *“An angel of the Lord.”* God used both an angel messenger and the Holy Spirit (v. 29) to guide Philip to the desert road that led from Jerusalem, through Gaza, and down to Africa.

**8:27** *“A eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen.”* This official seems to have been a proselyte to Judaism, who had *“come to Jerusalem to worship.”*

**8:28** *“He was reading Isaiah the prophet.”* On this journey to Jerusalem, he had acquired a copy of the scroll of Isaiah, the most evangelistic of all the prophets.

**8:29–30** *“The Spirit said ... go near ... so Philip ran to him.”* The obedient response of Philip is wonderful and is in great contrast to that of Jonah (Jonah 1:1–3). *“Do you understand?”* After hearing what the eunuch was reading, Philip gave him a chance to ask for clarification. In this way, the spiritual hunger of the Ethiopian is made clear.

**8:31 “How can I, unless someone guides me?”** God uses men to reach men. Teaching requires both a student and a teacher. God has uniquely gifted certain believers to be teachers (Rom. 12:6–8; Eph. 4:11–12; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

**8:32–33 “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.”** By the providential design of God, the eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53:7–8, a prophecy of the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. God’s guidance puts the right person in the right place at the right time with the right information!

**8:35 “Philip ... beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.”** The ministry of Philip was powerful because he always kept the focus on the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:5). The real power of ministry is not in the minister, nor in his method, but rather in the message where the Person and the work of Jesus Christ is central.

**8:36–38 “What hinders me from being baptized? ... If you believe ... you may.”** The ritual of water baptism has no reality apart from faith in Jesus Christ. In baptism, the new believer is proclaiming to the world his/her union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection to new life (Rom. 6:1–6). This spiritual union is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–13), which occurs at the moment we believe.

**8:39–40 “The Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away.”** This word *harpazo*, meaning “caught up” or “caught away,” is also used for the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:17), and of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:5). **“The eunuch ... went on his way rejoicing.”** As with the Samaritans (v. 8), the assurance of forgiveness and salvation brought great joy to the eunuch (1 Pet. 1:6–9).

**8:40 “Philip ... preached ... till he came to Caesarea.”** Philip continues his evangelistic ministry, and later settled in Caesarea—a seaport. Later, Paul and his missionary team would stay in his home (Acts 21:8).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 9**

The Lord Jesus confronts Saul on the Damascus Road; Saul becomes a believer and preaches Christ in Damascus.

### **Jesus Confronts Saul**

Acts 9:1–9

**9:1 “Saul, still breathing threats and murder.”** The hatred of Saul for the disciples of the Lord Jesus was intensified because of the spread of the gospel message. His intent now was not just to imprison believers (Acts 8:3), but to murder them as well.

**9:2 “If he found any who were of the Way.”** Based on Jesus’ words in John 14:6, the early Christians were often referred to simply as disciples of Jesus, or followers of The Way (Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

**9:3 “Suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.”** This was the light of the glory of Jesus Christ revealed to Saul (1 Cor. 15:8; 2 Cor. 4:6).

**9:4–5 “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”** Here, the Lord Jesus shows that the Church is His body on Earth (Rom. 12:4–5; 1 Cor. 12:12–20; Eph. 1:22–23; Matt. 25:40). **“I am Jesus ... It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”** Goads were sharpened sticks used to prod oxen along in their work. This statement shows that Saul was fighting against strong conviction in his own mind about the justice of his actions.

**9:6 “Lord, what do You want me to do?”** Here, Saul recognizes the Jesus he is persecuting as the LORD (*Jehovah*) of the Old Testament. Once we know **“Who”** Jesus is (v. 5), the surrendered soul can only ask **“what”** we should do (v. 6). God has a plan for every life. Discipleship is to discover and to fulfill the will of God (John 7:17). God reveals His will through His Word to those who are willing to do it. **“You will be told what**

## ACTS 9:8–21

*you must do.*” Again, we see that God uses men to reach men. The obedience of Ananias will play a role in Saul’s obedience to God.

**9:8–9** *“When his eyes were opened he saw no one ... they led him by the hand.”* The Lord blinded Saul so that he could ponder his own spiritual blindness. This would help him to better understand the blindness of his own kinsmen (Matt. 15:14; 23:16–17, 24–26; Rom. 11:8, 10, 25; Eph. 4:18).

### Ananias Ministers to Saul

Acts 9:10–19

**9:10** *“A certain disciple ... named Ananias.”* God used apostles, deacons, and even a simple disciple named Ananias. We owe much to this faithful man for his role in bringing about the transformation of Saul (his Hebrew name) to Paul, his Roman/Greek name (Acts 13:9; Rom. 12:1–2).

**9:11** *“Arise and go ... inquire ... for one called Saul of Tarsus ... behold, he is praying.”* During the three days of his fasting (v. 9), Saul had been praying. Since Ananias had heard of Saul, this information was given to encourage him.

**9:12** *“In a vision he has seen ... Ananias coming.”* This was the first recorded vision of the man whose visions and revelations would be instrumental in forming the Church (2 Cor. 12:1–5, 7–10).

**9:13–14** *“Lord, I have heard ... about this man.”* Ananias is obviously reluctant to confront Saul, due to his knowledge of Saul’s commission to arrest believers. *“How much harm he has done to Your saints.”* For the first time in Acts, believers—who have been called disciples, or followers of The Way—are called *“saints,”* meaning “sanctified ones”: those set apart to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**9:15–16** *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine.”* The Lord reveals His future purpose for Saul; his ministry *“before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel”* is the theme of the last half of the book of Acts. Here, Jesus anticipates *“How many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”* Paul would endure extreme suffering for the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 4:9–13; 2 Cor. 4:7–15; 6:3–10; 11:23–33).

**9:17** *“Brother Saul.”* Here, Ananias addresses Saul as a fellow believer in Jesus Christ. Ananias not only came to open Saul’s eyes, but *“That you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Only by the filling ministry of the Holy Spirit could Saul, or any other believer, be empowered to fulfill the calling of God (Acts 6:3, 5; 7:55; Eph. 5:18). The filling of the Spirit implies an emptying of self (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) and submission to the leading of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 18).

**9:18** *“He arose and was baptized.”* By this action, Saul showed his submission to the command of Jesus (Matt. 28:18–20) and openly confessed his union with Christ by faith (see Rom. 6:1–6). This union is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which occurs at the moment we believe in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

### Saul’s Early Ministry

Acts 9:20–31

**9:20** *“Immediately he preached the Christ ... that He is the Son of God.”* It is most interesting to observe Saul/Paul’s spiritual development he is seen as: a brother (Acts 9:17), a witness (Acts 9:20–22), a disciple (Acts 9:26–28), a prophet/teacher (Acts 13:1), and finally, he steps into the role of an apostle—expressing authority and power (Acts 13:9–12). He was gifted as an apostle at the moment he believed but, like each of us, he had to grow into his calling (Eph. 4:1).

**9:21** *“Then all who hear were amazed ... Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name ...?”* Nothing gives power to our witness more than a transformed life (Acts 26:19–23; Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Pet. 3:15).

**9:22** *“Saul increased all the more in strength.”* Even apostles had to grow up spiritually (2 Pet. 3:18). *“Proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”* Now all of his training as a Pharisee and his instruction from the Old Testament Scriptures is used to demonstrate the truth that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah.

**9:23** *“The Jews plotted to kill him.”* From the very beginning, his effectiveness made Saul/Paul a target of the envious Jewish leaders. Similar was their motive to kill Jesus (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

**9:25** *“The disciples ... let him down ... in a large basket.”* Paul recalls this as the beginning of his sufferings (2 Cor. 11:30–33). It was probably after this that Paul went into Arabia for three years (Gal. 1:15–18).

**9:27** *“Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles.”* Barnabas was a gracious believer, known for his gift of encouragement (Acts 4:36–37). Later, it was he who brought Paul to Antioch to be a teacher to the church there (Acts 11:25–26).

**9:29** *“He spoke boldly ... and disputed against the Hellenists.”* These *“Hellenists”* were Greek-speaking Jews—the same group who instigated the murder of Stephen (Acts 6:9), to which Saul gave his consent (Acts 7:58; 8:1; 22:20). Yet now he is proclaiming the same message Stephen did, that Jesus is the Messiah. *“They attempted to kill him.”* The life of Paul was in danger from the moment he began to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:15–16; 26:15–18).

**9:30** *“When the brethren found out, they ... sent him out to Tarsus.”* Tarsus was the home city of Saul (Acts 9:11; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3).

**9:31** *“Then the churches ... had peace and were edified.”* The Gospel had been planted in the first two geographical areas Jesus commanded to be reached (Acts 1:8). Proclaiming the Gospel brings unbelievers to faith in Christ. However, the next step is to build up their faith through sound teaching (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17; Titus 2:11–15). From Tarsus, Paul would go to Antioch, where the final part of his mission would be conducted (Acts 11:25–26; 13:1–5).

### The Healing Ministry of Peter

Acts 9:32–43

**9:34–35** *“Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.”* The apostles’ power to heal was an extension of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. *“So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon ... turned to the Lord.”* The goal of the physical healing was intended for more than just the alleviation of suffering. It was to show the power of God to heal souls, and it brought many to eternal life.

**9:36** *“A certain disciple ... Tabitha (Aramaic) ... translated Dorcas (Greek).”* Her name meant “Gazelle,” a small and graceful antelope in Israel. *“Full of good works and charitable deeds.”* This disciple showed her faith by her good works on behalf of others (Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:7–8, 11–14).

**9:37–38** *“They laid her in an upper room.”* The fact that they did not bury her showed they trusted that Peter could raise her to life.

**9:39** *“All the widows stood by him weeping.”* Widows in the ancient world were often deprived of all help. These destitute women were the recipients of the kind ministry of Dorcas who made garments for them.

**9:40** *“Peter put them all out ... and prayed.”* Here, Peter mimics the ministry of Jesus to Jairus when He raised his daughter (Matt. 9:23–26; Luke 8:49–56).

**9:42** *“It became known ... and many believed on the Lord.”* Again, as in v. 35, the miraculous healing was designed to bring many to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

## ACTS 9:43–10:22

**9:43** *He stayed many days ... with Simon, a tanner.*” A tanner was considered unclean since his work required handling dead animals. God is gradually preparing Peter for his coming vision and outreach to the Gentiles, also considered unclean by the Jews (Acts 10:10–16; 28).

## ACTS CHAPTER 10

Peter, prepared by a vision, brings the gospel message to the household of Cornelius.

### **The Vision of Cornelius**

Acts 10:1–8

**10:1** *“Cornelius, a centurion of ... the Italian Regiment.”* This man was in command of one hundred Roman soldiers. Remember that it was a centurion who caused Jesus to marvel due to his great faith (Luke 7:1–10).

**10:2** *“A devout man ... who feared God.”* Cornelius was what Jews called “a God-fearer.” They often worshiped in the synagogues and believed the Scriptures but did not convert to Judaism. Four things are said of Cornelius: 1) He was “*devout*,” having reverence for God, 2) he “*feared*” the true God, 3) he gave generously to the poor, and 4) he prayed to God daily. But he did not yet know the Lord Jesus Christ.

**10:3** *“About the ninth hour ... he saw ... an angel of God.”* This was the hour of prayer in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1), and the hour Jesus died on the cross (Matt. 27:45–50; Mark 15:33–37; Luke 23:44–46).

**10:4** *“Your prayers ... have come up for a memorial.”* God remembers our prayers and good deeds and will reward believers at the Judgment Seat of Christ (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18; Luke 6:35; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; Rev. 5:8; 8:3).

**10:5–6** *“Now send ... for Simon ... Peter.”* Since the tanner he was staying with was also named Simon, the angel gives the name “*Peter*,” which the Lord Jesus gave to him (Matt. 16:17–18). The name means “rock” and spoke of Peter’s firm and strong reliance on the Lord.

### **The Vision of Peter**

Acts 10:9–23

**10:9–10** *“As they ... drew near the city.”* The timing of the vision was designed to prepare Peter for their arrival and request. *“About the sixth hour ... he became very hungry.”* The sixth hour is twelve noon. God used Peter’s hunger in connection with the command given in the vision.

**10:12–16** *“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”* Here, God commands Peter to go against all his Jewish training since childhood. These unclean animals, listed in Leviticus 11, were never to be eaten by Jewish people, as part of the Mosaic Law. *“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”* The lesson for Peter is that God is able to cleanse the most foul things of the Earth, and make them holy. This lesson is preparing Peter to go to the house of Cornelius (v. 25).

**10:17–20** *“While Peter wondered ... the Spirit said ... ‘Arise ... go down.’”* The Holy Spirit confirms the heavenly origin of the vision and urges Peter not to doubt, since the men calling for him were sent by the Lord Himself.

**10:22** *“Cornelius ... was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you.”* Their words confirm not only the upright character of Cornelius, but also his visit by the angel. The mounting evidence of God’s perfect timing, the vision, and the Spirit’s voice, show that Peter had much prejudice to overcome. Perhaps he also remembered the interaction of Jesus with the other Centurion (Luke 7:1–10).

### At the House of Cornelius

Acts 10:24–33

**10:24–25** *“Cornelius was waiting ... and worshiped him.”* Since the angel had directed him to call for Peter, Cornelius would have considered him a very holy man. Even the Apostle John, overcome by his visions, fell down to worship an angel (Rev. 22:8–9) and was rebuked for doing it.

**10:26–27** *“Stand up; I myself am also a man.”* Peter is making the point that no man is worthy of the worship, which only God deserves (Acts 14:14–15). *“He ... found many who had come together.”* Cornelius wanted all his friends, fellow soldiers, and relatives to hear what Peter would say.

**10:28** *“You know how unlawful it is.”* Here, Peter admits that he is violating the Jewish religious custom, although no Law of Moses forbade contact with Gentiles. *“But God has shown me ... I should not call any man common or unclean.”* Sometime later, Peter would violate his newfound wisdom, at the church in Antioch (Gal. 2:11–21).

**10:30–33** *“Four days ago I was fasting.”* Cornelius relates the angelic visitation to Peter and the command to send for him. *“We are all present before God, to hear.”* The gathered company eagerly awaits Peter’s words, which will lead them into eternal life.

### Peter’s Message to Cornelius’ Household

Acts 10:34–43

**10:34** *“God shows no partiality.”* This principle is stressed throughout the New Testament (Acts 17:27; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; James 2:1). All men are equally sinners before God and, for this reason, Christ died for all mankind (Rom. 5:6–12, 19–21; 1 John 2:2).

**10:36–38** *“Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know.”* Peter had learned, perhaps from the messengers of Cornelius, that they knew of the ministry of Jesus. What they did not know about was His death, burial, and resurrection. It was perhaps the earthly ministry of Jesus which had awakened Cornelius’ spiritual hunger for more truth (Matt. 5:6).

**10:39–41** *“We are witnesses.”* Peter stresses this fact twice (vv. 39, 41), so as to validate his message, as one who was chosen by Jesus Himself. *“Him God raised up.”* Again, Peter wants to confirm that he was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ.

**10:42–43** *“He who was ordained by God to be Judge.”* The position of Jesus as the only Mediator between God and men is critical to understand that He is the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). *“To Him all the prophets witness.”* As Jesus had shown the disciples (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45), *“whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”* Faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for receiving forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 3:22). The *“whoever”* here, reinforces the “no partiality” of v. 34.

### The Holy Spirit Given

Acts 10:44–48

**10:44** *“The Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard.”* The indication is that as soon as Peter declared the necessity of faith in Jesus Christ, all who were in the house believed. From this point on, the Holy Spirit immediately baptizes those who believe into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:2).

## ACTS 10:45–11:14

**10:45** *“Those of the circumcision ... were astonished.”* These Jewish believers had just been given a dramatic proof that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile. This proof would calm the questions of the Jerusalem council (Rom. 1:16; 2:10–11; Acts 11:17–18).

**10:46** *“They heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.”* This is again a proof that tongues were understandable foreign languages (Acts 2:4–8). In essence, Pentecost reversed the curse of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9). The gift of tongues was a “sign” to unbelieving Israel that their rejection of the Messiah would lead to God’s judgment on the nation (Isa. 28:11–13; 1 Cor. 14:20–22).

**10:47** *“Can anyone forbid water?”* Peter is addressing the believing Jews who accompanied him, as witnesses that the Holy Spirit had been given to the Gentiles. *“Baptized.”* Water baptism is an outward ritual that acknowledges the inner baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith (Acts 8:36–38; Eph. 1:13–14).

**10:48** *“Then they asked him to stay a few days.”* This time would have been spent in fellowship and further instruction in order to strengthen their faith.

## ACTS CHAPTER 11

Peter defends his mission to the Gentiles; Paul becomes a teacher at Antioch.

### **Peter Defends His Mission to the Gentiles**

Acts 11:1–18

**11:2** *“Those of the circumcision contended with him.”* These Jewish believers wanted to maintain Jewish superiority and observance of the Law of Moses. They created much division in the early Church (Acts 15:1–5; Gal. 1:6–8; 2:1–5). These “Judaizers” were attempting to mix law and grace, works and faith—which is impossible, like mixing oil and water. This is the age-old problem of religion: man adding to what God has said (Rom. 4:1–6, 16; 11:6; Gal. 3:1–6; see Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

**11:3** *“You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them.”* This was the very cultural taboo that Peter referred to in Acts 10:28. It was not based on the Law of Moses, but rather on rabbinical tradition (Matt. 15:1–6; Mark 7:1–13; Gal. 1:14). Peter’s vision had overcome his prejudice, yet later in Antioch, he fell into this error again (Gal. 2:11–21).

**11:4** *“Peter explained it ... in order from the beginning.”* Peter patiently describes his vision and the Lord’s command (vv. 5–10). Along with the supernatural giving of the Holy Spirit, this presented these Jewish legalists with an irrefutable argument for their accusations against Peter.

**11:6** *“I observed it intently and considered.”* Here, Peter reviews his own state of mind while the vision was being seen. He was visually focused and mentally alert.

**11:9** *“What God has cleansed you must not call common.”* This was the main lesson of the vision. God had sanctified the Gentiles through the sacrifice of Christ; they were no longer to be considered “common” or unclean. Jesus taught a similar lesson regarding food in Mark 7:15 (see also 1 Tim. 4:3–5).

**11:12** *“The Spirit told me to go with them.”* The voice of the Holy Spirit is now added to the authority of the heavenly vision. *“These six brethren accompanied me.”* Peter had wisely taken twice the number of witnesses required by Jewish law (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).

**11:13–14** *“Call for ... Peter ... who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.”* This statement gives additional information about the message of the angel in Acts 10. The object of Peter’s

mission and message was to bring the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. The result of this salvation was the baptism of the Holy Spirit on all who believed.

**11:16** *“Then I remembered the word of the Lord.”* Here, Peter refers to Jesus’ words in Acts 1:5. The baptism of John was a sign of confession of sins, in preparation for the Messiah’s coming (Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5). Even John the Baptist declared that only the Messiah/Savior could baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11).

**11:17** *“If therefore God gave them the same gift ... who was I that I could withstand God?”* What God had done for Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), He had now done for Gentile believers. Peter’s argument shows that if the Jewish believers resist this evidence, they are actively opposing God. Yet, it is clear that Peter later wavered from his own conviction when confronted in Antioch by the legalistic Jews from Jerusalem (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:11–21).

**11:18** *“Then God has granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”* Here, the word “repentance” refers back to the word “believed” in v. 17. When anyone believes in Jesus Christ, they have “changed their mind” from resisting Him to receiving Him, and the result of that faith is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:16–17). This change of mindset results in the transformed life of the child of God (Rom. 12:1–2; Eph. 1:13–14; 2:4–10).

**Note:** This sets the stage for the rest of the book of Acts, which details Paul’s ministry as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

### The Founding of the Church of Antioch

Acts 11:19–30

**11:19** *“Those who were scattered.”* Luke resumes events from Acts 8:1. *“Traveled as far as ... Antioch.”* The church of Antioch will become the first major missionary-sending church to the Gentile world. *“Preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.”* This is the same prejudice originally overcome by Peter’s experience with Cornelius.

**11:20** *“But some of them ... spoke to the Hellenists.”* These were Jews who had adopted the language and much of the culture of the Greek world. They became a bridge between the strict Jewish believers and the Gentiles.

**11:21** *“A great number believed.”* Note that their faith in Christ preceded a turning to Him in seeking to live a God-honoring life.

**11:22** *“They sent out Barnabas ... as far as Antioch.”* God had providentially prepared Antioch to play a vital role in the spread of the early Church. The spiritual hunger of the believers in Antioch will call for more advanced teaching (Heb. 5:12–14).

**11:23–24** *“When he ... had seen the grace of God.”* God was at work in a powerful way in Antioch. He always works in mighty ways where there is great spiritual hunger. *“He ... encouraged them all.”* The great spiritual motivation of these new believers brought joy to Barnabas (“son of encouragement,” Acts 4:36; also, his spiritual gift, Rom. 12:8), and his exhortation to them was to continue to grow in grace and truth (2 Pet. 3:18).

**11:25–26** *“Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.”* Barnabas knew the limitations of his own spiritual gift. He knew the work in Antioch demanded someone gifted as a teacher. So, he went to find Saul in Tarsus. This was approximately ten years since Saul became a believer. *“For a whole year they ... taught a great many people.”* Saul is now developing his gift of apostleship for a greater role in the early Church. *“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”* They had been called Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), disciples (Acts 6:1; 9:1), and followers of The Way (John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 24:14). Now they are identified as those who

## ACTS 11:28–12:7

believe in and follow the Christ. It is in Antioch that believers, both Jews and Gentiles together, are called by one name.

**11:28** *“A great famine throughout all the world.”* The Jewish historian Josephus writes that this famine occurred in the year 46 A.D.

**11:29** *“The disciples ... determined to send relief.”* In this way, God used the famine to bind together the Gentile churches with the “mother” church in Jerusalem (see Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8). Paul speaks of the effect of this offering in Romans 15:25–27 and 2 Corinthians 8:1–15. This monetary gift was voluntary, according to each one’s desire and ability to give.

**11:30** *“Sent it ... by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”* This visit to Jerusalem is recounted by Paul in Galatians 2:1–10. At that time, he was still having to contend with the Jewish legalist faction in the church.

## ACTS CHAPTER 12

Herod persecutes James and Peter; Herod dies under God’s judgment.

### **James Martyred, Peter Imprisoned**

Acts 12:1–4

**12:1** *“Herod the king.”* This was Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great (Matt. 2:1–23). His uncle, Herod Antipas murdered John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29).

**12:2** *“Then he killed James ... with the sword.”* James was the first of the twelve apostles put to death. Both James and John, when their mother sought to promote them to Jesus’ right and left hand in the kingdom, said that they could drink of His cup (Matt. 20:20–23), and He said that they would indeed.

**12:3–4** *“He saw that it pleased the Jews.”* The Jewish religious leaders had been ineffective to stop the spread of Christianity. They now saw that they had an ally in Herod. *“He proceeded further to seize Peter also.”* James and Peter, along with John, formed the leadership of the apostolic band (Matt. 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33; Luke 9:28). *“He put him in prison ... four squads of soldiers to keep him.”* This would have been a total of 16 Roman soldiers to guard a Jewish fisherman! Surely, they remembered the soldiers who guarded Jesus’ tomb (Matt. 27:62–65; 28:11–15). *“To bring him before the people after Passover.”* Since no executions could take place during Passover, Herod waited to kill Peter until the feast was over.

### **An Angel Delivers Peter**

Acts 12:5–19

**12:5** *“Constant prayer was offered to God for him.”* We do not read of prayer being offered for James. Perhaps it all took place too quickly. Here, however, the prayers of God’s people bring a miraculous deliverance. Peter had been delivered by an angel before (Acts 5:17–20).

**12:6** *“Peter was sleeping.”* The next day he was to be executed, and Peter is fast asleep! His faith brought rest and peace in the midst of tribulation (Rom. 5:1–5). For each shift, two soldiers were chained to Peter and the other two guarded the door.

**12:7** *“An angel of the Lord ... struck Peter on the side.”* So sound was Peter sleeping that he did not notice the light shining around the angel. The angel had to strike him to wake him up. *“The chains fell off his hands.”* No power of Satan or of this world can stand against the power of God!

**12:8** *“Gird yourself and tie on your sandals.”* The angel caused the chains to fall off and he opened the iron gate, but he did not do for Peter what Peter could do for himself.

**12:9–10** *“So he went out ... but thought he was seeing a vision.”* The whole event was so unusual. Peter did not know if he was dreaming or seeing a vision, such as the one at the house of Simon the tanner (Acts 10:10–16).

**12:11** *“Now I know ... that the Lord has sent his angel.”* Peter now realizes his deliverance is real. Sometimes God works in such amazing ways, it is difficult to believe—even when we are in the middle of it. *“Has delivered me ... from all the expectation of the Jewish people.”* This shows that the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people, as a whole, continued through the ministry of the apostles and sealed the fate of the nation.

**12:12** *“He came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark ... where, many were ... praying.”* This is most likely the same house in which the disciples gathered together on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13; 2:1). John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark, which tradition says Peter dictated to him.

**12:13–15** *“Rhoda ... ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.”* It is comical that Rhoda did not open the gate and let Peter in. As he continues to knock, the prayer group refuses to believe their prayers have been answered. *“It is his angel.”* They perhaps believed his guardian angel had come to announce his death (Gen. 48:16; Dan. 10:20–21; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14).

**12:17** *“Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.”* James, the half-brother of the Lord (Mark 6:3) and author of the book of James, now becomes a leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13–21; 21:18).

**12:18–19** *“There was no small stir among the soldiers ... Herod ... commanded that they should be put to death.”* This was the common fate of any Roman soldier who failed to guard a prisoner.

### Herod Judged by God

Acts 12:20–25

**12:20** *“Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon.”* We are not told the reason for this anger. The effect, however, is hinted at in that their food supply was in danger of being cut off.

**12:21** *“Herod ... gave an oration.”* In Greek culture, the heroes were either orators or athletes. To give a great speech, complete with proper voice control and gestures, was like winning a great athletic contest.

**12:22–23** *“The voice of a god and not of a man!”* Surely, much of this praise was due to their desire to make peace with Herod. The flattery of powerful, political figures has never ceased to be a tactic of the weak and subservient. *“An angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God.”* It is the utmost evil for any man to claim the praise due only to God. The Lord will not share His glory with any man (Isa. 42:8). The pride and perversion of man will always end in the wrath of God (Rom. 1:18–32).

**12:24–25** *“The Word of God grew and multiplied.”* Both God’s mercy and His judgment promote the Word of God. *“Barnabas and Saul ... took with them John ... Mark.”* This resumes the story from Acts 11:30—the mission of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1–10). It also serves to introduce John Mark, who will go with them on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 13**

Barnabas and Saul begin the missionary outreach to the Gentiles.

### **The Beginning of the Mission to the Gentiles**

Acts 13:1–12

**13:1** *“In the church ... at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers.”* It is worth noting that Barnabas is listed first; Saul is listed last.

**13:2** *“The Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul.’”* The first organized missionary outreach to the Gentiles was done at the command of the Spirit of God. *“For the work to which I have called them.”* Every believer in Jesus Christ has a spiritual gift (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; Eph. 4:7, 11–16). Therefore, each of us is called to a different role to play in the Body of Christ.

**13:3** *“Having fasted and prayed ... laid hands on them.”* Having been informed of the will of the Spirit, the leaders then fasted and prayed for the success of the mission ahead. The laying on of hands on these two servants signified unity of purpose and the authorization of the church (Acts 6:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

**13:4** *“Being sent out by the Holy Spirit.”* Both the Spirit and the Church are said to be the sending agency. The Holy Spirit is working through the Church to do the will of God.

**13:5** *“In Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.”* Salamis was on the island of Cyprus, the home of Barnabas (Acts 4:36). This was a good place to start, as Barnabas would be familiar with the country and the people. It was Paul’s practice to always go to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). *“They also had John Mark as their assistant.”* The word *“assistant”* is *huperetes*, a word used for the lowest galley slave. John Mark was to be a lowly servant to whatever need they might have. This could explain his later defection (v. 13).

**13:6–7** *“A false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus.”* His name means “Son of Jesus,” and he is the first obstacle met on this mission. *“With the proconsul, Sergius Paulus.”* This Roman official, a Gentile, is open to the Word of God. The Jewish false prophet will seek to hinder him from becoming a believer. This scene sets the stage for the rest of the book of Acts, as the Gentiles are eager to hear the Word of God, while the Jewish opposition will only intensify.

**13:8** *“But Elymas ... withstood them ... to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”* This gives the sorcerer’s Greek name. He sought to hinder the proconsul from hearing the Gospel.

**13:9** *“Then Saul, who also is called Paul.”* Here, Luke shifts from using the Hebrew name “Saul,” to the Greek name “Paul.” This shift is deliberate, as the story in Acts is changing from a focus on the early Hebrew origins of the Church, to the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile nations.

**13:10** *“O full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil.”* It is worth noticing that up to this point the name of Barnabas has always been listed first (Acts 11:25, 30; 12:25; 13:1–2, 7). Yet, in this crisis moment, it is Saul/Paul who rises to the challenge. From this point on, it will be Paul who is in command of the mission (v.13).

**13:11** *“The hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind.”* Elymas no doubt claimed that God’s hand was on him as a prophet. Here, the hand of God will be upon him for judgment, making him blind for a time. This marked the first miracle worked by the Apostle Paul, and the beginning of his full apostolic ministry. As was said in the notes at Acts 9:20, Saul had to grow into his ministry—as we all do.

**13:12** *“Then the proconsul believed ... being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.”* The message that he heard, combined with the display of the divine power he had seen, convinced him of the truth of Paul’s message about Jesus Christ.

### Paul’s First Recorded Message

Acts 13:13–41

**13:13** *“John ... returned to Jerusalem.”* Later, Paul and Barnabas would separate over John Mark’s conduct. Paul considered his departure a defection from the work (Acts 15:37–39).

**13:14** *“Antioch in Pisidia.”* The Antioch from which they started was in Syria. This Antioch was in Galatia. *“Went into the Synagogue.”* Paul’s love for his own Jewish people (Rom. 1:16; 9:1–3; 10:1–2) compelled him to seek out the Jews first.

**13:15** *“After the reading of the Law and the Prophets.”* Paul would have known these Scriptures, being a trained Pharisee. As Jesus showed His disciples (Luke 24:25–27, 44–45), He was the central message of all the Scriptures (Col. 1:18). This was an open door for Paul to proclaim Jesus Christ.

**13:16** *“Men of Israel, and you who fear God.”* Present in this synagogue were both Jews and Greek God-fearers, like Cornelius (Acts 10:1–2).

**13:17–20** *“The God of this people Israel chose our fathers.”* This refers to the selection of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as the fathers of the nation (Rom. 9:5–13). Paul quickly reviews the Exodus (v. 17), the wilderness wanderings (v. 18), the conquest under Joshua (v. 19), and the time of the Judges (v. 20). The Almighty hand of God was upon Israel in her development as a nation.

**13:21–22** *“They asked for a king; so God gave them Saul.”* The prophet Samuel declared that this request, in effect, rejected God as their king (1 Sam. 8:4–9, 19–22). Though Saul began very humble (1 Sam. 9:21; 15:17), he became arrogant, selfish, and domineering in the end (1 Sam. 15:10–11, 26).

**13:22** *“I have found David ... a man after My own heart.”* This reference is from 1 Samuel 13:14 and Psalm 89:20. The spiritual high point of Israel was during the reign of King David.

**13:23** *“From this man’s seed ... God raised up ... a Savior—Jesus.”* Paul now comes to the main point of his message. God had promised that the Messiah/Savior would be of the seed of David (Gen. 3:15; 2 Sam. 7:12–13). This is why the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are so important. Paul boldly declares that Jesus of Nazareth is the long-awaited Messiah.

**13:24–25** *“After John had first preached ... the baptism of repentance.”* It was critical to mention John the Baptist, whose ministry would have been known to all of them.

**13:26** *“To you the word of this salvation has been sent.”* Paul identifies his mission as a God-ordained event to present to them the message of salvation. This offer is not confined to Israel, as was John’s baptism. The offer of salvation is both to the *“family of Abraham,”* as well as *“you who fear God,”* meaning the Gentiles among them.

**13:27–28** *“Those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers.”* Here, Paul places the guilt on the leaders and people of Jerusalem, who did not even know the Scriptures they read every Sabbath (Hosea 4:6). *“Asked Pilate that He should be put to death.”* In unbelief, they fulfilled Scripture by crucifying Jesus Christ.

**13:30–31** *“But God raised Him from the dead.”* Paul presents the resurrection from the dead as the undeniable proof, confirmed by many witnesses (1 Cor. 15:4–8), that Jesus is in fact the Savior—the Son of God.

**13:32–33** *“Glad tidings.”* This is the essential meaning of the word “Gospel,” *“that promise which was made to the fathers.”* The promise of a redeemer runs through the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 22:14, 18; Neh. 1:10; Job 19:25; Isa. 47:4; 48:17; 54:5; 63:16; see Gal. 3:16). *“God has fulfilled ... in that He raised up Jesus.”* The victory of Jesus Christ over the grave is a sure promise of eternal life to all who believe in Him (1 Cor. 15:3–4, 20–22, 55–58). *“You are My Son, today I have begotten You.”* This quote from Psalm 2:7 speaks of the Father’s words to the Son on resurrection morning.

**13:35** *“You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”* Note that the decay of death is mentioned in vv. 34–37. Paul’s point is that these promises could not have been made to David—they could only apply to the Lord Jesus.

**13:38–39** *“Through this Man is preached ... the forgiveness of sins.”* The *“forgiveness of sins”* was a major part of the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25–27). *“By Him everyone who believes is justified.”* The Lord Jesus Christ did what the Law of Moses could never do—provide a righteous standing before God on the basis of the merits of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:1–4).

**13:40–41** *“Beware, therefore.”* Paul anticipates the rejection of the message by some and gives fair warning of the eternal consequences of rejecting Jesus Christ. His quote from Habakkuk 1:5 was the prophet’s warning of the coming Babylonian captivity. Now, it stands as a warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the nation in 70 A.D., which was the result of Israel’s persistent rejection of their Messiah (Lev. 26:3–45; Hosea 4:6).

### The Gospel Received by the Gentiles, Rejected by the Jews

Acts 13:42–52

**13:42–43** *“The Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them.”* The overwhelming response of the God-fearing Gentiles was a hunger to know more. This response was shared by *“Many of the Jews and devout proselytes.”* The *“proselytes”* were Gentiles who had fully converted to Judaism, as opposed to the God-fearers, who sought to know the God of Israel without fully embracing Judaism. *“Continue in the grace of God.”* It was obvious to Paul and Barnabas that God was working in the hearts and souls of many of this congregation.

**13:45–46** *“They were filled with envy.”* Envy is the most devilish and murderous emotion known to man (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10; Acts 7:9; 17:5). *“The word of God should be spoken to you first.”* Again, this was based on Paul’s conviction that, since Christ came through Israel (Rom. 9:4–5), Israel should hear first (Rom. 1:16). *“You reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.”* Those who refuse to believe in Jesus Christ are condemned on the basis of their unbelief (John 3:16–19). *“Behold, we turn to the Gentiles.”* Though Paul continued to go into the synagogues and preach (Acts 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4), he anticipates the final and ultimate rejection by Israel as a nation, and the formation of the mostly Gentile church.

**13:47** *“For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles.’”* This quote from Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 is addressed to the Messiah (Luke 2:32; John 8:12). However, Paul sees his work as the continuation of the work of Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:16). Those who faithfully serve Him share in His work (Matt. 28:18–20).

**13:48** *“As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”* God in His all-knowing wisdom had recorded the names of all who believe before the foundation of the world (2 Tim. 2:19; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). This does not imply lack of human freedom, as this whole passage shows. The Jews are guilty because they rejected Christ (vv. 45–46); some Jews and the Gentiles are saved because they believe in Christ. God works according to divine capacity, which we cannot hope to comprehend. Man is required by God to work according to human capacity and is either blessed or cursed, based on what they choose to do about Jesus Christ (John 3:16–19).

**13:49** *“The word of the Lord was being spread.”* Those who had heard and believed were spreading the gospel message. What a glorious beginning to Paul’s ministry!

**13:50** *“But the Jews ... expelled them from their region.”* Those who cannot refute truth by sound argument always seek to have it banished and silenced.

**13:51–52** *“They shook off the dust from their feet.”* This was Jesus’ instruction to the disciples in the event of the rejection of the gospel message (Matt. 10:14; Luke 10:11). *“The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”* Paul left behind a thriving community of new believers, filled with the joy of the Lord (Rom. 5:1–5; Gal. 5:22–23).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 14**

As the missionary journey continues, persecution intensifies; Paul is stoned in Lystra.

### **Driven out of Iconium; Worshiped as Gods in Lystra**

Acts 14:1–18

**14:1** *“A great multitude both of Jews and of the Greeks believed.”* Paul continues his habit of going to the synagogue first. The great success of his and Barnabas’ ministry would bring intense persecution.

**14:2** *“But the unbelieving Jews.”* Here, the same envy rises up as was seen in Acts 13:45. Nothing makes shallow religious leaders so hateful as to see the crowds flock to hear someone who is teaching the Truth (John 14:6; John 15:18–27)!

**14:3** *“The Lord ... was bearing witness to the word of His grace.”* In these early days of the Church, because the apostles were bringing an entirely new message on the scene, God gave the apostles power to perform *“signs and wonders”* in order to confirm that their message was from God (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12).

**14:5–6** *“When a violent attempt was made ... they ... fled to Lystra.”* This was in keeping with the command of Jesus to the disciples (Matt. 10:23).

**14:9** *“Paul ... seeing that he had faith to be healed.”* The original Greek of this passage reads, *“Faith to be delivered [saved].”* Paul observed the man’s faith in what he was preaching and determined to also “save” him from his affliction.

**14:11–12** *“The gods have come down to us.”* An ancient legend in this region was told that one day Zeus and Hermes would come down in human form. No doubt they saw, in the more handsome Barnabas, Zeus—the chief god, and likened Paul to Hermes, who was the messenger of the gods, because of his powerful teaching.

**14:13** *“Then the priest of Zeus ... brought oxen and garlands.”* Unbelieving religious leaders are always quick to spot an opportunity to promote their phony leadership.

**14:14–15** *“Turn from these useless [vain] things to the living God.”* These are almost the exact words Paul uses when speaking to the Thessalonian believers (1 Thess. 1:9–10). By calling their worship of Zeus “an empty religion,” Paul will further inflame the hatred of the crowd (v. 19).

**14:17** *“He did not leave Himself without witness.”* Because of the ignorance of this population (Gentiles) of the Old Testament, Paul speaks in terms they can understand (1 Cor. 9:19–23). Creation and nature are powerful witnesses to the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Psalm 19:1–6; Matt. 5:45; Rom. 1:19–20; Col 1:15–18; Heb. 1:2–3).

**Paul Stoned, Yet Continues to Minister**

Acts 14:19–28

**14:19** “*Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium ... persuaded the multitudes ... they stoned Paul.*” This will be the pattern throughout Paul’s ministry. Unbelieving, hostile Jews will seek to follow him and stir up hostility to his message until the end of his life (Acts 17:5, 13; 18:12; 20:3, 19; 21:27; 2 Tim. 4:6–7). “*Supposing him to be dead.*” It has been suggested that it was during this event that Paul had his vision of Heaven (2 Cor. 12:1–4).

**14:20–21** “*He rose up ... he departed with Barnabas.*” Paul was beginning, on this first missionary journey, to experience the sufferings the Lord had foretold “*he must suffer*” (Acts 9:15–16). He proved to be faithful in the face of all those sufferings (2 Cor. 11:22–33). “*They ... made many disciples.*” Paul’s effective witness was no doubt enhanced by the marks of his stoning. (Gal. 6:17).

**14:22** “*Strengthening the souls of the disciples ... saying, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’*” Paul did not preach a soft or easy message. His gospel was full of the challenge of Jesus Christ to His disciples (Matt. 5:10–12; Luke 14:26–35). The only way to overcome afflictions is to “*continue in the faith.*” This requires spiritual growth to maturity (Rom. 5:3–5; Heb. 5:12–6:2; 1 Pet. 4:12–14; 2 Pet 1:5–7).

**14:23** “*When they had appointed elders in every church.*” The local church needs leadership who can both teach and be an example (1 Tim. 3:1–13; 5:17–20; Titus 1:5–9).

**14:25** “*They ... preached the word in Perga.*” In Acts 13:13, they had passed through Perga without preaching. This may have been because of conflict over John Mark’s departure, or perhaps because of a Spirit-led compulsion to reach Antioch in Pisidia.

**14:26** “*They sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God.*” It is estimated that this entire mission journey took up to three years. Surely, the “*grace of God*” had supplied and sustained them through many trials!

**14:27** “*They reported all that God had done ... that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.*” What had begun with Peter’s visit to the house of Cornelius, now blossomed into a worldwide mission under the apostleship of Paul. It is most important to notice that Luke always puts the emphasis on God’s grace and man’s faith (Acts 3:16; 4:33; 11:23–24; 13:8, 43; 14:3, 9, 22, 26–27; 15:11). God’s grace includes all that He has done for us through Jesus Christ. Faith is the reception of the gifts of His grace through belief in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. God reaches out to mankind in grace. We can only reach out to receive His gift of life through simple, childlike faith (Matt. 18:3; Eph. 2:8–9).

**ACTS CHAPTER 15**

The perversion of the gospel message and the Jerusalem council.

**The Judaizers Pervert the Gospel of Grace**

Acts 15:1–5

**15:1** “*Unless you are circumcised ... you cannot be saved.*” This inclusion of circumcision into the gospel message implied becoming a proselyte to Israel. In other words, the Gentile had to become a Jew. It was an attempt to keep the Church under Hebrew authority. It was also the beginning of a never-ending list of do’s and don’ts (v. 5). This is the very heresy Paul wrote the book of Galatians to expose and destroy (Gal. 1:6–9; 2:1–21). It was apparently at this time that Paul had to rebuke Peter for compromising under pressure from the Jews (Gal. 2:11–14).

**15:2** *“Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them.”* Part of this dispute is recorded by Paul in Galatians 2. The two missionaries to the Gentiles took a bold and resolute stand against this false teaching. After much debate, it was determined that the question must be decided in Jerusalem—by the other apostles.

**15:3** *“They caused great joy to all the brethren.”* The theme of joy and rejoicing follows everywhere the gospel message goes (Acts 8:8, 39; 13:52; 15:31; 20:24).

**15:4** *“They reported all the things that God had done.”* As with Peter’s earlier report (Acts 11:1–17), they simply relate what God had done. The point is that if God is pleased to accept the Gentiles by faith alone and that He also gave them the Holy Spirit, who could question the will of God?

**15:5** *“It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.”* The question is: Does God give salvation by grace alone through faith alone? Or does it come by faith plus works? As with most church disputes, these believing Pharisees are not so much concerned with truth as they are with power. They want to become the “authorities” in the newborn Church movement. To add any work to the Gospel of grace, is to nullify the grace of God (Rom. 4:16; 11:6; Gal. 2:16, 21). The tearing of the veil in the Temple (Matt. 27:51) and, later, the total destruction of the Temple, proved that the Old Covenant had fulfilled its purpose (Gal. 3:23–29) and had given way to the New Covenant (Heb. 7:22; 8:6–13; 10:9–10).

### Peter and James Uphold the Grace of God

Acts 15:6–21

**15:7** *“Peter rose up and said ... God chose ... that by my mouth.”* Here, Peter refers to his experience in the household of Cornelius (Acts 10–11). By simple faith alone, apart from works, the believers in Cornelius’ household received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:43; 11:15–17). His experience with the Gentiles who believed was consistent with what Paul and Barnabas had experienced with the Gentiles in Antioch.

**15:8** *“So God ... acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit.”* Again, the question is: Who can argue against the gracious work of God? God made no distinction between the Jews who believed and the Gentiles who believed.

**15:9** *“Purifying their hearts by faith.”* If God accepted Gentile believers, purified their hearts, and gave them the Holy Spirit based on faith alone, who could argue that circumcision or law-keeping was necessary for salvation?

**15:10–11** *“Why do you test God by putting a yoke ... neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”* In these two verses, Peter actually uses the same argument Paul had used against him in Galatians 2:14–16. *“Through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”* Both Jew and Gentile were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8–9).

**15:12** *“The multitude ... listened to Barnabas and Paul.”* Once again, they recited the mighty work of God through them on behalf of the Gentile believers.

**15:13** *“James answered, saying ... listen to me.”* James spoke last, and his counsel was given great weight. First of all, James was the half-brother of the Lord (Matt. 13:55), who did not believe until Jesus appeared to him after the resurrection (John 7:5; 1 Cor. 15:7). He was first among the three pillars of the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9) and was acknowledged as the leader of that church. His decision against the Judaizers is impressive, in light of the fact that he appears to have been a strict law-keeper. James was ultimately martyred by stoning.

**15:15–17** *“With this the words of the prophets agree.”* James upheld the firsthand testimony of Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, by quoting Scripture. He quotes Amos 9:11–12, from the Greek (Septuagint) version, *“After this I*

## ACTS 15:18–31

*will return,*” that is, after God had claimed His people among the Gentiles (Acts 15:14). Christ would call out His Church predominantly from among the Gentiles. After which, He would return at His Second Coming, and rebuild the Tabernacle of David for the Kingdom Age (Millennium). This same point is made by Paul in Romans 11:25. Nothing could be more clear that God is not done with Israel! **“Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name.”** In the earthly kingdom of Christ, both Jew and Gentile will worship together.

**15:18 “Known to God from eternity are all His works.”** James closes with a statement that affirms the all-knowing nature of God, as revealed in His Word.

**15:19–20 “We should not trouble those ... who are turning to God.”** In this statement, James makes it clear that salvation—whether for Jew or Gentile—is based on God’s grace, received by faith (vv. 7–8, 11). The addition of circumcision and law-keeping would only become a “yoke” of burden (v. 10) that would trouble Gentile converts. However, as a concession, he adds four practical observances to minimize friction between Jewish and Gentile believers. These were given to avoid the more free Gentile converts from becoming a stumbling-block to the weaker, law-observing Jewish believers (Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 8:1–13). The four practices mentioned were all observed as part of idol worship in the ancient world.

**15:21 “For Moses has had ... those who preach him in every city.”** Because of the presence of synagogues throughout the Gentile world, it would be wise not to antagonize them, or to put a stumbling block in the way of new Jewish converts to the Faith.

### The Final Decision Recorded

Acts 15:22–35

**15:22 “Then it pleased the apostles and elders.”** The council agreed to send two representatives, one from the Jewish faction (Judas), and one from the Hellenist or Greek faction (Silas—shortened Greek form of the Latin Silvanus). These men would represent the Jerusalem church in supporting the position of Paul and Barnabas that salvation was by grace alone through faith (Eph. 2:8–9).

**15:23 “They wrote this letter.”** This was a wise move to convey the decision of the council both in writing and by witnesses. The actual letter they wrote is found in Acts 15:23–29.

**15:24 “Some who went out from us ... to whom we gave no such commandment.”** The Judaizers who stirred up the trouble in Antioch no doubt claimed that they were representatives of the Jerusalem church. This was a severe blow, not only to their false doctrine, but also to their pride. No doubt some of these men followed Paul and stirred up trouble for his ministry from this point on.

**15:25 “With one accord ... our beloved Barnabas and Paul.”** The Jerusalem church declares their affection and support for the missionary team to the Gentiles. The listing of Barnabas first suggests that they still considered him the leader of the team.

**15:26 “Men who have risked their lives.”** The sufferings endured during the first missionary journey, most of them by Paul, were evidence of their faithfulness and devotion to the truth (Rom. 16:3–4; Phil. 1:29–30; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:1–3, 9–10; 3:12).

**15:28 “It seemed good ... to lay upon you no greater burden.”** It is crucial to note that these requirements were in no way essential to salvation. Rather, they were for those who had already believed, in order to avoid unnecessary provocation between Jewish and Gentile believers (Rom. 14:12–16; 1 Cor. 8:8–13).

**15:31 “They rejoiced over its encouragement [content].”** The early victory of grace and truth was crucial for the future growth of the Church. The Gentiles were filled with joy to know that they were not entering this church as inferiors to their Jewish brethren!

**15:35 “Paul and Barnabas ... teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.”** These two had achieved great success together, both in their first missionary outreach, and in establishing the foundational doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.

### Division Between Paul and Barnabas

Acts 15:36–41

**15:37–38 “Barnabas was determined ... Paul insisted.”** Barnabas, being of a very gracious nature (Acts 9:26–29), was willing to overlook John Mark’s earlier defection (Acts 13:13). Paul was not willing to do so. Later, this breach between Paul and John Mark would be healed (2 Tim. 4:11), possibly due to the willingness of Barnabas to not give up on him.

**15:39–41 “They parted from one another.”** At this point, Barnabas drops out of the picture in Acts. Silas, also known as Silvanus, now becomes a companion with Paul (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1–2) and will also be jailed with him in Philippi (Acts 16:19–31). He also wrote the first epistle of Peter at Peter’s dictation (1 Pet. 5:12).

## ACTS CHAPTER 16

Timothy joins Paul and Silas; Paul’s Macedonian vision; the Philippian jail.

### Paul Finds Timothy

Acts 16:1–5

**16:1 “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra.”** Remember that it was in Lystra where Paul had been stoned (Acts 14:19–20). What courage he had in going back to that place! **“A certain disciple was there, named Timothy.”** In the very place he had met the most opposition, a flourishing church existed and a dynamic, young disciple is found. Timothy’s mother was a believing Jewess (2 Tim. 1:5); his father, apparently, an unbelieving Greek.

**16:2 “He was well spoken of by the brethren.”** Young Timothy was a man of good reputation (1 Tim. 3:7). No one among the believers there doubted the faith or obedience of Timothy.

**16:3 “Paul ... took him and circumcised him because of the Jews.”** Paul had just fought a battle in Antioch and Jerusalem against requiring circumcision (Acts 15:1–5), where he refused to circumcise Titus—a Greek (Gal. 2:3). This contrast creates much confusion for many believers. However, in Antioch and Jerusalem, the issue was whether circumcision was essential for salvation. In Timothy’s case, he was already a believer, and his circumcision was based not only on his Jewish heritage through his mother, but also to avoid offending many Jews who lived in that area.

**16:4 “They delivered to them the decrees ... determined by the apostles.”** This referred to the letter sent from Jerusalem to Gentile believers (Acts 15:22–29).

**16:5 “So the churches were strengthened in the faith.”** It is significant that the effect of the Jerusalem letter was to strengthen faith, not to diminish it. The case for salvation by grace through faith alone was firmly established by this letter.

### The Open Door to Macedonia

Acts 16:6–15

**16:6 “They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.”** The word “Asia” refers to what we know as modern Turkey. This is interesting since it is the region where the seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are found. The Spirit does not send the witness until the time is right. When God

## ACTS 16:7–21

closes one door, He always opens another. Later, Ephesus, which is in this area, would become the center for Christian missions.

**16:7** *“The Spirit did not permit them.”* Paul did not allow these closed doors to discourage him. The key, when one way is blocked, is to keep moving. The Apalai Indians in Brazil once told me, “You can only steer a canoe if it is moving faster than the river.” You can’t steer a ship that is sitting still!

**16:9** *“A vision appeared to Paul ... a man of Macedonia ... ‘Come over ... and help us.’”* Macedonia was the threshold of Europe. While it was cultured and prosperous, it was spiritually dark and in need of the light of the Gospel (John 8:12).

**16:10** *“We sought to go to Macedonia.”* This is the first time Luke uses “we” with regard to Paul’s journeys. It is believed that Luke joined Paul and his company in Troas. It has been suggested that he was the “man from Macedonia,” since he was a Greek. Luke was also a physician (Col. 4:14) and may have joined Paul to act as Paul’s personal physician.

**16:11–12** *“Therefore, sailing from Troas ... to Philippi ... a colony.”* This city was named after Philip, the Father of Alexander the Great. It was a Roman colony where there were many Roman citizens, and where all the laws and customs of Rome prevailed.

**16:13** *“On the Sabbath day we went ... to the riverside, where prayer was ... made.”* Apparently, there was no synagogue in Philippi, but there was a Jewish place of prayer by the river.

**16:14** *“Lydia ... a seller of purple ... who worshiped God.”* This woman was a proselyte to Judaism and a successful businesswoman. *“The Lord opened her heart.”* Spiritual hunger on the part of Lydia was met with the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:17–19).

**16:15** *“She and her household were baptized.”* What Paul shared with her, she took to her whole household, and all received the Gospel by faith. *“Come to my house and stay.”* Lydia’s home most likely became the gathering place for the first local church in Europe.

### Paul and Silas Imprisoned

Acts 16:16–24

**16:16** *“A certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination.”* This poor girl was not only demon-possessed, but was also a slave of at least two masters who used her for personal profit.

**16:17** *“These men are servants of the Most High God.”* Under the guidance of the demon, this girl spoke of the gift of salvation, which she herself desperately needed.

**16:18** *“Paul, greatly annoyed ... said ... come out of her.”* Paul did not want his message, or the Lord Jesus Christ, to be associated with demonic utterances. By his apostolic authority, he commanded the demon to come out of her.

**16:19** *“Her masters ... seized Paul and Silas.”* Unsaved men will always value personal profit over all spiritual values. They cared nothing for this poor girl, but only for their personal gain (Matt. 16:26).

**16:20–21** *“These men, being Jews ... teach customs ... not lawful for us, being Romans.”* They use both ethnic and cultural accusations to inflame the magistrates. They do not realize, at this point, that both Paul and Silas are Roman citizens (v. 37). It was illegal to beat or imprison a Roman citizen without proper court proceedings.

**16:22–23** *“The magistrates ... commanded them to be beaten with rods.”* While the Jewish form of punishment was scourging with a whip, the Roman form of punishment was beating with rods (2 Cor. 11:24–25). *“They threw them into prison.”* This treatment of Roman citizens was a grave offense against Roman law. They must have actively chosen to remain silent, for if they had declared their Roman citizenship, this could not have happened. Paul and Silas were willing to suffer, in order to make Philippi a safer place for believers after their departure (v. 35–40).

**16:24** *“He put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.”* The beating, then imprisonment, and now the use of the stocks, brings the violation of Roman laws to three grave offenses against Paul and Silas—both Roman citizens.

### **The Jailer Saved and the Magistrates Shamed**

Acts 16:25–40

**16:25** *“Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God.”* The beating they had received was severe (*“many stripes,”* v. 23), yet they are praising God, knowing this is a high mark of His favor (Matt. 5:10–12; Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29–30). *“The prisoners were listening to them.”* We find out that the jailer was also listening (v. 30).

**16:26** *“There was a great earthquake ... all the doors were opened ... everyone’s chains were loosed.”* God commands natural disturbances, both for judgment, and for deliverance (1 Kings 19:11; Isa. 29:6; Matt. 27:54; Rev. 11:13).

**16:27** *“The keeper of the prison ... was about to kill himself.”* This was because, according to Roman law, any guard who allowed a prisoner to escape was put to death (Acts 12:19).

**16:28** *“Do yourself no harm.”* Seeing the intent of the jail keeper, Paul calls out to save his life. This becomes the opportunity to lead him to faith in Jesus Christ—to the saving not only of his soul, but also the souls of his household (v. 31).

**16:30** *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* The jailer knew the reason they had been arrested. He heard their witness through their prayers and songs. His fear at the earthquake and his conviction by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11) moved him to cry out for spiritual deliverance.

**16:31** *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”* The answer to our lost condition is always simple faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 6:47). *“And your household.”* The salvation of his household is not automatic. Paul is saying that the offer of salvation by grace through faith extends to them as well (Acts 10:43–45; 16:14–15).

**16:32** *“Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.”* What a great opportunity for a Bible class! Since the other prisoners were also experiencing this event, certainly they would have heard the Gospel. Paul and Silas (v. 29) strengthen the faith of these new believers as much as time permitted.

**16:33** *“And he took them ... and washed their stripes.”* He most likely would have washed away the blood and perhaps poured some oil into the wounds (Luke 10:34). *“He and all his family were baptized.”* Paul and Silas no doubt explained the meaning of water baptism as a public act of identification with Christ, and the first step of commitment to discipleship (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3–6).

**16:34** *“And he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”* Luke loves to record the joy that results from faith in Jesus Christ (Luke 8:13; 15:7, 10; Acts 8:8; 13:52; 15:3). In fact, joy and rejoicing is the theme of the epistle that Paul later sent to these believers (the book of Philippians).

## ACTS 16:35–17:9

**16:35** *“Let those men go.”* Perhaps they were frightened by the earthquake or were convicted, by their own conscience, of the evil they had done.

**16:37** *“They have beaten us ... uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison.”* Only now do we read that Paul makes his and Silas’ Roman citizenship known. His words here state charges that could be leveled at the magistrates that were worthy of severe penalty.

**16:38–39** *“They were afraid ... Then they came and pleaded with them.”* No doubt, *“the magistrates”* were begging Paul and Silas not to bring charges against them. Paul had perhaps kept their Roman citizenship a secret, even at the point of the beating, to ensure greater safety for the Christians who would remain in Philippi.

**16:40** *“When they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”* Lydia and her family, the jailer and his family, and perhaps many others, had come to faith in Jesus Christ. Even though Paul’s time here was brief, the Philippian church became the most faithful in supporting the Apostle in all of his years of ministry (Phil. 1:3–11; 4:14–20).

## ACTS CHAPTER 17

Paul goes to Thessalonica, then to Athens—the intellectual capital of the world.

### Paul’s Success Leads to a Riot in Thessalonica

Acts 17:1–9

**17:1** *“They came to Thessalonica.”* After a journey of over one hundred miles, Paul came to this city, which was the great crossroad between East and West. The Gospel planted here would spread throughout the Roman world. Again, Paul began in the Jewish synagogue.

**17:2** *“Then Paul ... reasoned with them from the Scriptures.”* Paul wisely used passages like Psalm 2, Isaiah 53, and Zechariah 12 to support his claim that Jesus was indeed the Messiah/Savior who was prophesied to come.

**17:3** *“Explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again.”* Paul’s method here is much like what Jesus used with the disciples (Luke 24:25–27; 44–45). *“This Jesus ... is the Christ.”* The Gospel is based not only on what Jesus did, but also on who He is. *“The Christ,”* according to Old Testament prophecy, had to be both God and man in order to bring salvation to men (John 20:30–31; 1 Tim. 2:5).

**17:4** *“And some of them were persuaded.”* Most of those who believed were Gentiles, which again aroused the envy and malice of the Jewish leaders. Paul reminds these Thessalonian believers of their early conversion in 1 Thessalonians 1:3–10.

**17:5** *“The Jews ... becoming envious ... took ... evil men from the marketplace.”* Here, the Jewish leaders, who claimed to represent God, manipulated and used evil men to stir up the people (Matt. 26:59–60; 27:3–8, 17–20; Mark 15:9–15).

**17:6–7** *“These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”* This was actually a charge of treason against Rome. In reality, however, Paul and his team were seeking to set the world right in the sight of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. *“Acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar.”* Just like the religious leaders in Jerusalem, these Jews would rather claim allegiance to Caesar than to Christ (Luke 23:1–2; John 19:15).

**17:9** *“When they had taken security from Jason ... they let them go.”* In effect, Jason posted a bond to assure that there would be no further trouble. This meant that Paul and Silas had to leave Thessalonica, even though

they had planted this church. The Thessalonian church was second only to the church in Philippi in their obedience to the faith, and support of Paul (1 Thess. 2:1–13).

### Paul and Silas Minister in Berea

Acts 17:10–15

**17:11 “*These were more fair-minded.*”** This refers to the Jews in the synagogue. **“*They received the word with all readiness.*”** They were eager to hear the Word of God and receive it (see Matt. 13:3–9, 23). **“*Searched the Scriptures daily.*”** As Paul presented the claims of Christ, these Jewish listeners compared his words to Scripture and found them to be true.

**17:12 “*Therefore many of them believed.*”** Both Jews and Gentile seekers came to faith by hearing and reading the Scriptures in light of Paul’s message. It is always true that faith comes by a willingness to hear the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; Eph. 1:13–14).

**17:13 “*The Jews from Thessalonica ... came ... and stirred up the crowds.*”** Their envy of Paul’s success and hatred for the gospel message drove them to a frenzy to shut down his ministry. This pattern would be repeated for the rest of Paul’s life (John 15:18; 1 John 3:13).

**17:14 “*The brethren sent Paul away ... both Silas and Timothy remained there.*”** Since Paul was the focus of the hatred of the Jews, Silas and Timothy remained behind, after Paul’s departure, to instruct these new believers and strengthen them in the faith. At the same time, Silas plays a role in helping Timothy develop into a faithful minister (Phil. 2:19–23; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2–5).

### Paul Preaches in Athens

Acts 17:16–34

**17:16 “*While Paul waited ... his spirit was provoked within him.*”** In the time of Paul, it was said that it was “easier to meet a new god in Athens than a man.” Because idol worship is actually demon worship (1 Cor. 10:20), Paul was indignant at the spiritual slavery of the people. After Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul in Athens, Paul sent Timothy again to Thessalonica, to see if they were standing firm in their faith. When Timothy joined Paul in Athens, he came with good news from Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1–3, 6–8).

**17:17 “*He reasoned in the synagogue ... and in the marketplace daily.*”** Athens was a place of much intellectual discussion and debate. Paul presented the Gospel as a true and reasonable solution to man’s sin and the darkness of idolatry.

**17:18 “*Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.*”** The Epicureans taught that everything in life was by chance, and the best way to live was to indulge in every pleasure and gratification. The Stoics believed in fate—everything was ordained to happen—and the best way to live was by self-discipline, and to treat good or bad fortune with personal detachment. **“*This babblers ... a proclaimer of strange gods.*”** They assumed that “Jesus” and “Resurrection” were two new gods.

**17:19 “*They took him ... to the Areopagus.*”** Also called “Mars Hill,” because it was named for Mars, the Latin god of war. It was a prominent place from which many could hear the message of Paul.

**17:21 “*The Athenians ... spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.*”** Like many people today, they were not interested in seeking and finding the truth (2 Tim. 4:3). They simply wanted to be the first to hear or tell something no one else knew.

## ACTS 17:23–18:3

**17:23** *“I even found an altar ... TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.”* Paul used this “altar” to preach Christ. These philosophers had no grounding in the wisdom of the Old Testament. So, Paul began with God—the Creator (Rom. 1:18–23).

**17:24–29** *“God, who made the world ... since He is Lord of heaven and earth.”* In these verses, Paul explains vital truths about God:

1. He is creator of all things (v. 24);
2. He does not need man’s works, because He gives life to all (v. 25);
3. All mankind is made by Him and given both a time and place to dwell on the earth (v. 26);
4. God has so designed the world that men should seek Him, and He is near to each of us (v. 27);
5. Our daily existence depends upon Him (v. 28); and
6. God should not be reduced to an image of gold, silver, or stone (v. 29).

**17:30–31** *“God ... now commands all men everywhere to repent.”* God restrained His judgment on the nations in their ignorance. Now, however, Jesus Christ—the very Light of God (John 8:12)—has come, and men must choose for or against Him (Matt. 12:30; Luke 9:50; Mark 9:40; John 1:4–5, 9–13; 3:19). This repentance means to turn from their idols to the Living God (1 Thess. 1:9–10). *“He will judge the world ... by the Man whom He has ordained.”* Paul brings the focus to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Righteous Judge (John 5:21–29).

**17:32** *“When they heard of the resurrection ... some mocked.”* The Greeks believed that the soul lived on after death. However, they considered the body to be a prison, and they rejected the idea of a bodily resurrection. This is why Paul had to spend so much time teaching about the resurrection to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15).

**17:34** *“However, some ... believed.”* Paul’s message broke through to some of the audience, by the power of the Spirit (John 16:8). *“Dionysius the Areopagite.”* This man would have been a high official or judge in the Areopagus—the meeting place of the council. *“Damaris.”* This woman may have been either a woman of high culture, or perhaps a temple prostitute. Either could have been present at Paul’s message.

## ACTS CHAPTER 18

Paul goes to Corinth, meets Aquila and Priscilla, and stays for six months; the early ministry of Apollos; Paul returns to Antioch, then begins his third missionary journey.

### Paul’s Ministry in Corinth

Acts 18:1–17

**18:1** *“Paul departed ... to Corinth.”* Corinth was considered the most immoral city of the ancient world. It was the center of the worship of the goddess Aphrodite, whose temple employed one thousand prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:15–16).

**18:2** *“He found ... Aquila ... Priscilla.”* This wonderful couple became close friends and co-workers of Paul in many places (Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). *“Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.”* The Emperor gave this order in 49–50 A.D. It is believed this was due to a reaction to the teaching of Jesus as the Christ/Messiah.

**18:3** *“Because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them.”* Every Jewish father taught his son a trade. It was especially important for Rabbis to have one, since a teacher who charged for his ministry was considered to be a hireling (John 10:12–13). As a tentmaker, Paul was able to minister free of charge, something he boasted about (1 Cor. 9:18; 2 Cor. 11:7, 9–10; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8).

**18:4–5** *“He reasoned in the synagogue ... and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.”* As always, Paul began in the Jewish synagogue, but the Jews rejected the preaching of Jesus as the Christ.

**18:6** *“Your blood be on your own heads.”* Paul faithfully gave them the truth and, by their rejection, they were guilty of willing unbelief (Ezek. 33:1–11). *“I will go to the Gentiles.”* Jewish rejection of the Gospel worked to open the door for his ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; 28:28). In the end, the grace God has given to the Gentile church will work for the salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:25–32).

**18:7–8** *“Justice ... Crispus ... and many of the Corinthians ... believed.”* Justice was a Gentile; Crispus was a Jew (1 Cor. 1:14). They, along with many other Corinthians, heard and believed the message.

**18:9–10** *“The Lord spoke to Paul ... by a vision.”* This is Paul’s third recorded vision (Acts 9:3–6). *“Do not be afraid ... for I am with you ... I have many people in this city.”* Both the opposition of the Jews and the sinfulness of the society in Corinth were discouraging to Paul. With this encouraging vision he would be strengthened to press on in the work.

**18:11** *“He continued there, a year and six months.”* This was one of Paul’s longer stays in one place (Acts 19:10).

**18:12** *“The Jews ... rose up against Paul.”* Thinking they would find favor with the new proconsul, Gallio, the unbelieving Jews charged him with treason against Rome, for Caesar was considered a god. *“Judgment seat.”* The word used here, is *bema*—the same word used for the Judgment Seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).

**18:14–17** *“When Paul was about to open his mouth ... he drove them from the judgment seat.”* Gallio was famous for his kindness and moderation. Here, he was obviously angry with the deceitfulness of the Jews. *“The Greeks took Sosthenes ... and beat him.”* Sosthenes, a synagogue ruler like Crispus (v. 8), leader of the Jewish opposition to Paul, later became a believer and worked with Paul (1 Cor. 1:1).

### Paul Returns to Antioch

Acts 18:18–23

**18:18** *“So Paul ... took leave of the brethren.”* After continued ministry, Paul departed from Corinth and Priscilla and Aquila went with him. *“He had his hair cut.”* It was common for Jewish men, when especially thankful to God for some blessing, to take the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1–21) as an expression of gratitude. This was usually done for 30 days as suggested by Mishna, a collection of Jewish oral law. The cutting of the hair signified the end of the vow. It is important to remember that Paul continued to keep the law, so as not to be a stumbling block to his ministry among the Jews (1 Cor. 9:19–20).

**18:19** *“He ... reasoned with the Jews.”* This time of ministry was apparently successful, as they asked him to stay longer (v. 20). This laid the foundation for the Ephesian church.

**18:21** *“I must ... keep this coming feast in Jerusalem.”* Paul felt compelled to be in Jerusalem for the feast. We do not know which feast this was.

**18:22** *“When he had ... greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.”* Paul greeted the Jerusalem church while at the feast. His return to Antioch was the end of his second missionary journey.

**18:23** *“After ... some time ... he departed ... strengthening the disciples.”* Paul left Antioch and went through the Galatian region again, in order to strengthen the faith of the disciples he had won on his first missionary journey. Faith must be fed to grow strong, and the meat for the soul is sound teaching (2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1; Heb. 5:14; 2 Pet. 1:5–7; 3:18). This was the beginning of his third missionary journey.

### The Discovery and Instruction of Apollos

Acts 18:24–28

**18:24** *“A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria ... mighty in the Scriptures.”* Where Athens was the center of philosophy, Alexandria was known as a center for Old Testament scholarship. His eloquence caused some in Corinth to favor him over Paul (1 Cor. 1:12–13).

**18:25** *“Instructed in the way of the Lord ... he knew only the baptism of John.”* Apollos had learned from the ministry of John the Baptist that the Messiah was coming. Like the disciples Paul found in Ephesus (Acts 19:1–7), he needed to be instructed further that Christ had been crucified and rose again.

**18:26** *“Aquila and Priscilla ... explained to him the way of God more accurately.”* Here, we see both the wisdom and the tact of this amazing couple. They do not embarrass Apollos but pull him aside in order to inform him further in the work of Christ.

**18:27** *“He greatly helped those who had believed through grace.”* With a letter of commendation from Aquila and Priscilla and the believers in Ephesus, Apollos was able to minister in Corinth and strengthen those who came to Christ by grace through faith (Acts 15:11; Eph. 2:8–9).

**18:28** *“Showing ... that Jesus is the Christ.”* Apollos was able to use his eloquent messages to greater effect, due to the instruction he received from Aquila and Priscilla about the Lord Jesus Christ.

### ACTS CHAPTER 19

Paul returns to Ephesus and ministers mightily for two years.

### Two Baptisms; Two Covenants

Acts 19:1–7

**19:2** *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* This passage has confused many believers. Paul met these disciples but noticed something lacking in their lives. The normal sequence, seen in the household of Cornelius, is that the Holy Spirit was given at the moment of faith (Acts 10:44–45). *“We have not ... heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”* These men were disciples of John, the last prophet of the Old Covenant (Matt. 11:9–11). They had been instructed that the Christ was coming, but knew nothing of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

**19:3** *“Into what then were you baptized?”* The rite of baptism represents identification of the person being baptized with something else (see baptism notes from Matt. 3:6). These disciples received the baptism of repentance, looking forward to the Savior but, like Apollos (Acts 18:25), lacked instruction concerning the finished work of Christ. They believed the Messiah was coming but did not yet know who He was. In essence, they were Old Testament believers who had to enter into the New Testament (New Covenant) faith.

**19:4** *“John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance.”* John’s baptism was a call to recognize one’s sinfulness in preparation for the coming King. *“Saying ... that they should believe on Him who would come after him.”* The people who were baptized by John did not yet know Jesus Christ. *“On Jesus Christ.”* Faith is focused on revealed truth. When it is revealed that Jesus is the Christ, He becomes the focus of our faith.

**19:5** *“They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”* In keeping with the commission of our Lord (Matt. 28:18–20), Paul would have fully instructed them in the finished work of Christ on the cross (John 19:30).

**19:6** *“The Holy Spirit came upon them.”* Tongues and prophetic utterance were visible signs given to the early Church to verify the presence of the Spirit. As Isaiah prophesied (Isa. 28:11–13; 1 Cor. 14:20–22), tongues

were a sign to unbelieving Israel that judgment was coming because of their unbelief. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., tongues gradually passed away (1 Cor. 13:8–13).

### God Worked Mightily through Paul

Acts 19:8–12

**19:8** *“He went into the synagogue ... reasoning and persuading.”* Paul continued to reach out to the Jewish community, but the trend of the Jewish rejection of their Messiah/Savior continued.

**19:9** *“But when some ... did not believe ... spoke evil of the Way.”* When the clear truth is rejected, there is no further point in discussion (2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9). *“He ... withdrew ... reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”* This was probably a school of philosophy. Most schools shut down during the heat of the day. This provided Paul a place to instruct those who were coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

**19:10** *“All who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus.”* From Ephesus, the Word spread to the Colossians and the seven churches of Asia (Revelation chapters 2 and 3). Ephesus now became the new center of evangelism and missions.

**19:11–12** *“God worked unusual miracles.”* It is clear that these works were unusual even for the Apostle Paul. *“Even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought ... diseases left them ... evil spirits went out of them.”* These unusual healings and casting out of demons were a demonstration of the power of God to overcome evil. Ephesus was a center of demonic worship and activities.

### Truth Conquers Superstition and Witchcraft

Acts 19:13–20

**19:13** *“We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.”* All power in the name of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:9–10) is based on a personal relationship with Him by means of faith. These phony exorcists used the name of Jesus as if it were a magical name. This is, in fact, “[taking] the name of the Lord your God in vain” (Exod. 20:7).

**19:14** *“Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest.”* It is very common, where there is religion without genuine faith, for people to mix false religion with witchcraft and demonism.

**19:15** *“Jesus I know ... but who are you?”* The demon recognized their faithless attempt to tap into the power of the Lord Jesus, who the demon knew and feared (James 2:19).

**19:16** *“Then the man ... leaped on them ... so that they fled.”* Here is a good warning to those who use the name of Jesus without faith in Him. In the end, it will only result in their greater judgment.

**19:17** *“The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”* The contrast of Paul’s powerful ministry with the failure of the Jewish exorcists caused many to turn to Christ in faith.

**19:18–19** *“Many who had believed ... who had practiced magic.”* Faith always brings us out of darkness into the light of Christ (Rom. 13:12; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9). *“Fifty thousand pieces of silver.”* This amount totaled the wages of an average worker for nearly 150 years!

**19:20** *“So the word of the Lord ... prevailed.”* The language here pictures a military campaign in which the Word of God is victorious in the end (Isa. 40:8).

### The Great Riot in Ephesus

Acts 19:21–41

**19:21 “Paul purposed in the Spirit.”** Paul made his missionary plans through prayer and reliance on the Spirit of God to guide him. **“Macedonia ... Jerusalem ... Rome.”** Paul wanted to revisit the Philippian and Thessalonian churches on his way back to Jerusalem, where he gave a mission report to the elders and James (Acts 21:18–20). Then he decided it was time for him to visit the capitol city of Rome.

**19:22 “So he sent ... Timothy and Erastus, but he ... stayed in Asia for a time.”** We should note that these two ministered to Paul, so that Paul could minister to the multitudes. The best way to train for the ministry is to learn to be a humble servant. By this time, Paul had many young men who he was training. They were to prepare the churches for his coming.

**19:23 “A great commotion about the Way.”** Because of Jesus’ words, recorded for us in John 14:6, the early Church movement was simply referred to as *“the Way”* (Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

**19:24–26 “Demetrius ... called them together.”** This man, like so many today, had no concern for truth or for souls, but only for personal profit (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25; 12:19). **“This Paul has persuaded ... many people.”** Paul’s teachings against idolatry (Psalm 115:3–8; Isa. 44:10–20) had cost the idol-makers much money.

**19:27–28 “So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling ... but also the temple of the great goddess Diana ... whom all Asia and the world worship.”** The temple in Ephesus dedicated to Diana, also called Artemis in Greek, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Demetrius links their trade to the temple so as to inflame an emotional response from the crowd, now a dangerous mob: **“they were full of wrath.”**

**19:29 “The whole city was filled with confusion ... rushed into the theater with one accord ... seized Gaius and Aristarchus.”** Paul may not have been with them at the time. The names are common ones, mentioned in other places (Acts 20:4; Rom. 16:23; Col. 4:10).

**19:30–31 “And when Paul wanted to go in to the people.”** Paul’s disciples, along with high officials who were his friends, restrained him from entering the large theatre which held 25,000 people. The courage of the Apostle Paul was without question (Rom. 15:15).

**19:33–34 “Alexander.”** The Jewish segment of the population did not want to be identified with Paul. They urged Alexander, a Jew, to explain this to the crowd. The crowd’s reaction was crying out with one voice, **“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”** for two hours.

**19:35 “The city clerk ... quieted the crowd.”** This man was responsible for order in the city. **“The image which fell down from Zeus.”** This was possibly a meteor fragment that was worshiped in the temple as a sign from Zeus, their chief god.

**19:37 “For you have brought these men here.”** The city clerk testifies that neither Gaius or Aristarchus had committed any crime against the people or their religion. This indicates that in presenting the truth of Jesus Christ, Paul had wisely avoided attacking their false religion. It is enough to simply present the truth of the Gospel, and those who are receptive will choose Truth over deception.

**19:38 “The courts are open.”** The clerk declares that if Demetrius or anyone else wants to charge Paul or his companions, they must do it legally—through the courts—and not in a riot (v. 36). Roman law did not tolerate civil disturbances, and Roman soldiers would restore order by force of arms.

**19:40** *“For we are in danger ... there being no reason ... for this disorderly gathering.”* If word of this riot came to the ears of the Roman authorities, the city would be placed under martial law, and possibly lose many of the current freedoms they enjoyed.

## **ACTS CHAPTER 20**

Paul journeys toward Jerusalem.

### **The Jews Plot to Kill Paul**

Acts 20:1–6

**20:1** *“Paul ... departed to go to Macedonia.”* Here, he would revisit the churches of Philippi and Thessalonica. During this time, Paul had written 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, 2 Corinthians from Macedonia, and the Roman epistle from Corinth (from Nelson Study Bible).

**20:2–3** *“He came to Greece.”* Here, he would have visited the church of Corinth. *“The Jews plotted against him.”* Paul’s life was in constant danger as he travelled (2 Cor. 11:23–28). Since his original plan was to return to Antioch, in Syria by ship, they may have planned to throw him overboard or kill him by some other means.

**20:4** *“Sopater ... Aristarchus ... Secundus ... Gaius ... Timothy ... Tychicus ... Trophimus.”* These names show us that Paul had, what was equivalent to, a travelling seminary. These were all young men being trained for future ministry. They were also chosen to accompany Paul with the gift from the churches to the poor church of Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:3–4).

**20:5–6** *“At Troas.”* Troas was the gateway between Asia and Europe. Paul would leave some items here, possibly planning to retrieve them when he journeyed on to Rome. However, his arrest in Jerusalem made this impossible (Acts 21:26–40; 2 Tim. 4:13).

### **Ministry at Troas**

Acts 20:7–12

**20:7** *“Now on the first day of the week.”* The early Church met on Sunday in remembrance of the Lord’s resurrection. Just as the Sabbath was dedicated to the Old Covenant (Exod. 31:13, 17), so Sunday became the worship day dedicated to the New Covenant (1 Cor. 16:2). *“To break bread.”* The order of the early church service involved a love feast and the Lord’s table, along with singing, teaching, and prayer (Acts 2:42; Jude 12).

**20:9** *“Eutychus ... was overcome by sleep”* These meetings were held at night so that the laborers could attend. After a long day of work, and probably having eaten something, Eutychus went to asleep and fell three stories down.

**20:10** *“His life is in him.”* He was dead but, at Paul’s touch, came to life again.

**20:11** *“He ... talked ... even till daybreak.”* This was an all-night session with the Apostle Paul. Many of those who listened would have had to go to work after dawn, having worked all the previous day. Yet, in years to come, would have remembered that night with great joy.

### **Paul Travels by Foot**

Acts 20:13–16

**20:13–14** *“Paul ... had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.”* Paul may have had need for some solitude, and time for prayer—perhaps even need for some exercise. Whatever the reason, the fact that Luke

## ACTS 20:16–30

declares that Paul gave orders implies that he would not be denied this time. ***“He met us at Assos.”*** Though Paul was nearing 60 years old, he was still able to cover 20 miles of rugged country on foot!

**20:16** ***“Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus.”*** Had he stopped to visit the Ephesian church; they would have begged him to stay awhile. ***“He was hurrying to be at Jerusalem ... on the Day of Pentecost.”*** Paul wanted to deliver the offering from the Gentile churches at a time when many Jewish believers would be present. His desire was always to maintain unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.

### Paul’s Message to the Ephesian Elders

Acts 20:17–38

**20:17** ***“He sent ... for the elders of the church.”*** The term *“elders”* is referring to those who lead the churches. This title is the same as *“overseer”* and *“shepherd”* (pastor), both of which are used for the same men in v. 28. In 1 Peter 5:1–4 the same three titles are used for the leaders of the church.

**20:18** ***“What manner I always lived among you.”*** Paul not only lived a blameless life among them, but it was his boast that he provided for his own needs and those of his team (v. 34; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6, 18).

**20:19–21** ***“Serving the Lord ... I kept back nothing ... repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** In these verses, Paul summarizes his philosophy of ministry in *“serving the Lord”*:

1. *“with all humility”* (v. 19),
2. *“with many tears and trials”* (v. 19),
3. proclaiming all the truth (vv. 20, 27),
4. teaching in various places (v. 20),
5. urging *“repentance toward God”* (from opposition to submission, v. 21), and
6. *“faith in Jesus Christ”* (v. 21).

As always, repentance speaks of the recognition of our lost and helpless condition, and our need of a Savior. Faith is the receiving of Jesus Christ as the only hope of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

**20:22–23** ***“I go bound in the spirit ... chains and tribulations await me.”*** Paul knew from the warnings of the Spirit that great trials awaited him in Jerusalem. Yet, he was compelled to go to the church there—for the sake of his ministry (Rom. 15:25–26, 31; 1 Cor. 16:3).

**20:24** ***“So that I may finish my race with joy.”*** Like his Savior, Paul was willing to pay with his life to fulfill the will of God (2 Tim. 4:6–8; Heb. 12:2).

**20:26** ***“I am innocent of the blood of all men.”*** By faithfully warning all men of the judgment of God on sin, and of the saving work of Christ on the cross, Paul was free of the guilt of their blood (Ezek. 33:1–9; Acts 18:6).

**20:28** ***“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.”*** These leaders must recognize the great responsibility upon them to care for the flock of God. ***“Shepherd the church.”*** Those who believe must be strengthened and sustained by sound teaching from the Word of God. ***“Which He purchased with His own blood.”*** This is a strong statement of the fact that Jesus Christ is God.

**20:29–30** ***“Savage wolves will come in ... to draw away disciples after themselves.”*** There will always be “hirelings” in the ministry (John 10:12–13; Phil. 1:15–16). They seek to feed off the flock, instead of caring for it (Ezek. 34:1–10). Instead of humble service, they seek to dominate the church for their own gain (1 Tim. 6:3–5; 3 John 9–10).

**20:32** *“I commend you to God and to the word of His grace.”* Only the Spirit of God, working through the Word of God, is able to bring us to maturity and assure us of a rich, eternal reward (Matt. 6:1, 6, 19–20; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; Heb. 5:14–6:1; 2 Pet. 1:10–11).

**20:35** *“I have shown you in every way ... it is more blessed to give than to receive.”* Paul’s life and ministry were a vivid example of the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Giving is a reflection of God’s grace (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23); receiving is a picture of our faith. We magnify, glorify, and praise the grace of God, but never our faith!

**20:36** *“He knelt down and prayed with them all.”* The Ephesian epistle is built around Paul’s prayers for this church (Eph. 1:15–23; 3:14–21). Paul was a man of prayer because he believed in the power of prayer. Prayer was, in his mind, the key to winning every spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10–18).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 21**

Paul returns to Jerusalem and is arrested.

### **Warnings on the Way to Jerusalem**

Acts 21:1–14

**21:1–3** *“We ... set sail, running a straight course.”* By the descriptions he gives, it seems that Luke especially enjoyed travelling by sea.

**21:4** *“Finding disciples ... they told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.”* This was a message Paul had received before (Acts 20:23). We cannot know, at this point, whether he was being forbidden from going to Jerusalem altogether, or whether he was not to go at this particular time. The problem in Jerusalem arose because of the many Jewish believers who had come for the Feast of Pentecost, who were zealous law-keepers (v. 20).

**21:5** *“We knelt down on the shore and prayed.”* Once again, Paul’s devotion to prayer stands out (Phil. 1:3–11).

**21:7** *“We ... greeted the brethren.”* Paul’s journey to Jerusalem was a visit to many believers on the way, perhaps because he sensed he would not see them again (Acts 20:25).

**21:8** *“Philip the evangelist.”* This is the Philip who was chosen as a deacon (Acts 6:5), who then evangelized in Samaria (Acts 8:4–12) and ministered to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–39). After this, Philip seems to have settled in Caesarea (Acts 8:40).

**21:9** *“Four virgin daughters who prophesied.”* This was an ongoing fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, which Peter quoted on the first Pentecost (Acts 2:17–18; Joel 2:28–32). Once the whole New Testament Scriptures were completed, there was no further need for this gift (1 Cor. 13:8–13).

**21:10–11** *“A certain prophet ... Agabus ... Thus says the Holy Spirit.”* This same Agabus predicted the world-wide famine (Acts 11:27–28). *“He took Paul’s belt.”* In the manner of the old prophets, he acts out his message (1 Kings 11:29–31; Isa. 20:3–4; Jer. 13:1–11; Ezek. 5:1–4). He does not tell Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but only that he will be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. It may be that, in light of Paul’s determination to go to Jerusalem (Acts 20:22–23; 21:13), the warning not to go was no longer included.

## ACTS 21:13–26

**21:13–14** *“I am ready ... to be bound, but also to die.”* Paul was convinced that he must be in Jerusalem—whatever the cost. *“The will of the Lord be done.”* Even his friends decided that further argument was useless. They commended him to the will of God. It may well be, as mentioned in the note on v. 4, that Paul was not so much forbidden to go, as he was being warned not to go at this time. As we will see (vv. 18–24), the problem was not that he went to Jerusalem, but that due to the multitude of Jewish law-keepers, Paul was led into a serious compromise with them.

### Paul Walks into a No-Win Situation

Acts 21:15–25

**21:17** *“The brethren received us gladly.”* By now, Paul was known and respected throughout the world as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

**21:18–19** *“On the following day Paul went in with us to James.”* This James, the Lord’s half-brother (Matt. 13:55; Acts 15:13; 1 Cor. 15:7), was still the leader of the church in Jerusalem. *“Which God had done among the Gentiles.”* Paul gave a mission report of God’s grace to the Gentiles through him.

**21:20** *“You see ... how many ... Jews ... all zealous for the law.”* Because of his insistence to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost, thousands of Jews, both believers and unbelievers, were present. Paul will attempt (wrongly, in my opinion) to pacify the believing Jews regarding law-keeping and, in so doing, he will be recognized and attacked by the unbelieving Jews from Asia. He has walked into a no-win situation!

**21:21** *“They have been informed ... that you teach ... to forsake Moses.”* This is not what Paul taught at all. He taught that the Law could not save us (Gal. 1:6–9; 2:1–5, 16; 3:11–14, 24–26). Paul should have stood firm on what he taught, instead of trying to pacify people who distorted his teaching. Once the veil in the Temple was rent (Matt. 27:51), based on the finished work of Christ (John 19:30), the sacrificial system was no longer acceptable to God (Gal. 3:10–14, 23–26; 4:21–31; Heb. 7:17–22; 8:1–2, 6–7, 13; 10:5–10).

**21:23–24** *“Therefore do what we tell you.”* This compromise by James is doomed to fail. *“Four men who have taken a vow.”* In light of v. 25, this was a Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1–8). *“Take them ... and pay their expenses.”* This would have been a very costly venture. Following the purification, each would have to offer a yearling lamb as a burnt offering, a ewe lamb as a sin offering, and a ram as a peace offering, along with unleavened bread, oil, and grain (Num. 6:14–15). These were to be offered by the priest in the Temple (Num. 6:16–18). The problem is that the veil in the Temple was ripped from “top to bottom” when Jesus, “the Son,” offered the perfect sacrifice to God the Father (Matt. 27:51). This meant that no further sacrifice was acceptable to God, and to offer a lamb for sin was equal to “crucifying the Son of God afresh” (Heb. 6:6; 10:11–18). I believe it was this compromise, after Paul had rebuked the Galatian believers severely for seeking to follow the law, that caused the Gentile believers in Asia to forsake him (2 Tim. 1:15).

**21:25** *“Concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written.”* Here, James refers to the letter from the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:22–29). It was clear that the leaders of the Jerusalem church knew that Christ had fulfilled the Law on our behalf. They were in a difficult situation that called for much sensitivity on their part. The issue is that of Law versus grace, which is addressed in the epistles to the Galatians and Hebrews. The issue was ultimately resolved in 70 A.D. when the Temple was destroyed, making sacrifices impossible.

### The Riot in the Temple and the Arrest of Paul

Acts 21:26–40

**21:26** *“At which time an offering should be made for each one of them.”* These offerings are given in Numbers 6:13–15. Again, such offerings were made invalid once Jesus Christ made the final and total payment for sin on the cross (John 19:30).

**21:27 “The Jews from Asia ... laid hands on him.”** These were not the believing Jews, who misunderstood Paul’s teaching (vv. 20–21). These were hostile, unbelieving Jews who had followed Paul and incited riots everywhere Paul went (Acts 14:2, 5, 19; 17:5–6, 13; 18:12–13). By compromising with legalistic parties in the church, Paul walked into a trap of the unbelieving Jews who wanted him destroyed.

**21:28 “This is the man ... he also brought Greeks ... and has defiled this holy place.”** Their accusations were all false, but the last part, about bringing Greeks into the Temple (v. 29), was added to stir up an emotional reaction from the crowd. Isn’t it amazing that it was their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah that ultimately brought the Romans to destroy the Temple in 70 A.D.?

**21:31–32 “As they were seeking to kill him ... the commander ... took soldiers.”** There was a garrison of Roman soldiers in the Fortress of Antonia, which was connected to the Temple grounds by either a tunnel or two flights of stairs. Since two centurions are mentioned, there must have been at least two hundred soldiers who responded. The appearance of these Roman soldiers saved Paul’s life.

**21:33 “The commander ... commanded him to be bound.”** The Roman commander assumed Paul was the cause of the riot, and so arrested him.

**21:34–35 “When he could not ascertain the truth.”** The uproar made it impossible for the commander to determine why they were beating Paul. **“he had to be carried ... because of the violence of the mob.”** Either Paul was so badly beaten that he could not walk, or the soldiers surrounded him and carried him to shield him from further violence.

**21:38 “Are you not the Egyptian.”** This was a reference to a false prophet who had claimed to be the Messiah and led a revolt against Rome in 54 A.D.

**21:39 “I am a Jew ... a citizen.”** Paul identifies himself not only by his Jewish heritage, but also his Greek culture, being raised in Tarsus—a great university city. When he said the word “*citizen*,” it implied his Roman citizenship, which he would make more clear in Acts 22:25. **“Permit me to speak to the people.”** The courage of Paul in the face of violent mobs displays the power of faith (Prov. 28:1).

**21:40 “Paul ... motioned with his hand ... there was a great silence.”** Paul had a truly commanding presence due, no doubt, to the Presence of the Holy Spirit. Paul surprised the commander by speaking in cultured Greek (v. 37), but he now spoke to the crowd **“in the Hebrew language.”**

## **ACTS CHAPTER 22**

Paul gives his defense to the crowd and claims his rights as a Roman citizen.

### **Paul’s Defense Is His Vision of Christ**

Acts 22:1–21

**22:1–2 “Brethren ... fathers ... He spoke to them in the Hebrew language.”** Paul identified with this crowd by sympathy (Rom. 9:1–5; 10:1–2), shared history, and language. **“They kept all the more silent.”** The “*great silence*” of Acts 21:40 became even more hushed as he addressed them as a fellow Jew.

**22:3 “I am ... a Jew ... brought up ... at the feet of Gamaliel.”** According to Acts 5:34, Gamaliel, as a teacher of the law, was “*held in respect by all the people*.” He spoke in favor of lenience toward the apostles (Acts 5:35–39). Many believe he was the leader of the Jewish high court—the Sanhedrin. The fact that Gamaliel trained Paul would give him great credibility in the eyes of this crowd. Gamaliel is believed to have died before this event, in 52 A.D.

## ACTS 22:4–24

**22:4–5** *“I persecuted this Way ... as also the high priest bears me witness.”* By showing his zeal in persecuting Jesus’ disciples, Paul conveys his understanding of the zealous rage of this mob.

**22:7** *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”* Paul, relating his experience on the Damascus Road (Acts 9), explains his change from persecutor to champion of the Gospel of Christ. A transformed life is often the greatest witness (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Pet. 3:15). It is our personal experience of union with Christ that gives credibility to our faith.

**22:8** *“I am Jesus of Nazareth.”* All of those from Judea in this crowd would have known the name of Jesus. They all would have known of His crucifixion, and the earthquake, and the tearing of the veil, and the talk of His resurrection (Matt. 27:51–54; Mark 15:33–38; Luke 23:44–45).

**22:10** *“Arise and go into Damascus ... you will be told things which are appointed for you to do.”* Here, Paul begins to build the case for his apostleship—the plan and purpose of God for his life. Every believer should understand that God has a specific plan for his or her life, and this plan is related to our spiritual gift (Rom. 12:3–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–7; Eph. 4:3–8, 11–16).

**22:12–13** *“Then ... Ananias, a devout man according to the law.”* This would also build sympathy in the mob, since Ananias was *“having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there.”*

**22:13–15** *“Brother Saul.”* Ananias identifies Paul as his brother—both as a Jew, and as a believer in Jesus Christ. *“The God of our Fathers has chosen you.”* If Saul/Paul was divinely chosen for a special task, to resist that ministry would be to resist the will of God. Remember Gamaliel’s words in Acts 5:38–39. *“See the Just One ... For you shall be His witness to all men.”* The term *“Just One”* is a reference to the Messiah (Isa. 45:21). If Paul was to be a witness to all men, that would include the Gentiles.

**22:18** *“Make haste ... for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.”* This vision probably occurred during Paul’s initial visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–30) when the Jews plotted to kill him. God forewarned Paul of the ultimate rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Jewish leaders and the nation as a whole.

**22:21** *“Depart, for I will send you ... to the Gentiles.”* Paul had the attention of the crowd up to this point. He was able to make the case that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah. However, the Jewish prejudice against all Gentiles brought an immediate and violent reaction.

### Paul Proclaims His Roman Citizenship

Acts 22:22–30

**22:22** *“Away with such a fellow from the earth.”* It is difficult for people today to understand the absolute contempt and hatred that the Jewish people had for the Gentiles. One rabbi is recorded as saying, “The Gentiles were created to ignite the fires of hell.” To think that Paul claimed a commission from the God of Israel to bring the Gentiles into the kingdom, without first becoming proselytes to Judaism, was unthinkable to them. The unlimited free offer of the grace of God will always incite hatred from those who are bound by law (Gal. 4:21–31).

**22:24** *“The commander ordered ... that he should be examined under scourging.”* *“Scourging”* was used in the Roman Empire as a means of questioning. It was designed to force the victim, by extreme pain, to answer truthfully. The victim was bound to a pillar or post, with their back exposed. A whip with many thongs, having bits of metal and bone tied into them, was used. It was not unusual for one to die under scourging. Yet, Paul endured this from the Jews five times (2 Cor. 11:24).

**22:25** *“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?”* Under Roman law, no Roman could be either bound or scourged unless they were first convicted in court and condemned. It is interesting that in Philippi Paul did not make known his and Silas’ Roman citizenship (Acts 16:22–23, 37–38). They may have willingly endured the punishment so as to make the Roman officials reluctant to further harass or persecute the church there.

**22:26–27** *“Take care ... for this man is a Roman.”* The centurion knew that they had already violated Roman law by having Paul bound without trial. *“Are you a Roman?”* At this point, the commander would have been terrified of what he had already done. *“He said, ‘Yes.’”* Paul confirms his citizenship.

**22:28** *“With a large sum I [the commander] obtained this citizenship.”* Roman citizenship originally belonged only to those born in Rome. Gradually, the privilege was extended to those who rendered special service to Rome, or those who by military service or a large sum of money could gain it. *“But I was born a citizen.”* Paul’s Roman citizenship was probably the result of a father or grandfather who had gained this prized citizenship, and then the privilege passed down to sons. This made the status of Paul’s citizenship of much higher value than that of the commander’s.

**22:29** *“Then immediately those ... withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid.”* The penalty for binding or scourging a Roman citizen, not guilty of any crime, was death. They had already violated the first of these.

**22:30** *“He wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews.”* The boast of Roman law was that it was totally impartial. Here, the Roman commander sets up a hearing with *“the chief priests and all their council”* in order to gather all the facts, before making his final decision. The injustice of the Jewish leaders will quickly become evident to him (Acts 23).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 23**

Paul successfully divides the council; a plot to kill him leads to his removal to Caesarea.

### **The Council Divided Regarding Resurrection**

Acts 23:1–10

**23:3** *“God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!”* This was the same accusation Jesus used against the religious leaders (Matt. 23:27). It was an open charge of the worst kind of religious hypocrisy. The corruption and greed of Ananias were well known. *“You command me to be struck contrary to the law.”* Jewish law was also designed to be fair and just, but as always happens, it had been corrupted (Lev. 19:35; Deut. 25:1–2).

**23:5** *“I did not know, brethren, that he was high priest.”* Paul certainly knew that Ananias was the high priest (Acts 22:5). His statement appears to be sarcastic, indicating that the corrupt actions of Ananias had disqualified him for the office. *“You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people.”* Paul was an expert in Jewish law (see Exod. 22:28).

**23:6** *“I am a Pharisee ... concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged.”* Paul very shrewdly divided the council by bringing up the issue of resurrection. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead; the Sadducees did not (Matt. 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27). Paul’s point was actually correct, for he was being judged for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 22:6–10).

**23:9** *“We find no evil in this man ... let us not fight against God.”* They are repeating the counsel given by Gamaliel, Paul’s teacher (Acts 5:34–39; 22:3).

### **The Plot to Kill Paul Discovered**

Acts 23:11–22

**23:11** *“The Lord stood by him.”* We know that Jesus Christ appeared to Paul at least four times (Acts 9:3–6; 18:9–10; 22:17–18 and here). There, were probably other appearances as well (Gal. 1:11–12; 1 Cor. 11:23; 2 Cor. 12:2–4). *“You must also bear witness at Rome.”* Here, Jesus Christ affirms that Paul’s desire to minister in Rome was indeed according to the plan of God (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:15).

**23:12** *“Some of the Jews ... bound themselves under an oath.”* So great was their hatred of Paul, and of the Gospel he preached, that they were willing to resort to murder. The oath gave their actions an appearance of religious duty.

**23:14–15** *“They came to the chief priests and elders ... Now you ... suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you.”* The willingness of the chief priests and elders to become partners in this plot shows both their total spiritual corruption, as well as their recognition that their charges against the Apostle Paul could not prevail.

**23:16** *“Paul’s sister’s son ... told Paul.”* This is the only mention of Paul’s relatives. His family was obviously well connected to the Jewish council. The courage of this young man saved Paul’s life.

**23:17–21** *“Take this young man to the commander.”* The fact that Paul’s nephew knew all the details of the plot shows again how connected Paul’s family was with the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem.

### **Paul Sent to the Governor Felix**

Acts 23:23–35

**23:23** *“He called for two centurions ... ‘Prepare two hundred soldiers.’”* Each centurion was commander over one hundred Roman soldiers. With the horsemen and spearmen, there would be a small army guarding Paul on his journey to Caesarea.

**23:25** *“He wrote a letter.”* In a case like this, it was required that the subordinate officer write a letter to his superior, explaining the case being brought before him.

**23:26** *“To the most excellent governor Felix.”* While this letter is very professional, in reality, Felix is recorded in history as being very corrupt. His headquarters was not in Jerusalem, but in Caesarea. The commander’s letter is an example of a professional and objective evaluation of the facts.

**23:31** *“Then the soldiers ... brought him by night to Antipatris.”* This was a fortified Roman town about 40 miles from Jerusalem. The country between the two is rugged and well-suited for ambush. Once at Antipatris, the danger of ambush was small, as they would be in open country for the 25 miles to Caesarea. The soldiers and spearmen therefore returned to Jerusalem.

**23:34** *“The governor ... asked what province he was from.”* This question was the formal beginning of Paul’s case. As a Roman, Paul had the right to be tried in his own province. Since Cilicia fell under the jurisdiction of Felix, he agreed to hear the case.

**23:35** *“He commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.”* This was the residence of the governor, built by Herod the Great. There was also a Praetorium in Jerusalem (John 18:28). In Rome, Paul would lead many of the palace guards of the Praetorium to faith in Christ (Phil. 1:13).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 24**

Paul is accused by Ananias and gives his defense.

### **The False Charges of Ananias**

Acts 24:1–9

**24:1** *“A certain orator named Tertullus.”* The inclusion of this orator was an obvious attempt to make their charges seem more valid and polished. He may also have been a lawyer, or one who often represented lawyers.

**24:2–3** *“Tertullus began his accusation.”* His first words were nothing but gross flattery in an attempt to gain the good favor of Felix, who loved being praised. In fact, the Roman historian Tacitus spoke of Felix as a brutal, greedy, and corrupt official.

**24:5** *“We found this man ... a creator of dissension ... throughout the world.”* In reality, as the record of Acts shows, Paul always conducted his ministry in a quiet and orderly manner. It was the hatred of the Jews, everywhere he went, that resulted in riots. *“A ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”* Since Rome had been plagued by several self-styled messiahs (Acts 5:36–37; 21:38), this was an attempt to present Paul as a revolutionary against Rome. The charges implied here are treason against Rome and heresy against the Jewish religion, which was protected by Rome.

**24:6** *“He even tried to profane the temple.”* This was the false charge used by the mob in Jerusalem to incite the riot against Paul (Acts 21:28).

**24:6–7** *“We ... wanted to judge him according to our law.”* Here, Tertullus presents the Jewish mob as decent, law-abiding citizens, who were kept from their duties by the brutal commander, Lysias. All of the charges by Tertullus are an act of projection—imputing to someone else the very faults of the accusers. This twisting of truth is as old as Satan (John 8:44–45), who in the Garden accuses God of wanting to keep Adam and Eve from the very thing Satan himself wanted—to *“be like God/the Most High”* (Gen. 3:1–5; Isa. 14:13–14).

### **Paul Gives His Defense**

Acts 24:10–21

**24:11–12** *“No more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem.”* Paul answers the charge of treason by declaring that only a short time ago he went to Jerusalem—surely not enough time to incite a revolt. *“Neither ... in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd.”* It was the Jews who attacked Paul, not the other way around.

**24:14** *“This I confess ... according to the Way ... I worship the God of my fathers.”* Paul openly proclaims himself to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, declaring that *“The Law and ... the Prophets”* all speak of Him (Luke 24:27, 32, 44–45).

**24:15** *“I have hope in God ... there will be a resurrection of the dead.”* The only hope of resurrection is grounded in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25–26; Phil. 3:10).

**24:17** *“I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation.”* These offerings were the financial aid given by the Gentile churches for the church in Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1–3; 2 Cor. 8:1–4).

**24:18–19** *“Some Jews from Asia ... They ought to have been here.”* See the note on Acts 21:27. Roman law required that any accused person had the right to face his accusers in court (Acts 25:16). The absence of these accusers was a serious breach of Roman law.

## ACTS 24:21–25:9

**24:21** *“Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged.”* Paul twice emphasizes the resurrection (v. 15). By doing this, he is both giving Felix a witness to the truth of the Gospel, and also framing the accusations against him in a religious context. Rome did not judge in religious matters at this time (Acts 18:14–15).

### Felix Delays Paul’s Case Indefinitely

Acts 24:22–27

**24:22** *“Felix ... having more accurate knowledge of the Way.”* First, members of the early Church are spoken of as Nazarenes (v. 5), then as followers of *“the Way.”* This spoke of Jesus as *“The way, the truth, and the life”* (John 14:6). Felix probably gained his knowledge of the followers of Jesus through Drusilla, his Jewish wife (v. 24). Her grandfather, Herod the Great, had tried to kill the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:16–18). Her uncle was the Herod who killed John the Baptist (Matt. 14:1–12; Mark 6:14–29; Luke 9:7–9). Finally, her father was the Herod who had the Apostle James put to death (Acts 12:1–2).

**24:24–25** *“Felix ... heard him concerning the faith in Christ.”* Luke does not record Paul’s witness concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, but this was an open opportunity for Paul to explain the gospel message in full. *“He reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.”* Paul was always prepared to give a reasonable defense of the faith (1 Pet. 3:15–16). Felix, who had married and divorced twice before he took Drusilla away from her husband, was obviously convicted by Paul’s words, and asked him to *“Go away for now.”*

**24:26** *“He also hoped that money could be given him by Paul.”* For a rich bribe, Felix, who by now was certain of Paul’s innocence, would set Paul free. This was something Paul could not do (Exod. 23:8).

**24:27** *“After two years.”* We have no scriptural record of these two years that Paul was kept in Caesarea. *“Felix ... left Paul bound.”* Since Paul would not give a bribe, Felix tried to gain favor with the Jews.

## ACTS CHAPTER 25

Paul is tried before Festus, the new Governor, and appeals to Caesar.

### Paul Defends Himself before Festus

Acts 25:1–12

**25:2–3** *“Then the high priest ... petitioned him ... that he would summon him to Jerusalem.”* Even after two years, the Jewish leaders were willing to break both Roman and Jewish law and seek to ambush and kill the Apostle Paul. There is no hatred so great as religious hatred against Jesus Christ.

**25:5** *“Let those who have authority ... accuse this man.”* The Jewish council was not able to deceive Festus. He strictly follows the laws of Rome and demands evidence against Paul (Acts 25:17–19).

**25:7** *“The Jews ... laid many serious complaints ... which they could not prove.”* Roman law demanded clear evidence of guilt, especially for one who was a Roman citizen. The innocence of Paul is becoming clear to Festus (Acts 25:17–18, 25).

**25:8** *“Neither against ... the Jews ... the temple ... nor against Caesar have I offended.”* In one brief sentence, Paul refutes all the false charges they had brought against him (Acts 24:5–6).

**25:9** *“Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem.”* Because Paul knew of the plot to ambush and kill him, he could not agree to this arrangement. He had only one other option—to appeal to Caesar, the right of every Roman citizen.

**25:10** *“I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat.”* Here, Paul uses the privileges of his Roman citizenship to appeal to the highest court in the Roman Empire. Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem, and his appeal to the Roman court, all worked together to bring about the desire of Paul and the will of God (Acts 19:21; 23:11; Rom. 1:15; Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

**25:11** *“If I am an offender ... I do not object to dying.”* Paul’s sense of justice was so great that, if he had been guilty of the charges against him, he would have been willing to die.

### **King Agrippa Prepares to Hear Paul**

Acts 25:13–27

**25:13** *“King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea.”* King Agrippa and Bernice were actually brother and sister. Because Paul had already appealed to Caesar, he was not required to give a defense before them. However, he no doubt saw this as an opportunity to present the gospel message to them.

**25:14** *“Festus laid Paul’s case before the king.”* Festus had a problem. Because he had sought to appease the Jews, he forced Paul to appeal to Caesar. Now, it was required that he send a letter to Caesar, declaring the charges against Paul (vv. 25–27). He wants Agrippa, who was an expert in Jewish law (Acts 26:3), to help him formulate his charges.

**25:16–19** *“The custom of the Romans ... questions ... about their [accusers] own religion.”* Had Festus been honest and objective, he would have released Paul. Rome did not settle religious disputes (Acts 18:14–16). While Rome prided itself on justice based on evidence, the Jewish leaders were willing to violate all the Law of Moses (Exod. 20:16; Deut. 19:15), in order to have Paul killed, just as they had done with Jesus Christ.

**25:23** *“Agrippa and Bernice ... with great pomp ... and the prominent men of the city.”* Here, Paul is being treated like a novelty, to provide entertainment for the high-class leaders and citizens. Nevertheless, he used this as an opportunity to present the Gospel to many powerful people. Believers need to expect injustice from the rulers of this world (John 15:18). That should never keep us from openly proclaiming the truth about Jesus Christ. Paul was fulfilling the prophecy of Jesus (Matt. 10:18)

**25:24** *“You see this man ... the Jews petitioned ... that he was not fit to live.”* Paul is presented in a very negative light, yet his conduct and truthfulness shine through all the false accusations (Matt. 5:16).

**25:25** *“I found ... nothing deserving of death.”* By his own admission, Festus admits that Paul should have been set free. Because of all the friction between Rome and Jerusalem, his desire to please the Jews had caused him to compromise justice.

**25:26–27** *“I have nothing certain to write ... to specify the charges against him.”* When Festus speaks of *“my lord,”* he is speaking of Caesar. To send a prisoner to Rome without specific charges would bring down the wrath of Caesar on the head of Festus. His hope is that Agrippa can help him formulate specific charges.

## **ACTS CHAPTER 26**

Paul presents his defense before Agrippa.

### **Paul Reviews His Early Life**

Acts 26:1–11

**26:1** *“Paul stretched out his hand.”* This was a common gesture among speakers, designed to bring silence and command attention (Acts 12:17; 13:16; 19:33; 21:40). Though a small gesture, it indicated the speaker had culture and training.

## ACTS 26:3–19

**26:3** *“Because you are expert in all customs ... questions which have to do with the Jews.”* It is this expertise that Festus is counting on to help him discern how to charge Paul (see note above, Acts 25:14).

**26:4–5** *“My youth ... was spent ... at Jerusalem ... I lived a Pharisee.”* As Saul of Tarsus, Paul was from a very prominent family (Phil. 3:4–6) and was raised up to be both a Pharisee and a rabbi (Acts 22:3).

**26:6** *“I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God.”* This refers to the promise of the coming Redeemer and Savior, resulting in resurrection to eternal life (Rom. 1:1–4).

**26:7** *“For this hope’s sake ... I am accused by the Jews.”* The hope of the resurrection from the dead is central to Paul’s teaching (1 Cor. 15:16–19; Col. 1:27; Titus 1:2; 2:13).

**26:9** *“Contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”* Paul introduces Jesus Christ as One he himself once hated (1 Tim. 1:12–13).

**26:10–11** *“Many of the saints I shut up in prison ... I cast my vote against them.”* Here, Paul may have remembered the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58–59). His violence against the early Church was well known (Acts 8:1–3; 9:13–14; 22:19–20; Gal. 1:13–14).

### His Conversion on the Damascus Road

Acts 26:12–18

**26:12** *“I journeyed to Damascus with authority ... from the chief priests.”* It is most interesting that the word “apostle” (*apostolos*) refers to “one given a commission from highest authority.” It was often given to ambassadors and commanders of naval fleets. Paul began as Saul, the apostle of the high priest, and became, by grace, Paul—the Apostle of Jesus Christ!

**26:14** *“I heard a voice ... in the Hebrew language.”* This is the only place where we are told Jesus spoke to Saul/Paul in Hebrew. *“It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”* A goad was a sharpened stick or staff used to prod the unwilling oxen to pull their load. If the ox kicked at the goad, it only hurt itself more. God had been convicting Saul (John 16:8), and his conscience was being wounded by his hard-heartedness.

**26:15** *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”* When the members of the Body of Christ are persecuted, it is Christ Himself who is the target of the abuse (John 15:18; 16:33).

**26:16–18** *“I have appeared to you for this purpose.”* God had a plan for Saul/Paul before his life began (Jer. 1:5; Rom. 1:1–4; Gal. 1:15). The following statements are an amazing summary of Paul’s calling. *“To make you a minister and a witness.”* Even here, in the presence of royalty, Paul is fulfilling his commission. *“I will deliver you from the Jewish people.”* From the very beginning, the Lord warned Paul of the hostility of the Jews (Acts 22:18). *“To open their eyes ... to turn them from darkness to light.”* The work of regeneration delivers us from darkness to light, and delivers us from the power of Satan, resulting in an eternal inheritance (2 Cor. 4:1–6; Col. 1:12–14; Gal. 3:26–29; 1 Pet. 1:4–5).

### His Proclamation of Jesus Christ

Acts 26:19–23

**26:19** *“I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”* Paul could say that he faithfully carried out his mission to the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6–8). The grace of God overwhelmed Paul, making him a debtor to the plan of God (Rom. 1:14–15; 8:12).

**26:20** “[I] *declared ... that they should repent.*” To repent means “to change one’s mind completely,” resulting in a change of life (Rom. 12:2). When one changes their mind about Christ—turning from unbelief to faith—the result is a “new creature” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). The effect of the indwelling Holy Spirit, along with spiritual growth, results in “*works befitting repentance.*” (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8; Titus 2:14–3:8).

**26:22–23** “*Witnessing ... those things which the prophets and Moses said would come.*” Paul proclaimed the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in Jesus Christ (Luke 24:26–27, 32, 44–45). “*That the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead.*” Because Jesus is the first ever to rise, never to die again, He is called “*the first born from the dead*” (Col. 1:15, 18). His resurrection is the promise of the future resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15:20–24).

### The Response of Festus and Agrippa

Acts 26:24–32

**26:24** “*Paul ... Much learning is driving you mad.*” Festus, possibly under strong conviction, suggests that Paul’s training had driven him insane. The natural man is not able to understand the Word of God apart from the light of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 1:18, 22–25; 2:11–15).

**26:26** “*The king ... knows these things ... this thing was not done in a corner.*” Ever since the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, followed by the amazing events taking place in Jesus’ ministry, word of these things had spread far and wide (Matt. 2:1–6; Luke 1:65–66).

**26:28** “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian.*” The fact that Agrippa used the title “*Christian*,” shows that he had heard of these teachings (Acts 11:26). Not until eternity will we know if Agrippa ever came to faith in Jesus Christ.

**26:29** “*I would to God that ... all who hear me today.*” With the exception of his chains, Paul’s deep desire was that all that who heard him of this great crowd might become like him—a believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

**26:31** “*This man is doing nothing deserving of death.*” At this point, Paul could have been released, except that he had already claimed the right to be heard in Rome. It is so often true that when things go what we think is the worst possible way, God is at work bringing about His perfect plan (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28).

## ACTS CHAPTER 27

The terrible sea voyage to Rome, shipwreck, and God’s deliverance.

### The Perilous Journey Begins

Acts 27:1–8

**27:1** “*Paul and some other prisoners.*” It is very possible that some of these prisoners had been condemned to death and were on their way to fight in the Gladiatorial Games in Rome. What an opportunity these prisoners had to hear the Gospel from the Apostle Paul! “*Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.*” This regiment bore the name of Caesar Augustus and must have been a highly trained and honored regiment. Julius would have been an experienced and distinguished centurion.

**27:2** “*Aristarchus ... was with us.*” This loyal disciple had been with Paul since he left Thessalonica (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Col. 4:10; Phi. 24). Since Paul refers to him as a “*fellow prisoner*” in Colossians, he may have stayed with Paul as his personal slave. We know that Luke was with them because of his use of the words “*we*” and “*us*” (vv. 1–7).

## ACTS 27:3–21

**27:3** *“Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty.”* This was extraordinary treatment of a prisoner by a Roman centurion. This soldier certainly saw Paul as a man of integrity and honor, who could be trusted entirely.

**27:4** *“The winds were contrary.”* The reference to the “Fast” in v. 9 probably refers to the Feast of Atonement (Lev. 16:29–34). This means that they were sailing during late September or early October—the most dangerous time of the year. The winds, at this time, come out of the West; and they were sailing East, into the wind.

**27:6** *“The centurion found an Alexandrian ship.”* This ship would have been a cargo ship for grain, coming out of North Africa.

**27:7–8** *“We ... arrived with difficulty ... passing it with difficulty.”* Luke uses the repetition of this phrase to indicate the perilous conditions they were facing. This was only the beginning! In the next verse, he uses the word “dangerous.”

### Paul Warns of Dangers Ahead

Acts 27:9–12

**27:9–10** *“Sailing was now dangerous ... Paul advised them ... this voyage will end with disaster.”* Paul had much experience in sea travel. But he was also guided by the Spirit of God. His warning was ignored but, in the end, proved all too true.

**27:11** *“The centurion ... the helmsman ... the owner of the ship.”* All three ignored the warnings of Paul, much to their peril and ultimate loss.

**27:12** *“The majority advised to set sail.”* The majority rule is usually wrong. In this case, one man gave wise counsel, and the majority ignored him. If they could reach Phoenix, on the island of Crete, they would have safe harbor for the winter, but it was not to be.

### In the Peril of the Sea

Acts 27:13–38 (2 Cor. 11:26)

**27:14** *“A tempestuous head wind ... called Euroclydon.”* This wind was a violent wind that blew out of the northeast and was feared by all sailors of those seas. They had to let the wind drive the ship.

**27:16–17** *“Running under the shelter of an island called Clauda.”* This was a small island with no harbor, but it provided some shelter to prepare for the worst. They brought the small skiff, or landing craft, aboard. *“They used cables to undergird the ship.”* This was an indication of their great fear—that they would be driven onto the sandbars off the northern coast of Africa.

**27:18** *“We were exceedingly tempest-tossed.”* By now, the storm had complete control of the ship. *“They lightened the ship.”* They would have begun to throw the cargo of valuable grain overboard to accomplish this.

**27:19** *“We threw the ship’s tackle overboard.”* This was the most extreme measure—leaving them no way, whatsoever, to guide the ship. It is clear that Paul, Luke, and the others were involved in these efforts.

**27:20** *“All hope that we would be saved was finally given up.”* All those aboard the ship resigned themselves to die in the waves. All except one faithful, courageous man—the Apostle Paul.

**27:21** *“Men, you should have listened to me.”* I am sure that no one on that ship was happy to hear Paul say this. However, he was not gloating. He wanted to get their attention for the instructions he was about to give them. He was claiming leadership of the ship! From now on, the captain of the ship, the Roman centurion, and everyone else, would be taking orders from Paul!

**27:22** *“Now I urge you to take heart.”* What great power there is in the courage and assurance of one confident man! *“There will be no loss of life ... but only of the ship.”* Paul is now speaking from his apostolic authority, based on God’s message to him. How comforting his words must have been.

**27:23** *“There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong.”* Paul was a prized possession of God, as were Luke and Aristarchus. And because of his presence and counsel, the ship would be saved.

**27:24** *“You must be brought before Caesar.”* God’s will could not be hindered. *“God has granted you all those who sail with you.”* This implies that Paul had been praying for the deliverance of everyone on the ship.

**27:25** *“Take heart, men, for I believe God.”* Paul’s confidence in God, and faith in His word, gave him courage in the face of great dangers. Like Abraham from long ago, Paul’s faith overcame seemingly impossible odds (Rom. 4:16–22).

**27:26–29** *“We must run aground on a certain island.”* This implied the thing sailors feared most—being driven onto land by the storm. Paul’s word was soon proven true, as the sailors realized they were nearing land. *“They dropped four anchors ... and prayed for day to come.”* To be driven onto a rocky coastline would have been a disaster.

**27:31** *“Unless these men stay ... you cannot be saved.”* When God promises deliverance (v. 24), it comes with the condition of obedience. Paul knew that he would be saved, but said to the centurion and soldiers that they would not, unless his directions were obeyed.

**27:33** *“As day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food.”* Paul knew that the dawn would bring the final effort to save their lives. They had not eaten for two weeks!

**27:34** *“Take nourishment, for this is for your survival.”* Paul was a supremely spiritual man, but this did not hinder him from being practical as well. He links his encouragement to eat some food to the success of their survival. Paul was able to master his circumstances because he himself was mastered by God.

**27:35** *“He took bread and gave thanks to God ... he began to eat.”* Paul was able to give thanks in all things (1 Thess. 5:18). He then set the example, by beginning to eat.

**27:36–37** *“They were all encouraged ... in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons.”* Every one of these people, from captain to centurion, to sailors and prisoners, had been given a living example of the power of faith and the value of knowing the true God.

### Shipwrecked but Safe, Because of God’s Faithfulness

Acts 27:39–44

**27:40** *“They hoisted the mainsail ... and made for shore.”* This shows that they did not throw all tackle overboard (v. 19). At this point, they must have thought their troubles were nearly over. We should never base our optimism or confidence on how things appear. Paul shows us that our assurance is based on God’s Word (v. 25, see Jer. 23:29; Heb. 4:16).

**27:41** *“They ran the ship aground ... the stern was being broken up.”* In many ways, this was the most dangerous time of the entire perilous journey. Again, Paul becomes the indirect means of saving many lives, because of the commanders growing attachment to him.

**27:42–43** *“The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners ... but the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose.”* The soldiers knew that if any prisoners escaped, their lives would be forfeited

## **ACTS 27:44–28:15**

(Acts 12:19). However, this veteran Roman centurion had come to see in Paul a spiritual warrior that he both trusted and admired.

**27:44** *“And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.”* “And so” the Word of God, and the assurance of Paul, was fulfilled before their eyes (vv. 22–26).

## **ACTS CHAPTER 28**

Paul ministers on the island of Malta, finally arrives in Rome, is again rejected by the Jews, and declares that the Gospel will go to the Gentiles.

### **Paul’s Ministry in Malta**

Acts 28:1–10

**28:1** *“The island was called Malta.”* This island had a port (v. 11) and was only 60 miles south of Sicily, off the southern tip of Italy. Many of the people on the island are Christians to this day.

**28:3** *“Paul ... gathered a bundle of sticks.”* Paul was not like so many so-called leaders today, who would not stoop to do menial tasks. He was a true leader, who led by example in both spiritual and practical ways. *“A viper ... fastened on his hand.”* The poise of Paul in this incident is one of the greatest examples of his total trust and confidence in the plan and purpose of God.

**28:4** *“No doubt this man is a murderer, whom ... justice does not allow to live.”* Like many people today, these natives assumed that any bad thing that happens is indicative of some sin on the part of the victim (John 9:1–3). While this idea is misguided, there is in it at least an awareness that sin must be punished.

**28:6** *“They changed their minds and said that he was a god.”* People who base their worldview on superstition change their mind like the wind (Acts 14:11–20; Eph. 4:14). Only the Word of God, based on His unchangeable nature, can give us a solid foundation on which to build our lives (Mal. 3:6; Matt. 7:24–27; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

**28:8** *“Father of Publius lay sick ... Paul went in ... and prayed ... and healed him.”* Again, we see that God is directing events to provide Paul an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. While we are not told of his witness to the many who came to him (vv. 9–10), the record of his life in Acts would assure us that he must have led many to Christ.

### **Paul Arrives in Rome at Last**

Acts 28:11–16

**28:11** *“After three months.”* Paul’s journey from Jerusalem to Rome took about five months altogether. *“We sailed in an Alexandrian ship.”* Like the ship that wrecked, this would have been a grain ship bringing cargo from northern Africa to Rome. *“The Twin Brothers.”* This is a reference to Castor and Pollux—mythical figures believed to be the guardians of those who traveled by sea.

**28:13–14** *“We came to Puteoli, where we found brethren.”* How encouraging it must have been to Paul to find believers along the way in places he had never visited! Many seeds of the Gospel would have been planted by those who were in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:8–11).

**28:15** *“The brethren ... came to meet us.”* Now believers from Rome to whom Paul had written the Roman epistle, came to meet him. *“Appii Forum and Three Inns.”* These lodging places were over 30 miles from Rome. It was the custom in ancient times to go out to meet visiting dignitaries. The more honored they were,

the further the welcoming delegation would go to meet them. At last, Paul's desire—expressed in Romans 15:24—was fulfilled.

**28:16** *“Paul was permitted to dwell ... with the soldier who guarded him.”* This arrangement was in no doubt due to the commendation of the centurion Julius, who would have reported on Paul's conduct and leadership. If there was one thing Rome valued, it was the ability to be level-headed and take decisive action in times of crisis.

### Paul's Ministry in Rome

Acts 28:17–29

**28:17–19** *“Men and brethren ... I have done nothing against our people.”* Paul begins his meeting with the Jewish leaders by giving a brief summary of how he came to Rome in chains.

**28:20** *“For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”* Paul makes it clear that the Gospel he preached was not a heresy, but rather the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the coming Messiah.

**28:22** *“We desire to hear from you ... concerning this sect.”* From the very beginning, these Jewish leaders show that they consider the followers of Jesus to be a heretical sect or cult *“spoken against everywhere.”*

**28:23** *“Persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law ... and the Prophets.”* Paul presented the Lord Jesus Christ to these leaders as the fulfillment of the prophecies in their own Scriptures (Matt. 1:22–23; Luke 24:25–27, 44–45). *“From morning till evening.”* How vast was the knowledge Paul had of the Old Testament!

**28:24** *“Some were persuaded ... and some disbelieved.”* Paul was able to win some to the faith but, for the most part, the Jewish leaders remained in unbelief. There is no middle ground when it comes to the Gospel. Either one believes it or rejects it (Matt. 12:30). Those who believe immediately receive eternal life (John 5:24). Those who reject remain under the wrath of God (John 3:19, 36).

**28:25–27** *“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah.”* Here, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9–10, a prophecy of Israel's ultimate rejection of Jesus Christ. In Romans, Paul makes it clear that this hardening and blinding were the result of Israel's willful unbelief (Rom. 9:30–33; 10:16, 21; 11:20, 23).

**28:28** *“Therefore ... the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles.”* In this one simple statement, Paul summarizes what he wrote in Romans 9–11. These three chapters summarize the story of God's favor to Israel, of Israel's rejection of Jesus Christ, and of the prominence of the Gentiles throughout the history of the Church.

### Paul's House Arrest and Ministry

Acts 28:30–31

**28:30** *“Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house.”* Again, this speaks of the trust and respect given to Paul by the Roman authorities. We can also assume that Paul either had sufficient support coming in from the churches to rent this house (Phil. 4:10–16), or it is possible his father had died and left him his inheritance. During this time, Paul was guarded by members of the elite Praetorian Guard, many of whom he led to Christ (Phil. 1:12–13), even members of Caesar's household (Phil. 4:22). *“Received all who came to him.”* There were, perhaps, visitors from all over the known world, as well as the comings and goings of his trusted co-workers (Col. 4:7–15; 2 Tim. 4:11–13).

**28:31** *“Preaching ... and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.”* In essence, Paul's home became an evangelistic center and seminary. In addition, during this time, Paul wrote the prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

In the ending of the book of Acts, Luke shows us that the words of Jesus Christ from Acts 1:8 had been fulfilled, and would continue to be fulfilled, throughout the history of the Church Age. Each and every believer today is a continuing part of this glorious story!

### **CONCLUSION**

Just as the Gospels record the birth and earthly life of Jesus, so the book of Acts records for us the birth and early life of the Church—the Body of Christ. The book of Acts was written by Luke as a sequel to his Gospel, showing how the story of Jesus Christ spread from Jerusalem throughout the Roman world, in obedience to Christ’s command (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts. 1:8). The work continues today through every believer who faithfully witnesses to the love of Christ, and by every scriptural missionary endeavor throughout the world.