

The Sovereign Creator Has Spoken

Objective Authority for Living

The New Testament with Commentary

Second Edition

Dr. Wilbur Pickering, ThM, PhD

Both the translation and the notes are the responsibility of Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM, PhD, being based on his edition of the Greek New Testament, according to the only significant line of transmission, both ancient and independent, that has a demonstrable archetypal form in all 27 books. The Greek Text of which this is a translation, and articles explaining the preference, may be downloaded free from:

www.prunch.org.

Second Edition

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Foreword

Wilbur N. Pickering is a Christian missionary living in Brasília, Brazil. He has a ThM and a PhD in Linguistics. Of those actively involved in NT textual criticism, no one holds a more radical view in defense of the inerrancy and objective authority of the Sacred Text. This includes the position that the precise original wording has been preserved to our day and that we can know what it is.

Dr. Pickering joined Wycliffe Bible Translators in 1958. After three years of preparation for the field, he arrived in Brazil in 1961, where he and his wife began the translation work with the Apurinã people. In 1996 he resigned from Wycliffe to pursue other interests.

For some time Dr. Pickering has felt that among the many hundreds of Greek manuscripts known to exist today, surely God would have preserved the original wording. After years of searching and comparing Greek NT manuscripts, he has concluded that God used a certain line of transmission to preserve that wording. That line is by far the largest and most cohesive of all manuscript groups, or families. It is distinguished from all other groups by the high level of care with which it was copied (Dr. Pickering holds copies of perfect manuscripts for 22 of the 27 books). It is both ancient and independent, and is the only one that has a demonstrable archetypal form in all 27 books. That archetypal form has been empirically, objectively identified by a wide comparison of family representatives, and it is indeed error free. As he expected, that error-free text is not seriously different from some of the other “good” Greek texts. Nevertheless he has done an English translation based on it.

In the footnotes the reader will frequently encounter the description of certain Greek manuscripts as being “of objectively inferior quality”. The objective demonstration to which he refers may be found in Herman C. Hoskier's *Codex B and Its Allies, a Study and an Indictment* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914, 2 volumes). For a quick and easy introduction to the question, the reader may consult his article, “Copyist Care Quotient”, available from his site: www.prunch.org.

Acknowledgment

I wish to acknowledge my debt to Dr. William Penning (PhD in Astronomy) for formatting both the first edition of this book and now this revision. He is a computer specialist working to support Bible translation, mainly in Brazil.

The Gospel According to

MATTHEW

Abraham to Christ—1997 BC → 5 BC

- 1** ¹A genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham:
- ²Abraham begot Isaac, then Isaac begot Jacob, then Jacob begot Judah and his brothers;
- ³then Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, then Perez begot Hezron, then Hezron begot Ram;
- ⁴then Ram begot Amminadab, then Amminadab begot Nahshon, then Nahshon begot Salmon;
- ⁵then Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, then Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, then Obed begot Jesse,
- ⁶then Jesse begot David the king. Then King David begot Solomon by her *who was* of Uriah,^a
- ⁷then Solomon begot Rehoboam, then Rehoboam begot Abijah, then Abijah begot Asa;
- ⁸then Asa begot Jehoshaphat, then Jehoshaphat begot Joram, then Joram begot Uzziah;
- ⁹then Uzziah begot Jotham, then Jotham begot Ahaz, then Ahaz begot Hezekiah;
- ¹⁰then Hezekiah begot Manasseh, then Manasseh begot Amon, then Amon begot Josiah;
- ¹¹then Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time of the Babylonian captivity.
- ¹²After the Babylonian captivity Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, then Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel;
- ¹³then Zerubbabel begot Abiud, then Abiud begot Eliakim, then Eliakim begot Azor;
- ¹⁴then Azor begot Zadok, then Zadok begot Achim, then Achim begot Eliud;
- ¹⁵then Eliud begot Eleazar, then Eleazar begot Matthan, then Matthan begot Jacob;
- ¹⁶then Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was begotten Jesus, who is called Christ.^b
- ¹⁷So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David until the Babylonian captivity are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian captivity until the Christ are fourteen generations.^c

^a Sins may be forgiven, but your curriculum remains—3,000 years later we still read about David's sin (Bathsheba is not named, she was Uriah's wife). The only women included in the genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth [Deuteronomy 23:3], Bathsheba) represent some violation—perhaps to emphasize the grace of God.

^b Here the formula changes, because Jesus could not be the son of Joseph—see Jeremiah 22:30.

^c This is really Joseph's genealogy. As foster father he confers the legal right to the throne of David on Jesus. Since the throne of David has to do with the covenant people, this genealogy only goes back to Abraham. In contrast, Mary's genealogy (Luke 3:23-38) goes back to Adam and God—Jesus was literally son of both Adam and God. It has been observed that from David to the captivity there were

Conception of Jesus—5 BC

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was like this: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they joined together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit.^a ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband,^b being a just man and not wanting to humiliate her publicly, decided to repudiate her secretly. ²⁰But while he pondered these things, wow, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to receive Mary as your wife, because that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will give birth to a Son and you will call His name Jesus, because He will save His people^c from their sins.” ²²Now all this happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: ²³“Behold, the virgin will become pregnant and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel”,^d which being translated is, ‘God with us’.^e ²⁴Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as that angel of the Lord commanded him and received his wife,^f ²⁵but did not know her until^g she had given birth to her son, the firstborn.^h And he called His name JESUS.

Jesus is born—4 BC

The ‘wise men’

2 ¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [*magi*] from the East came into Jerusalem, ²saying: “Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the East and have come to worship him.” ³When Herod the king heard it he became agitated, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴And gathering all the chief priests and scribes of

seventeen kings, but Ahaziah reigned only one year, Amon only two and Abijah only three, so they would not count as generations—Matthew is correct in saying there were fourteen ‘generations’. For further discussion of perceived difficulties in this genealogy, please see the Appendix: Some related anomalies in Matthew’s genealogy of the Christ.

^a For more detail on this, see Luke 1:26-38.

^b The betrothal was legally binding, so the man was then called ‘husband’, even before the physical union.

^c To whom does “His people” refer? To actually receive the salvation one must believe into Jesus, so the reference would appear to be to those who have identified with Him as their Savior.

^d The quote is from Isaiah 7:14. Matthew uses the Greek parthenos, which unambiguously means ‘virgin’, to translate the Hebrew ‘alma, which is ambiguous—it refers to a young woman who may be a virgin, but not necessarily. Isaiah did not use bethulah, which refers unambiguously to a virgin, because, I suppose, the context demands an immediate fulfillment, which was supplied by Isaiah’s wife, as the next chapter makes clear. It follows that translations of Isaiah 7:14 that render ‘young woman’ are not doing violence to the Hebrew Text.

^e ‘God with us’ is stronger than ‘God is with us’: Jesus was literally God living among us.

^f Apparently there was some urgency involved; it sounds like he did it that same night (Mary was at least three months pregnant)—at night there would not be any onlookers.

^g The use of this conjunction implies that they had normal relations after Jesus’ birth, and in fact they had at least six children together. In the Bible the verb ‘to know’ is used to refer to sexual intercourse. Matthew is said to have ‘published’ his Gospel in about 39 AD. By then Mary would be past the age when she could have children, even if she was still alive. So for Matthew to write ‘firstborn’ means there were others later; if Mary had had only one child Matthew would have written ‘only born’.

^h Only 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “her” and “the firstborn” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). That is eight manuscripts against 1,454 that have been collated, but there are probably over 300 others yet to be collated that will swell the number against the eight. Why do so-called ‘evangelical’ scholars insist on damaging the Text based on such ridiculously inferior and inadequate ‘evidence’?

the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.^a ⁵So they said to him: “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it stands written by the prophet:

⁶And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are not at all the least among the rulers of Judah,
for out of you will come a Ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”^b

⁷Then Herod, calling the wise men secretly, determined from them the time when the star appeared. ⁸And directing them to Bethlehem he said, “When you get there, search carefully for the young child; and should you find him, bring back word to me, so that I also may go and worship him.”^c

The Star!

⁹So having heard the king they departed, and there was the star that they had seen in the East! It went before them until it arrived and stopped above where the young Child was. ¹⁰Now when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy!^d ¹¹And coming into the house^e they saw the young Child with Mary His mother,^f and falling down they worshipped Him; and opening their treasures they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense and myrrh.^g ¹²Then, having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their *own* country by a different road.

The flight to Egypt

¹³Now when they had departed, again, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying: “Get up, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt and stay there until I tell you; because Herod is about to seek the young Child to destroy Him!” ¹⁴So he got up and took the young Child and His mother by night^h and departed for Egypt. ¹⁵And he was there until the death of Herod, so

^a The magi said, “King of the Jews”; Herod said, “Messiah”. Evidently he knew something about O.T. prophecy.

^b See Micah 5:2.

^c Presumably Herod was a good actor, so if they hadn’t been warned in a dream, they would probably have reported back.

^d It reappeared after two years. They had undertaken an expensive and dangerous journey in the dark, as it were. Now God confirms that they are on the right track. They are beside themselves with joy! It guided them to the very house.

^e Joseph probably used the stable (Luke 2:7) for only one night; the next day he would look for more adequate quarters. That Jesus was born at night is clear from Luke 2:8-12. The angels appeared at night (verse 8) and said “this day” (verse 11)—the shepherds were Jews, and the Jewish day began at 6:00 p.m. Since the shepherds broadcasted the message delivered by the angel, any people in the town who loved God would want to help Joseph. The Text says ‘young child’, not ‘baby’—the visit to Jerusalem (Luke 2:22-38) is now well behind them.

^f They may have arrived at night. All the events recorded in verses 1-8 presumably happened the same day. It is only some ten miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, but it may have been already dark when they started out. The Text says that they saw Jesus and Mary; Joseph is not mentioned. Perhaps he was sleeping in another room. If the magi took off immediately, as I suppose, then the angel roused Joseph as soon as they were out the door.

^g Because the gifts were three, some have assumed that the magi were three, but nowhere does the Text specify the number. Now, as then, those who are wise still seek Him. The gifts were providential to meet their financial needs in Egypt and beyond, quite apart from any symbolism.

^h That same night, immediately. A suspicious man like Herod doubtless sent a spy to keep an eye on the magi. When they took off in the opposite direction Herod would have been informed within a few hours. If Joseph had waited until morning it would probably have been too late.

MATTHEW 2

that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely: “Out of Egypt I called my Son.”^a

The massacre

¹⁶Then Herod, when he saw that he had been deceived by the wise men, became very angry, and he sent out and killed all the boys who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men.^b ¹⁷Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, namely:

¹⁸“A voice was heard in Ramah,
lamentation, weeping and great mourning;
Rachel weeping for her children
and not wanting to be comforted,
because they are no more.”^c

The return to Natsareth

¹⁹Now Herod having died, there, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰saying: “Get up, take the young Child and His mother and go into the land of Israel, for those^d seeking the life of the young Child have died.” ²¹So he got up and took the young Child and His mother and went into the land of Israel. ²²But hearing that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned in a dream he proceeded into the region of Galilee. ²³And upon arriving he settled in a city called Natsareth [Branch-town],^e so that what was spoken through the prophets should be fulfilled, that He would be called a Natsorean [Branch-man].^f

^a The time spent in Egypt was possibly only a month or two. The quote is from Hosea 11:1, which in that context refers to Israel, but Jesus was/is literally God’s Son—O. T. prophecies often have a dual reference/application.

^b Obviously it had been his intention to kill Jesus.

^c Ramah was a district of Bethlehem. The quote is from Jeremiah 31:15. The birth of the Savior resulted in the massacre of many infants; being the fulfillment of prophecy means it was part of the Plan. God’s ways seem strange to us at times, but He is under no obligation to explain His actions. (However, based on Jeremiah 31:16 I wonder if God did not compensate the parents somehow.)

^d The Text is plainly plural here, so who else besides Herod had died? That massacre would not be a nice thing to have on the record, and it may be that Herod had ordered the execution of others who were involved.

^e We know from Luke that Natsareth was Joseph’s home—his house and business were waiting for him (although he had been gone for quite a while). The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants רצן (*resh, tsadde, nun*), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means ‘branch’. Greek has the equivalent for ‘ps’ and ‘ks’, but not for ‘ts’, so the transliteration used a ζ (*zeta*) ‘dz’, which is the voiced counterpart of ‘ts’. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as ‘z’! But Hebrew has a ‘z’, ז (*zayin*), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants רצן, replacing the correct *tsadde* with *zayin*. This technical information is necessary as background for the next footnote.

^f Neither ‘Nazareth’ nor ‘Nazarene’, spelled with a *zayin*, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, *netser*—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, *tsemach*—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the ‘Branch-man’, from ‘Branch-town’. Which brings us to the word ‘natsorean’. The familiar ‘Nazarene’ (*Ναζαρηνοϛ*) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but here in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is ‘Natsorean’ (*Ναζωραιοϛ*), which is quite different. (Actually, in Acts 22:8 Jesus introduced Himself to Saul as the Natsorean, which Saul would understand as a reference to the Messiah.) To my surprise, Pilate put “the Natsorean” in the accusation above the cross—John 19:19. I have been

Ministry of John the baptizer—26 AD

3 ¹Now in those days John the Baptizer began preaching in the wilderness of Judea ²and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has come near!”
³For this is he who was referred to by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

“A voice crying-out,
 ‘Prepare in the wilderness the way of the LORD,
 make His paths straight.’”^a

⁴Now John actually used clothes *made* from camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist; while his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem, all Judea and all the region of the Jordan went out to him, ⁶and were being baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

A bunch of snakes

⁷But seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: “Brood of vipers! Who tipped you off to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance, ⁹and don’t *even* think to say within yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as father,’^b for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰Indeed, already the ax is being laid to the root of the trees.^c So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with water unto repentance, but the One coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with Holy Spirit.^d ¹²His winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”^e

Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.
¹⁴But John tried to dissuade Him saying, “I have need to be baptized by You, and

given to understand that the Nazareth of Jesus’ day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. “Can anything good...?”

^a The reference is to Isaiah 40:3. Hebrew poetry, and prose, makes heavy use of parallel or synonymous statements. From the context in Isaiah it seems clear that “in the wilderness” goes with the verb ‘make straight’, not ‘call out’. But why a straight road in the wilderness? Any road facilitates the movement of people and goods, but a straight road through accidented terrain is a major asset. (Actually, Isaiah 40:3-4 describes the construction of a modern super highway.) John was the voice, but it was the people who had to make the road. So how about us? Are we supposed to be making such a road, and if so, how? At the very least we should be proclaiming biblical values to the world by every available means.

^b They had notions of spiritual privilege based on birth, but as someone has said, God has no grandchildren. Later on Jesus will make clear that they did in fact reject John’s message—they were not baptized.

^c The Messiah was already present, and He would condemn the Pharisees and Sadducees.

^d There is no article with ‘Holy Spirit’, so I take the phrase as a proper name. The ‘and fire’ we are used to is read by only 20% of the Greek manuscripts. The 80% includes the best line of transmission. However, Luke 3:16 has the ‘and fire’.

^e Can you have wheat without chaff? Isn’t the chaff part of the wheat plant? What might the implications of this analogy be for the Church? What percentage of the plant is edible wheat? Wherever Christianity is the state or majority religion, or part of the prevailing culture, a large majority of the ‘Christians’ will be chaff. Where Christians are persecuted a high percentage will be wheat. Since Judaism was part of the prevailing culture, presumably most of John’s hearers were chaff. The ‘unquenchable’ fire is presumably a reference to the Lake.

MATTHEW 4

You are coming to me?”^a **15**But in answer Jesus said to him, “Permit it now, because thus it is appropriate to us to fulfill all righteousness.”^b Then he permitted Him. **16**And having been baptized Jesus came up directly from the water, when wow, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting upon Him.^c **17**And wow, a Voice from the heavens saying, “This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am *always* well pleased!”^d

Jesus tested by Satan

4 ¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ²And having fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry.^e ³And coming to Him the tempter said, “Since you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.”^f ⁴But in answer He said, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word coming out of God’s mouth.’”^g ⁵Then the devil takes Him into the holy city^h and sets Him upon the pinnacle of the temple,ⁱ ⁶and says to Him, “Since you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written:

‘He will give orders to His angels about you,
and they will lift you up on their hands,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”^j

⁷Jesus said to him, “It is also written: ‘You shall not test the LORD your God!’”^k ⁸Again the devil takes Him to a very high mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.^l ⁹And he says to Him, “All these things I will give to you, if You will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus says to him:

^a John knew that Jesus was the Messiah.

^b Our Lord’s statement here seems difficult to us. Since Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 state that it was “a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins” but Jesus had no sins to repent of, in what sense was He “fulfilling all righteousness”? Perhaps as Messiah and Great High Priest He needed to identify Himself with those of His people who were truly repentant.

^c The episode is presented from John’s perspective, while in Mark 1:11 and Luke 3:22 it is presented from Jesus’ perspective. Just as at Pentecost the Holy Spirit translated into the ears of the foreigners, I take it that here Jesus heard one thing and John another.

^d The Trinity is clearly manifested: voice = Father, Jesus = Son, dove = Holy Spirit. This was an important confirmation for Jesus.

^e This episode was ordained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to confront Satan when He was physically the weakest He would ever be (40 days without food!). When Satan failed to defeat this weakened Jesus he was probably filled with despair—he now knew that he could never defeat Him. (But he would still try to kill Him.)

^f Satan was not so foolish as to question Jesus’ identity, “if”; he was more subtle, “since”.

^g See Deuteronomy 8:3.

^h ‘The holy city’ was evidently Jerusalem. One is tempted to ask, what was ‘holy’ about it?

ⁱ This is literal: Satan has the power to transport things. Matthew has the correct sequence, whereas Luke inverts the order of tests 2 and 3 (Matthew uses adverbs of sequence, but Luke does not).

^j See Psalm 91:11-12. Satan knows the Bible, and how to twist it.

^k See Deuteronomy 6:16. The point is to not put God to the test, to not deliberately do something irresponsible with the intention of obliging God to work a miracle to save you.

^l This also is literal and obviously supernatural (since the world is a sphere, even from a satellite one can only see half of it). We have here a masterstroke of Satan—Jehovah the Son took on human form in order to recover what the first Adam had lost, and Satan offers it to Him on a silver platter, with just one ‘small’ condition...

“Get behind me, Satan!^a For it is written: ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve.’”^b ¹¹Then the devil leaves Him, and then, angels came and began ministering to Him.^c

Jesus chooses Capernaum as His base of operations—27 AD

¹²Now hearing that John had been put in prison, Jesus departed into Galilee.^d ¹³And leaving Natsareth behind,^e He went and took up residence in Capernaum by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali; ¹⁴so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet should be fulfilled, namely:

¹⁵“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations!

¹⁶The people sitting in darkness saw a great light,
and upon those sitting in the place and shadow of death
light has dawned.”^f

Jesus calls four fishermen

¹⁷From then on Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has come near.”^g ¹⁸And walking by the Sea of Galilee He saw two brothers, Simon (the one called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a circular net into the sea (for they were fishermen). ¹⁹And He says to them, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰So leaving the nets immediately they followed Him.^h ²¹And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James (the one of Zebedee) and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. And He called them. ²²So leaving the boat and their father immediately they followed Him.ⁱ

A tour of Galilee

²³Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness among the people. ²⁴So His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were sick—suffering with various diseases and torments, and being demonized and being moonstruck, and paralytics—and He healed them. ²⁵So large crowds followed Him—from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and beyond the Jordan.^j

^a 88% of the Greek manuscripts have “Get behind me...”; in Luke 4:8 at least 97% have “Get behind me...”.

^b See Deuteronomy 6:13. Note that Jesus did not deny his right to make the offer.

^c The impression one gets is that the angels were not allowed to help Jesus during His direct confrontation with Satan.

^d The early Judean ministry, as recorded in John 1, 2 and 3, ends here.

^e See Luke 4:16-30. Presumably Jesus moved His belongings out of Natsareth at this time.

^f See Isaiah 9:1-2.

^g Right! The King was walking among them. “Kingdom of the heavens” and “kingdom of God” are synonyms, as can be seen by comparing parallel passages in Mark and Luke. Jesus continues with John’s message, since the herald is now out of action.

^h They had employees who could take care of the equipment.

ⁱ All four of these men had spent time with Jesus already, so this was not ‘out of the blue’.

^j Luke 5:1 says that this same crowd was hungry to hear the Word of God, and they did indeed hear the Sermon on the Mount, but Jesus used healing and deliverance to attract the crowd.

The Sermon on the Mount

5 ¹Now seeing the crowds He went up on the mountain, and upon His sitting down His disciples approached Him.

The Beatitudes

²And opening His mouth^a He started teaching them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek,^b
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.^c

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who have been
persecuted on account of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.^d

For disciples

¹¹“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and speak all kinds of evil against you, lying, because of Me. ¹²Rejoice and exult, because your reward in the heavens is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt becomes insipid with what will it be salted? It is then good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled down by the people.^e ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city located upon a hill cannot be

^a This appears to be a Hebrew idiom indicating a formal or serious pronouncement.

^b ‘Meek’ is not ‘weak’, it is power under control. It was said of Moses that he was the meekest man in his time, precisely because he was also the most powerful. Jesus said of Himself that He was ‘meek’, and He was also powerful.

^c In James 2:12-13 we read: “Speak and act as being those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty (the judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy). *That law* exalts mercy over judgment.” This accords with the description that Jehovah gave of Himself to Moses, on that rarest of occasions: “Jehovah, God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children unto the third and the fourth generation” (Exodus 34:6-7). He keeps mercy to the 1000th generation, He punishes to the 4th; the proportion is 250:1. That is why it is important that we show mercy.

^d These ‘beatitudes’ are in the third person and so presumably of general application. From verse 11 on Jesus uses the second person and so the specific application is presumably to His disciples. The first and last of these ‘beatitudes’ say, “theirs is the kingdom of the heavens”. In Matthew 18:3 the Lord will say we have to become like little children to enter the Kingdom—that is being ‘poor in spirit’. To face persecution, you must be committed.

^e ‘Christians’ who have caved in to the world’s values and life style are like insipid salt—good for nothing except to be thrown out. (Insipid salt was thrown on the road, where it helped to keep down the dust.) The implications of this have become increasingly serious in today’s world.

hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and place it under the hamper, but on the lampstand, and it shines on everything in the house. ¹⁶So also let your light shine before the people, so that they may see your good works and may glorify your Father, who is in the heavens.^a

Jesus interprets the Law

¹⁷“Do not suppose that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸For assuredly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota nor one tittle shall pass away from the Law until everything happens.^b ¹⁹Therefore, whoever annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches that to the people will be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he will be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. ²⁰For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will absolutely not enter the kingdom of the heavens!^c

About respecting others, especially ‘brothers’

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘You shall not murder, so whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.’^d ²²But I say to you that whoever gets angry with his brother without cause will be liable to the judgment.^e And whoever says to his brother, ‘Numbskull!’ will be liable to the council.^f But whoever says, ‘You absolute idiot!’ will be liable to hell fire.^g ²³Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something

^a Nowadays if you stand up for Biblical values you will probably be persecuted, not praised; but the darker the night, the farther a light can be seen.

^b The Lord here makes an impressively strong statement about the preservation through time of the precise form of the Sacred Text. Since our only access to the meaning is through the form, any alteration in the form will alter the meaning. One of the most effective ways of annulling a commandment is to corrupt the Text—something Satan understands quite well.

^c Did you get that? If you are like the scribes and Pharisees what are your chances?

^d The scribes had diluted the Text—the Law demands the death penalty (Exodus 21:12).

^e God hates injustice and will judge it. Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “without cause” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). NIV, NASB and LB favor us with a footnote informing us that “some manuscripts” add ‘without cause’—by “some” they mean 98% of them!! More serious, the shorter text has the effect of forbidding anger, which would contradict other Scriptures (Ephesians 4:26, Psalm 4:4) and the Lord’s own example (Mark 3:5).

^f The Greek text has a transliteration of the Aramaic term, *raka*. The idea seems to be that this was an offensive epithet that could lead to a court case, for defamation of character (or whatever).

^g This presumably involves an offense against God, denigrating His image, disparaging His work. **However**, note that the Lord is talking about saying this to a brother. He Himself applied this term to the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23. Verses 22-24 deal with how we treat ‘brothers’. Consider James 4:11-12: “Brothers, do not speak evil of one another. Because the one speaking against a brother and judging his brother speaks against a law and judges a law. So if you judge a law you are not a law-doer but a judge. The Lawgiver and Judge is One, the One who is able to save and to destroy. So who are you (sg) to be judging someone who is different?” I was surprised to find the Greek *ετερος* here, which usually refers to a different kind. I personally do not enjoy dealing with ‘brothers’ who are too different; I would rather question whether they are really ‘brothers’ at all! But James tells me not to do that. Each person is different (background, experiences, personality, training) and we must recognize that God can and will deal differently with different people. He uses one ‘law’ with me, another ‘law’ with you, and so on. A law is a set of rules or demands, so when I judge a brother I am questioning the way (‘law’) that God is working on him. As He is both Lawgiver and Judge, I will have to answer to Him for how I judged my ‘brothers’. (For ‘different one’ the eclectic text currently in vogue has ‘neighbor’, following some 12% of the Greek manuscripts [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.])

MATTHEW 5

against you,^a **24**leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother and then, returning, offer your gift.^b **25**Be agreeable to your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest the adversary hand you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. **26**Assuredly I say to you, you will by no means get out of there until you have paid the last penny.^c

About sexual sin

27“You have heard that it was said,^d ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28**But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.^e **29**So if your right eye is causing you to fall, tear it out and throw it away; because it is better for you that one of your members perish than that your whole body be thrown into hell.^f **30**And if your right hand is causing you to fall, cut it off and throw it away; because it is better for you that one of your members perish than that your whole body be thrown into hell. **31**It was said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32**But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for a case of fornication,^g causes her to commit adultery,^h and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

About swearing

33“Again you have heard that it was said to the ancients: ‘You shall not swear falsely, but you shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ **34**But I say to you not to swear at all: neither by heaven, because it is God’s throne; **35**nor by the earth, because it is a stool for His feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. **36**Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **37**But let your word be ‘yes yes’, ‘no no’;ⁱ for whatever is more than these is from the malignant one.^j [!]

^a Verse 23 is linked to 22; insult or injury is involved—an overt action, an unpleasant scene that will presumably be alive in your memory.

^b Verses 23-24 refer to moral debt, through abusive language.

^c Verses 25-26 refer to financial debt, through property damage, a loan, etc. There is no doubt about the fact of the debt, and the time limit has expired; and you are on the way to court—at that point the only way out is to humble yourself and throw yourself on the mercy of the creditor.

^d Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘to those of old’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^e If he had the courage and the opportunity, he would do it.

^f This is literal, but mostly theoretical, since by the time people realize they are in trouble it is usually too late; they are already trapped. Perhaps this is why Hebrews 3:13 tells us to “exhort one another daily... lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin”. Sometimes others see that we are in trouble before we do.

^g Presumably a reference to pre-marital sex, where a groom discovers that his bride is no longer a virgin (like the situation that Joseph faced in 1:18-19). See Matthew 19:3-12.

^h In that culture such a woman would look for another man as a matter of physical survival.

ⁱ Presumably this precludes any and all exaggeration, putting a ‘spin’ on things, etc.

^j Do we really believe this? If not, we had better go back to the drawing board.

About retaliation

³⁸“You have heard that it was said: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’^a ³⁹But I say to you not to resist the evildoer; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.^b

⁴⁰“And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have the cloak as well.^c ⁴¹And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.^d ⁴²Give to him who asks you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.^e

How to treat enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said: ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’^f ⁴⁴But I say to you: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you,^g ⁴⁵that you may prove to be sons of your Father in the heavens; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the just and the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your friends,^h what are you doing extra? Do not even the tax collectors do so?ⁱ ⁴⁸Therefore, you be perfect just as your Father in the heavens is perfect.^j

Jesus warns against religious ostentation

6 ¹“Be careful not to do your charitable giving before the people so as to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father who is in the heav-

^a The reference is to Exodus 21:24, but verse 22 makes clear that it is “as the judges determine”—we are not to take the law into our own hands.

^b Do not use physical violence to respond to physical violence—but we can use our spiritual authority. Animals must resort to force, but Adam was given dominion over the animals, which presumably was not exercised with physical force—we should not lower ourselves to the animal level; but Satan tries to trick us into doing so. If someone lashes out in anger, turning the other cheek should shame him.

^c Do not use legal action to respond to legal action—but we can use our spiritual authority. If they are resorting to legal action they presumably do not want to talk it over, they are trying to impose something on us; so turning the other cheek could shame them.

^d A Roman imposition on subjugated peoples—any Roman soldier could compel a local non-Roman citizen to carry his pack one mile. A cheerful response to this humiliating situation could at least deprive the soldier of sadistic satisfaction, and maybe even shame him into carrying his own pack.

^e Presumably this does not refer to professional beggars (2 Thessalonians 3:10), but to someone overtaken by adversity who needs temporary help, someone you know who is part of the community.

^f Leviticus 19:18 says to “love your neighbor”, but not “hate your enemy”. The scribes had added an unwarranted inference.

^g Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, offer a truncated form of this verse (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘brothers’, as in many versions.

ⁱ The reference to “reward” and “extra” suggests that the procedures previously enjoined are demonstrations of practical righteousness—we are to be examples, rise above the level of the surrounding society. Tax collectors were Jews, part of the community, but despised as traitors.

^j “Perfect”—the Father is our point of reference; we are to be like He is. A standard is a standard; it is not invalidated just because we may feel that it is unattainable. Comparing this passage with texts like Deuteronomy 7:10, “He repays those who hate Him to their face”, and Psalm 5:5-6, “You hate all workers of iniquity”, I take it that we must distinguish between personal enemies (those who oppose us for personal reasons) and enemies of God and His truth. To be like the Father we also must hate workers of iniquity (because of the consequences to others).

MATTHEW 6

ens.^a ²Therefore, whenever you do charitable giving do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by the people. Assuredly I say to you, they *already* have their reward. ³But when you do charitable giving do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,^b ⁴so that your charitable giving may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself repay you openly.^c ⁵And whenever you pray do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners, so that they may be seen by the people. Assuredly I say to you that they *already* have their reward. ⁶But you, whenever you pray, go into your room, and having shut the door pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you openly.^d

How to pray

⁷“But when you pray do not babble like the heathen; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸So do not be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.^e ⁹Therefore, you pray like this:

‘Our Father who is in the heavens,
let Your name be revered;
¹⁰let Your kingdom come,
let Your will be done, on the earth just as in heaven.
¹¹Give us today our daily bread;
¹²and forgive us our debts,
as we also forgive our debtors.
¹³And do not bring us into testing,
but rescue us from the evil one;^f
because Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.’^g

¹⁴For if you forgive people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive people their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.^h

How to fast

¹⁶“Also, whenever you fast do not become gloomy like the hypocrites, because they disfigure their faces so that people will notice that they are fasting. Assuredly I say to you that they *already* have their reward. ¹⁷But when you fast anoint your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that you do not appear to the people to be fast-

^a Note that the reward has more to do with the person’s motive than the charitable act itself.

^b Since hands do not think (so far as I know), I suppose that not even the recipient should know where the gift came from, although there may be times when the recipient needs to know.

^c This is amazing; the Father **Himself** will repay = a good investment! (“Himself” is omitted by 24% of the Greek manuscripts; “openly” is omitted by 6%.)

^d About 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “openly”.

^e We do need to ask, but we should do it simply, and without undue repetition (God is not deaf). Further, we should ask with confidence.

^f The Father can rescue us from the evil one because He is far greater.

^g About 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, TEV, etc.).

^h Forgiveness is a very serious matter!

ing, but to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.^a

The right attitude toward material supply

19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust ruin and where thieves break in and steal; **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust ruins and where thieves neither break in nor steal; **21**because where your treasure is there your heart will be also.^b

About world-view

22“The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light.^c **23**But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness.^d So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

“You cannot serve God and money”

24“No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.^e **25**Therefore, I say to you not to worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? **26**Look at the birds of the air, that they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not superior to them? **27**And which of you can add one cubit to his stature by worrying? **28**And why do you worry about clothes? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither labor nor spin, **29**and yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was arrayed like one of these. **30**Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which exists today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, you little-faiths? **31**Therefore do not worry saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32**For the pagans seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need each of these things. **33**Rather, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.^f **34**Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own affairs. Each day has enough trouble of its own.^g

^a Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘openly’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^b That is the crucial question: where is your heart? It should be obvious that the best place to have your savings account is in the Bank of Heaven. So how does one make deposits up there? You do it by investing in the Kingdom.

^c Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has “eye” in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real ‘eye’)—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it.

^d “Evil” here has the idea of malignant—aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to everything he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. Compare Titus 1:15.

^e The Text has “mammon”, which presumably includes more than just money; anyone who has materialistic values is serving mammon. But I fear that comparatively few speakers of English today know the word, so I put ‘money’.

^f “These things” refers to food, drink and clothes—the basics. Jesus does not promise luxury. Just how seeking first the Kingdom works out in practice will differ from person to person. It should be obvious that we are not being told to sit around doing nothing.

^g The implication would appear to be that each day will present us with some challenges.

MATTHEW 7

The right attitude toward others

7 ¹“Do not judge, so that you be not judged.^a ²Because with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.^b ³So why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴Or how will you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye,’ when hey, there is a plank in yours? ⁵Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.^c

Analyze your audience

⁶^ADo not give what is holy to the dogs, ^Bnor cast your pearls before the pigs; ^Blest they trample them with their feet, and ^Aturning around they tear you to pieces.^d

Be persistent, yet considerate

⁷“Keep asking, and it will be given to you; keep seeking, and you will find; keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For each one asking, receives; and the one seeking, finds; and to the one knocking it will be opened. ⁹Or which man is among you who, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake? ¹¹If you then, being evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those who ask Him!^e ¹²So then, whatever you want people to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.^f

Eternal destiny

¹³“Go in through the narrow gate; because wide is the gate and broad is the way which leads away into perdition, and those who are going in through it are many. ¹⁴How narrow is the gate and confined the way which leads away into life, and those who are finding it are few!^g

^a By whom? Perhaps both God and man.

^b The use of the future tense probably points toward God. If we call for judgment, not mercy, on others, by so much we are calling for judgment, not mercy, on ourselves.

^c Can you have a ‘plank’ in your eye without knowing it? (The tiniest bit of grit is an unbearable irritant.) When a person does not want to admit or correct his own failures, it is standard defensive procedure to call attention to the failures of others.

^d This verse may be a chiasmus, AB,BA. But just who are ‘the dogs’ and ‘the pigs’? A pig will sniff the pearl and perhaps think it a stone—it not being edible the pig will ignore it and it will get trampled into the mud. So a ‘pig’ is someone who is incapable of recognizing or appreciating the ‘pearl’—the reaction will be one of total indifference. So do not waste your time. In contrast a ‘dog’ reacts in an aggressively hostile manner against what is ‘holy’. So a ‘dog’ is presumably someone who is committed to evil and will therefore attack what is holy. In general our media today are controlled by ‘dogs’. So do not innocently offer what is holy to a ‘dog’—you will get chewed up! We need to try to convert the ‘dogs’, but you need to understand what you are about. Anyone who has sold out to Satan will almost certainly have a resident demon, and we have the authority to bind such.

^e I take it that we are authorized to ask!

^f This is the so-called ‘golden rule’—if everyone did this the world would be a better place.

^g Observe that the Lord Jesus Christ affirms that “few” find the way of life. He Himself makes clear that to travel the way of life requires commitment to the Owner of that ‘way’. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts have the weaker “Because narrow...”, as in KJV and NKJV.

A tree is known by its fruit

¹⁵“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.^a ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Do people gather grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Just so, every good tree produces good fruits, but the rotten tree produces evil fruits.^b ¹⁸A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruits. ¹⁹So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.^c ²⁰Therefore, you will know them by their fruits.

We have to do the Father’s will

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord, will go into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of my Father who is in the heavens.’^d ²²Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and perform many mighty works in Your name?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me you practitioners of lawlessness!’^e

All face adversity—foundation determines outcome

²⁴“Therefore whoever hears these words of mine and does them, I will compare him to a prudent man who built his house on the bedrock; ²⁵and the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew and attacked that house; and it did not fall, because it was founded on the bedrock. ²⁶But every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand; ²⁷and the rain fell, and the rivers rose, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall!”^f

Editorial comment

²⁸And so it was, when Jesus had ended these words, that the crowds were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not like the scribes.^g

The Messiah demonstrates His power

Jesus heals a leper

8 ¹So when He came down from the mountain large crowds followed Him. ²And then, a leper came and worshipped Him saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You

^a Probably demonized; demonic prophecies are always destructive.

^b The Lord uses ‘rotten’ and ‘evil’ (or ‘malignant’) because He is really talking about people, not trees.

^c The Lord is very clear about the eternal destiny of people who do not produce good fruit. Remember Ephesians 2:8-10—we are not saved by good works, but we are indeed saved for good works; if we do not produce, we are not saved.

^d If we do not do the will of the Father, we will not enter the Kingdom.

^e Evidently they did indeed cast out demons and perform mighty works—so if it was not by God’s power, by whose power was it? Could it be that Satan works with those who think they are serving the Lord but are really ‘lawless’, to confirm them in their error? When we do not do things God’s way we are being ‘lawless’.

^f Here again, we have to do the words. Note that both houses had to face the same circumstances, but the verbs are different. Everyone faces adversity in this life—your foundation determines the outcome. Why do the adverse circumstances ‘attack’ one house, but only ‘beat on’ the other? The verb ‘attack’ implies an intelligence ordering the circumstances.

^g The scribes would not dare to say, “**I** tell you”; they would quote a variety of scholars and leave the question up in the air.

MATTHEW 8

can make me clean.”³ So reaching out His hand Jesus touched^a him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed!”^b And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus says to him: “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a **proof** to them.”^c

Jesus heals at a distance^d

⁵ As He entered Capernaum a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him ⁶ and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, being terribly tormented.” ⁷ And Jesus says to him, “I will go and heal him.” ⁸ But in answer the centurion said: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; but only speak a word and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does.” ¹⁰ Upon hearing *him* Jesus marveled, and said to those who were following: “Assuredly I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith! ¹¹ And I say to you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of the heavens; ¹² but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness farthest away. There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”^e ¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; and let it be done for you just as you believed.” And his servant was healed in that very hour.^f

Peter’s mother-in-law^g

¹⁴ Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his mother-in-law laid up and burning with fever. ¹⁵ So He touched her hand and the fever left her; and she got up and began to serve Him.^h ¹⁶ And when evening came they brought to Him many who were demonized. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,ⁱ ¹⁷ so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet should be fulfilled, namely:

“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”^j

¹⁸ Seeing large crowds around Him Jesus gave an order to depart for the opposite shore. ¹⁹ Then a certain scribe approaching said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you may go.” ²⁰ So Jesus says to him, “The foxes have dens and

^a To touch a leper was unheard of, because of the contamination; this was a powerful demonstration of authority.

^b Beautiful!

^c A proof that the Messiah had arrived—who else could cure leprosy?

^d It has often been assumed that this account is parallel to that in Luke 7:1-10, but I believe they were different occasions. For a detailed discussion, please see the Appendix: Did the centurion leave his house?

^e “Sons of the kingdom”—those who knew the truth and rejected it will have the severest judgment, “farthest away”. (Dante’s view of hell is perhaps not entirely mistaken.)

^f Jesus healed a serious case at a distance.

^g It has often been assumed that Matthew’s account here is parallel to those in Mark 1:29-31 and Luke 4:38-39, but close attention to the contexts has convinced me that Matthew’s account took place some time after that in Mark and Luke. In that event, Jesus healed the woman twice, which means that just because God heals you one time, it does not mean that you will never get sick again.

^h Jesus healed the consequences as well—normally a high fever leaves you weak.

ⁱ Jesus did not touch the demonized, nor did He argue with them; He expelled the demons with a word.

^j See Isaiah 53:4. If the main fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy took place on the cross, this would be an application.

the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of the Man does not have where He may lay His head.”^a **21**Then a different one of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” **22**But Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”^b

Jesus controls wind and wave

23Now when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. **24**And then—a great tempest^c arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered by the waves. But He was sleeping. **25**So the disciples came and awakened Him saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” **26**And He says to them, “Why are you cowardly, you little-faiths?” Then rising He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.^d **27**So the men marveled, saying, “What sort of being is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”^e

Jesus controls any number of demons

28Upon His coming to the other side, to the region of the Gergesenes,^f two demonized men^g met Him, coming out from the tombs, **very** dangerous, so that no one could pass that way. **29**And then—they cried out saying: “What do you have to do with us, Jesus, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?”^h **30**Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many pigs feeding. **31**So the demons kept imploring Him saying, “Since you are going to cast us out, permit us to go into the herd of pigs.” **32**So He said to them, “Go!” And coming out they went off into the herd of pigs. And then—the whole herd of pigs rushed down

^a That is what the Text says, “the Son of the Man”, which appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself; the phrase doesn’t make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if “the man” refers to pristine Adam and “the son” to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

^b When it comes to discipleship, Jesus is very demanding—ordinary physical comfort and normal human relationships must be held in abeyance. Since a physically dead person can’t do anything, it is the spiritually dead who are to do the burying. To wait for a father to die before doing God’s will could mean never doing it.

^c The word rendered ‘tempest’ usually means ‘earthquake’; one could render, “there was a big earthquake in the sea”—which would produce sudden, unexpected waves. Maybe that is what happened (that lake is right on a major fault line).

^d The implication is that they should have solved the problem. Again Jesus undoes the consequences, as well as the cause.

^e Well, what were the options? Jesus obviously had supernatural power.

^f Some 98% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘Gergesenes’, rather than ‘Gadarenes’. Gadara was the Roman capital of the province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee. For the swineherds to run six miles to the city to report the incident and then walk back with the people would take quite a while. It seems more likely that there was a village named ‘Gergesa’ nearby, whose people came and asked Jesus to leave. For a more detailed discussion, please see the Appendix: The ‘Legion’ and the pigs; where was it?

^g As a tax collector, numerical precision was important to Matthew. Where other Gospels may select an individual as sufficient for the narrative, Matthew specifies that there were actually two (also blind men and donkeys).

^h The demons knew who Jesus really was, and also about their own destiny. The parallel accounts in Mark 5 and Luke 8 give added detail—their name was ‘Legion’, and there were about 2,000 pigs. In Luke 8:31 they kept imploring Him not to send them to the Abyss—they were really worried; they knew something we do not.

the steep bank into the sea and died in the water!^a ³³So the swineherds ran away, and going into the town they told everything, including about the demonized men. ³⁴And then, the whole town went out to meet with Jesus; and upon seeing Him they begged Him to depart from their borders.^b

Jesus forgives sins

9 ¹So getting into the boat He crossed over and came into His own city. ²And then, they came to Him carrying a paralytic lying on a pallet. And seeing their faith Jesus said to the paralytic, “Courage, son; your sins are forgiven you!” ³But then, some of the scribes said within themselves, “This man blasphemes!” ⁴So Jesus, knowing their thoughts,^c said: “Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵So which is easier, to say ‘Your sins are forgiven’, or to say ‘Get up and walk’?^d ⁶But so that you may know that the Son of the Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins”—then He says to the paralytic, “On your feet, pick up your pallet and go to your house!” ⁷So he got up and went off to his house. ⁸And seeing it the crowds marveled and glorified God, the one giving such authority to the people.^e

Matthew called

⁹And going on from there Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and He says to him, “Follow me.” So getting up he followed Him. ¹⁰Now it happened, as He was reclining *at the table* in the house,^f that many tax collectors and sinners had also come and were reclining *at the table* with Jesus and His disciples! ¹¹Upon seeing this the Pharisees said to His disciples, “Why does your teacher eat and drink^g with the tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But Jesus heard it, so He said to them: “Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”^h

Fasting

¹⁴Then the disciples of John come to Him saying, “Why is it that we and the Pharisees fast *about* many things, but your disciples do not fast?” ¹⁵So Jesus said to them: “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

^a I really doubt that the demons did it—why would they want to destroy their new ‘house’? Perhaps the pigs preferred death to demons (animals often show more common sense than people do). It is also possible that Jesus commanded the action.

^b Apparently Jesus never went back there; they did not want Him and that was that (I doubt that the inhabitants were Jews). The dead pigs represented a big economic loss; the pigs were more important to them than the two men—what Jesus represented threatened their way of life.

^c Jesus could read people’s minds.

^d Obviously it is easier to say “your sins are forgiven” because no one can see if it happened or not; but “get up and walk”—if he doesn’t, you look silly!

^e This way of putting it intrigues me. The people were getting the benefit from just one person who was using God’s authority. How many people do you know who use God’s authority on a regular basis? What would happen if a few appeared on the scene?

^f Matthew’s; see Luke 5:27-29. Matthew prepared a special meal and invited all his colleagues. He would have to turn his responsibilities as tax collector over to them.

^g I follow the best line of transmission that has ‘and drink’, although 70% of the Greek manuscripts omit the words.

^h Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “to repentance” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

Old wineskins

¹⁶“And no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment and the tear becomes worse. ¹⁷Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst and the wine spills out, and the wineskins will be ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”^a

Jesus raises the dead

¹⁸While He was saying these things to them, there he was; a certain ruler came and worshipped Him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and she will live.” ¹⁹So Jesus got up and followed him, with His disciples. ²⁰And then—a woman who had been hemorrhaging for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. ²¹For she kept saying to herself, “If only I may touch His garment I will be healed.”^b ²²But Jesus, turning around and seeing her, said, “Take courage, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And the woman was healed from that *very* hour. ²³When Jesus came into the ruler’s house and saw the flutists and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴He says to them, “Go away, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.” So they began to ridicule Him.^c ²⁵But when the crowd had been put outside, He went in and grasped her hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶And the report of this went out into all that land.

Jesus restores sight and speech

²⁷As Jesus went on from there two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” ²⁸And arriving in the house, the blind men approached Him; so He says to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They say to Him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹Then He touched their eyes saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.” ³⁰And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them saying, “See to it that no one knows!” ³¹But going out they spread the news about Him in all that country.

³²As they were going out, well, they brought to Him a mute man, demonized. ³³And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the crowds marveled saying, “Never was it seen like this in Israel!”^d ³⁴But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”^e

The harvest needs workers

³⁵Then Jesus went around to all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every illness among the people. ³⁶Seeing the crowds He was moved with compassion for them, because they were harassed and prostrated, like sheep without a

^a What are the implications here for established ecclesiastical structures? How many churches have been split by ‘new wine’? But, so, how should we go about trying to renew a dead church? Or should we just pull out and ‘leave the dead to bury their dead’?

^b It is clear from Mark 5:27-30 that the woman was healed before Jesus turned around. At other times contact with the shadow or a handkerchief brought healing. There is a principle at work here that we no longer understand, but satanists use all the time.

^c They knew that the girl was dead.

^d I take it that the events recorded in verses 10-33 happened one right after the other, probably within two or three hours—the Lord had very little time to Himself; someone was clamoring for attention constantly. To be alone with the Father He had to slip away at night.

^e At this point the Pharisees committed the unpardonable sin; see Mark 3:29-30.

shepherd.^a ³⁷Then He says to His disciples: “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send out workers into His harvest.”^b

Jesus commissions and orients the twelve disciples—28 AD

10 ¹So summoning His twelve disciples He gave them authority over unclean spirits so as to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every illness. ²Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first Simon (the one called Peter) and Andrew his brother, James (the son of Zebedee) and John his brother, ³Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew (the tax collector),^c James (the son of Alphaeus) and Lebbaeus (who was surnamed^d Thaddeus), ⁴Simon (the Canaanite) and Judas Iscariot (who also betrayed Him).

Orientation with immediate effect

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out,^e and commanded them saying: “Do not go off into the road of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.^f ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of the heavens has come near.’ ⁸Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.^g You have received free of charge, give free of charge.^h ⁹Do not provide gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, ¹⁰nor a knapsack for the road, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs;ⁱ because the worker is worthy of his food.

¹¹“In whatever city or village you may enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there until you go out. ¹²Upon entering the house, greet it; ¹³and should the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but should it not be worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, as you go out from that house or city shake off the dust from your feet.^j ¹⁵Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of judgment than for that city!

^a Who or what did the harassing? Sheep without a shepherd have no protection.

^b Not everyone is supposed to go, and not everyone can give, but we can all pray—or can we? To pray that prayer honestly, we have to be prepared to be one of the workers He will send!

^c Matthew insists on recording the fact that he was a tax collector—perhaps to underscore God’s grace in choosing someone from a despised occupation.

^d Less than half of one percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Lebbaeus who was surnamed” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e The Lord gives the example; He sends out the twelve (9:38).

^f See Matthew 15:24; the emphasis of the Lord’s earthly ministry was upon “the house of Israel”.

^g Some 94% of the Greek manuscripts do not have “raise the dead”. KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. (most versions in English) follow 6%.

^h What would happen if the Church started following this instruction?

ⁱ They were to travel ‘light’—a spare staff would just be extra weight (they went everywhere on foot); with no knapsack a spare tunic and pair of sandals would just get in the way. However, this was a temporary instruction for a specific occasion. Later, in the upper room, He revoked this instruction (Luke 22:35-36). Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘neither a staff’ (singular), that sets up a contradiction with Mark 6:8, to be duly followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^j This is an instruction, an order. Paul did it at least once—Acts 13:51 (as have I). Jesus Himself declares this judgment upon Capernaum (Matthew 11:23-24), thereby setting the example.

Orientation with prophetic effect

16“Now then, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be prudent like snakes and innocent like doves. **17**But beware of the people, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues. **18**And you will be brought before governors and even kings for my sake, as a testimony to them and to the nations. **19**But whenever they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you will speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;^a **20**for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.^b

Like master, like slave

21“Furthermore, brother will hand over brother to death, and a father a child, and children will rise up against parents and put them to death. **22**And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake;^c but the one enduring to the end, he will be delivered. **23**But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to another.^d For assuredly I say to you, you will certainly not go through all the cities of Israel before the Son of the Man comes.^e **24**A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. **25**It is enough for a disciple that he become like his teacher, and a slave like his master.^f Since they have stigmatized^g the master of the house as Beelzebul,^h how much more those of his household! **26**So do not fear them; because there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, and secret that will not be known.

“Do not be afraid”

27“What I tell you in the dark, say in the light; and what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the housetops.ⁱ **28**And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.^j **29**Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father’s *will*. **30**Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered! **31**Therefore do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

^a As one of my seminary professors once said, this instruction is for martyrs, not preachers. But would it not be nice if more preachers got their messages from the Holy Spirit?

^b God still speaks in and to the world today, using our mouths.

^c This is already happening in North America and elsewhere. Anyone who stands up for Biblical values—speaks out against homosexuality, for instance—is ridiculed, and more physical forms of persecution have already started.

^d This sounds like the life of a refugee.

^e Beginning with verse 18, but especially in verses 21-23, Jesus is probably referring to the end times, more than to their immediate future.

^f This should be our goal: be like Jesus, do like Jesus.

^g I here follow the best line of transmission, with 30% of the Greek manuscripts. ‘To stigmatize’ is the appropriate verb here, rather than ‘to call’.

^h All Greek manuscripts have ‘Beelzebul’, rather than the familiar ‘Beelzebub’, that is a carry-over from the Latin.

ⁱ This one bothers me; to do this is like painting a target on your back. But He goes on to say that it is better to fear God more than man, and that nothing can happen to you apart from the Father’s will. But how many of us really trust God that much? How many of us can say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15)?

^j The Greek Text has ‘Gehenna’, a euphemism for the Lake of Fire.

Jesus demands total commitment

³²“Now then, everyone who will confess me before the people, I will also confess him before my Father who is in the heavens. ³³But whoever should deny me before the people, I will also deny him before my Father who is in the heavens.^a

³⁴“Do not suppose that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and a man’s enemies will be those of his *own* household.

³⁷“The one who is more devoted to father or mother than to me is not worthy of me, and the one who is more devoted to son or daughter than to me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.^b ³⁹The one ‘finding’ his life will lose it, and the one ‘losing’ his life for my sake will find it.^c

⁴⁰“The one receiving you receives me, and the one receiving me receives the One who sent me. ⁴¹The one receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward,^d and the one receiving a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man’s reward. ⁴²And whoever should give so much as a cup of cold *water* to one of these little ones, in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he will certainly not lose his reward.”^e

The Pharisees reject Jesus as Messiah

11 ¹And so it was, when Jesus finished directing His twelve disciples, that He moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

John needs reassuring

²But John, hearing in prison *about* the works of the Messiah, sent two of his disciples ³to say to Him, “Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?”^f ⁴By way of answer Jesus said to them: “Go and report to John the things that you hear and see: ⁵blind regain sight and lame walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf hear, dead are raised and the poor are evangelized. ⁶And, blessed be whoever is not offended at Me!”^g

^a If Jesus denies us in front of the Father, what are our chances? Maybe this is why the Text says that a coward does not enter the Kingdom (Revelation 21:8).

^b Notice that it is Jesus who sets the parameters, not we. Rather than people ‘accepting’ Jesus, the question is whether He will accept us.

^c I take it that the reference is to the potential that your life represents, potential in the interests of God’s Kingdom. To the extent that your life revolves around God’s will and Kingdom you will both find and save it—of course from the world’s perspective you will be throwing it away.

^d I assume that the point here is identification: you are identifying with the prophet whose name you invoke; and if that prophet is in prison, you are taking a risk.

^e Presumably the rewards mentioned here are received in this life, since the good deeds mentioned could be performed by an unbeliever. I suggest that God blesses anyone who takes sides with what is right, good, decent, honorable, just—but if that person does not belong to Christ the blessing is limited to this life.

^f John was in prison, which was contrary to his expectations: like all the others he expected Jesus to set up the Kingdom right then. In answer the Lord says, in effect, that the Kingdom is not based on our expectations.

^g Verse 6 was directed specifically at John. When Jesus went to John to be baptized, John knew perfectly well that he was looking at the Messiah, but now, because of his circumstances, he is in doubt. In effect, Jesus is saying, “Whatever you do, do not rebel!” And He is still saying so to us: when your circumstances are painful and unexplained, do not rebel!

Jesus commends John the Baptizer

⁷So as they departed Jesus began to say to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see, a reed shaken by the wind? ⁸But what did you go out to see, a man clothed in soft garments? Actually, those who wear soft material are in kings’ houses. ⁹But *really*, what did you go out to see, a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet. ¹⁰For this is he of whom it is written:

‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way ahead of you.’^a

¹¹Assuredly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptizer; but he who is least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he.^b ¹²But from the days of John the Baptizer until now the kingdom of the heavens is being aggressive and aggressive people are seizing upon it.^c ¹³For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴and if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.^d ¹⁵He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in a marketplace and calling to their friends ¹⁷and saying,

‘We played the flute for you and you did not dance;
we mourned for you and you did not lament.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of the Man came eating and drinking and they say, ‘Just look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Indeed, wisdom is vindicated by her children.”^e

Jesus denounces three cities

²⁰Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! Because if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²So I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of judgment than for you! ²³And you, Capernaum, ‘the one having been exalted to heaven’, you will be brought down to Hades! Because if the mighty works that were done in

^a See Malachi 3:1.

^b Evidently, as forerunner of the Kingdom John was not part of it—the Kingdom was rejected at that time: both forerunner and King were killed—those who participate in the actual future Kingdom will be more privileged. “Born of women” excludes Adam. Men like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Daniel would be of equal standing, just not “greater”. But those who live during the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium) will be more privileged than all except Adam, because the earth will return to conditions similar to Eden.

^c Note that Jesus is referring to a period of about two years. With the King physically present and giving a living demonstration of the Kingdom, the Kingdom was being more aggressive in this world than it had been since the time of Moses. In the present tense of a Greek verb a single form serves for both the middle and passive voices—the verb βιάζεται has usually been translated as passive in our versions, ‘suffers violence’, but I think it makes much better sense to translate it as middle, as I have done. Given the hostility of the religious leaders, it would take someone with plenty of backbone to openly side with Jesus.

^d Jesus declares that the real Elijah is still going to come. John fulfilled the role for Messiah’s first advent that Elijah will fill for the second.

^e Instead of “her children”, just 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality (objectively so), have “her works” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

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you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴So I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of judgment than for you.”^a

“I praise You, Father”

²⁵At that time Jesus reacted and said: “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to ‘babes’. ²⁶Yes, Father, because thus it was good to You.”^b

²⁷“All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one really knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone really know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son may will to reveal *Him*. ²⁸Come to me all you who are laboring and are loaded down, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls; ³⁰for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”^c

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

12 ¹At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath.^d But His disciples became hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²And upon seeing it the Pharisees^e said to Him, “Hey, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath!” ³But He said to them: “Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and those who were with him, ⁴how he entered the house of God and ate the loaves of presentation, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but only for the priests? ⁵Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbaths the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶Yet I say to you that a greater than the temple is here. ⁷If you had but known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’^f you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸Furthermore, the Son of the Man is Lord of the Sabbath!”^g

Jesus heals on the Sabbath

⁹Now moving on from there He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰And there was a man with a withered hand! And they asked Him saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—so that they might accuse Him. ¹¹So He said to them: “What man will there be among you who has one sheep, and should this *one* fall into a ditch on the Sabbath, will he not lay hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” ¹³Then He says to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” And he stretched it out, and

^a Evidently there are degrees of judgment, based on the amount of ‘light’ received. To be worse off than Sodom—help! (See Matthew 10:14-15.)

^b I take it that this was said out loud, so those around could hear.

^c To be without a yoke is not an option in this world. It is either Jesus’ yoke or Satan’s—if you refuse Jesus’ yoke you remain under Satan’s yoke, which is always heavy. Being born with an inclination to sin, we are soon under Satan’s yoke—Jesus offers us a way out.

^d The Text actually has ‘the Sabbaths’; the parallel passage in Luke 6:1 has ‘a second-first Sabbath’. This was evidently a special day, but we have lost the relevant cultural information.

^e Most probably the Pharisees had ‘observers’ tagging along everywhere Jesus went.

^f The quote is from Hosea 6:6.

^g Who but the Messiah, or God Himself, could be Lord of the Sabbath? Jesus was hitting the Pharisees where they lived (they used the Sabbath as an instrument of domination). He had also just said that He was greater than the temple.

it was restored whole like the other. ¹⁴But going out the Pharisees plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.^a

A tactical withdrawal

¹⁵So being aware, Jesus withdrew from there. And large crowds followed Him, and He healed them all.^b ¹⁶Yet He warned them not to make Him known, ¹⁷so that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, namely:

¹⁸“Behold my Servant whom I chose,
my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased!
I will put my Spirit upon Him,
and He will declare justice to the nations.
¹⁹He will not quarrel nor cry-out,
nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.
²⁰A bruised reed He will not break,
and a smoldering wick He will not quench,
until He sends justice forth to victory.^c
²¹And in His name Gentiles will trust.”

The Pharisees blaspheme the Holy Spirit

²²Then a demonized man was brought to Him, blind and mute, and He healed him, so that the ^Ablind and ^Bmute ^Bspoke and ^Asaw.^d ²³And all the crowds were amazed and said, “Might this not be the Christ,^e the Son of David?” ²⁴But upon hearing it the Pharisees said, “This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebul, ruler of the demons.” ²⁵But knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself becomes desolate, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶So if Satan casts out Satan he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges.^f ²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or how can anyone go into the house of the strong *man* and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then he can plunder the house.^g

^a They could not answer Him, but did not want to submit to Him either: He threatened all that they held dear.

^b He did not go looking for sick people to cure, but He healed all who came to Him.

^c The quote in verses 18-21 (see Isaiah 42:1-4) is tied to verse 16. Since after His resurrection the Lord commanded them to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every person, I take it that the “until He sends justice forth to victory” was fulfilled at His death and resurrection. So the description in verses 19-20 is limited to His earthly ministry and is not an example for us to follow now—see Matthew 10:27, etc.

^d A chiasmus—AB,BA

^e I follow the best line of transmission [20%] in reading ‘the Christ’, although it is alone against the rest.

^f Jesus seems to be affirming that their sons did indeed cast out demons: the implication is that they were doing so by Satan’s power. Further, if they did not protest when their sons did it, why did they protest when He did it?

^g The use of the definite article with “strong man” (its first occurrence) means that the entity has already been introduced in the previous context—the reference is to Satan. Here is biblical basis for binding him.

The unforgivable sin

³⁰“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.^a ³¹Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven people. ³²And whoever speaks a word against the Son of the Man, it will be forgiven him;^b but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in the present age nor in the next.^c

Jesus denounces the Pharisees

³³“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree rotten and its fruit rotten; for the tree is known by the fruit. ³⁴Brood of vipers!^d How can you, being malignant, speak good things?^e For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵The good man out of the good reservoir brings forth good things, and the malignant man out of the malignant reservoir brings forth malignant things. ³⁶Furthermore, I say to you that for every useless word whatever that people may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of judgment. ³⁷For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”^f

The sign of the prophet Jonah

³⁸Then some of the scribes and Pharisees reacted saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”^g ³⁹But in answer He said to them: “A malignant and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the stomach of the sea monster, so will the Son of the Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.^h ⁴¹Ninevite men will arise with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and really, a greater than Jonah is here. ⁴²The queen of the South will be raised with this generation at the judgment and she will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and really, a greater than Solomon is here.ⁱ

^a There is no ‘neutrality’; you are either for or against. There are only two teams, two sides, two kingdoms in this world. Either God or Satan, light or darkness, truth or falsehood. Whose side are you on? Really.

^b Statements like this need to be interpreted against the background of all other Scriptures that bear on the subject. Forgiveness depends on confession (1 John 1:9).

^c Mark 3:30 makes clear that “the blasphemy against the Spirit” is to ascribe His working to Satan.

^d At no time did the Lord make any effort to conciliate the Pharisees. They are ‘serpents’ because their father is a serpent (Revelation 12:10).

^e Jesus appears to be saying that a malignant person is incapable of speaking good.

^f “Every useless word whatever”—do we really believe that? This may be why certain orders of monks took an oath of silence (but how can you be ‘justified’ by your words if you never say anything?).

^g Jesus had already performed hundreds of signs, and doubtless they had seen some of them. Their request was not honest.

^h “In the heart of the earth”—here we seem to have instruction from the Lord on the location of Hades—it is inside the earth, somehow. Compare 1 Samuel 28:13 where Samuel (literally), returning from Hades/Sheol, comes up from inside the earth.

ⁱ Jonah, and the sea monster, are just as historical as Solomon, the queen of Sheba, Nineveh—we have it on the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

An empty 'house' is bad

⁴³“Now when an unclean spirit [demon] goes out from a man, it goes through arid places looking for rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from where I came.’ And coming it finds it unoccupied, swept and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes along with itself seven different spirits, more malignant than itself, and going in it dwells there; and the last *state* of that man becomes worse than the first. Just so it will be for this malignant generation also.”^a

New relationships

⁴⁶But then, while He was still speaking to the crowds, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. ⁴⁷So someone said to Him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with you.” ⁴⁸But in answer He said to the one who told Him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” ⁴⁹And stretching out His hand toward His disciples He said: “Here are my mother and my brothers! ⁵⁰For whoever does the will of my Father in the heavens, he is my brother and sister and mother.”^b

Parables of the Kingdom

13 ¹On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. ²And large crowds were gathered together to Him, so He got into a boat to sit down; and the whole crowd stood on the shore.

Parable of the soils

³Then He spoke many things to them in parables saying: “Listen, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some *seeds* fell alongside the road, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Others fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; so they sprouted quickly because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun came up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and smothered them. ⁸But others fell on the good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The reason for parables

¹⁰And the disciples approached and said to Him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”^c ¹¹So in answer He said to them: “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them it has not been given. ¹²For whoever has, to him more will be given and he will have abundance;^d but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.^e ¹³Therefore I speak to them in parables, that seeing they not see and hearing they not

^a Jesus does not say why the demon left, but obviously a vacuum is dangerous. Jesus seems to be implying that the Pharisees are already demonized, but will become worse! Actually, in verse 34 He said they were malignant, poisonous snakes: to be malignant is to be aggressively evil, the term is regularly used of Satan. In fact, later on Jesus says they are sons of Satan.

^b Notice again that the key is doing the Father’s will.

^c From Mark 4:10 it appears that this occurred later, probably after verse 33. Mark has two parables that Matthew does not—Mark 4:21-29.

^d But he will have to give an accounting for it all.

^e Spiritual growth is like going up an incline on a bicycle without brakes: if you stop pedaling you go backwards. We must keep learning and growing; if we stop, we start losing.

MATTHEW 13

hear nor understand.^a **14**And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘By hearing you (ye) will hear and not understand,
and seeing you will see and not perceive.
15Because the ^Ahearts of this people have grown dull,
and their ^Bears hard of hearing,
and their ^Ceyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their ^Ceyes
and hear with their ^Bears
and understand with their ^Ahearts,
and turn around: and I would heal them.’^b

16But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear;
17for assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous ones desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

Parable of the soils explained

18“Therefore hear the parable of the sower: **19**When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand, the malignant one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart—this is the seed sown alongside the road.^c
20But the seed sown on stony places—this is he who hears the word and directly receives it with joy, **21**but he has no root in himself and is short-lived; for when trial or persecution comes because of the word, directly he is offended.^d **22**But the seed sown among the thorns—this is he who hears the word, but the care of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word, and it becomes fruitless.^e
23Now the seed sown on the good ground—this is he who hears the word and understands, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”^f

Wheat and tares

24He put another parable to them, saying: “The kingdom of the heavens is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; **25**but while the people were sleeping his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. **26**But when the stalk sprouted and produced fruit, then the tares also appeared.^g **27**So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ **28**He said to them, ‘An enemy did it.’

^a This is in response to their choice, as verses 14-15 make clear. But Jesus only started using parables after the Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Spirit—they formally rejected Jesus as Messiah. Notice that the declared purpose of the parables is that the people not understand. It follows that doctrine should never be based on a parable, unless Jesus interprets it—the interpretation may be used, but not the parable itself.

^b A triple chiasmus—ABC,CBA. The Text is clear to the effect that if they turn around He will heal.

^c In sowing, the seed is scattered on top of the soil, not planted, and is therefore vulnerable—maybe that is why the great commission is to disciple. Observe that Jesus is teaching that the devil can invade a person’s mind.

^d This is typical of the ‘prosperity gospel’.

^e Both the seed on stony places and among thorns sprouted—there was life.

^f Not all saved persons serve the Lord at the same level of intensity; some are more committed, others less.

^g It is only when the ‘fruit’ appears that you can tell the difference. “By their fruits you shall know them.”

The servants said to him, ‘So do you want us to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹But he said: ‘No, lest gathering up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

Mustard seed

³¹He put another parable to them, saying: “The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; ³²which indeed is smaller than all the seeds,^a but when it is grown it is greater than all the vegetables and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and rest^b in its branches.”

Yeast

³³He spoke another parable to them: “The kingdom of the heavens is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until it was all leavened.”

³⁴All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and without a parable He did not speak to them, ³⁵so that what was spoken through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely:

“I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things kept secret
from the foundation of the world.”^c

“Wheat and tares” explained

³⁶Then Jesus dismissed the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples approached Him saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷So He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of the Man. ³⁸The field is the world; as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom, while the tares are the sons of the malignant one. ³⁹The enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Therefore just as the tares are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹The Son of the Man will send out His angels,^d and they will collect out of His kingdom everything that is offensive, and those who perpetrate lawlessness;^e ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire. There there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

^a That is, seeds normally planted in gardens.

^b The verb I have rendered ‘to rest’ is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. In Mark 4:32 the Text says that the birds can use the shade, not the branches. But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says ‘under its shade’)?

^c The quote is from Psalm 72:2—Matthew calls Asaph a prophet.

^d The angels are going to be busy.

^e I take it that the “kingdom” here is physical (not merely ‘spiritual’) and includes the whole planet, because it contains “offensive” things and “lawless” people.

Treasure and pearl

⁴⁴“Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in a field,^a which a man found and re-hid, and in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a merchant, seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶who upon finding one very valuable pearl went and sold everything he had and bought it.^b

A seine

⁴⁷“Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a seine that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind, ⁴⁸which, when it was full, they pulled upon the shore; and sitting down they collected the good into vessels, but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth and will separate the malignant out from among the righteous, ⁵⁰and they will throw them into the furnace of fire. There there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

⁵¹Jesus says to them, “Did you understand all these things?” They say to Him, “Yes, Lord.”^c ⁵²So He said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been disciplined into the kingdom of the heavens is like a man, a householder, who brings out of his reservoir things new and old.”^d

A visit to Natsareth

⁵³Now it happened, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. ⁵⁴And coming into His hometown He began to teach them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said: “Where did this man get this wisdom, and the mighty works? ⁵⁵Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joses and Simon and Jude?^e ⁵⁶And his sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷So they were offended at him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and in his own house.” ⁵⁸And He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

The death of John the Baptizer

14 ¹At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus ²and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptizer; he has been raised from the dead, and therefore the powers are at work in him.” ³For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. ⁴For John would say to him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.”^f ⁵And although he wanted to kill him, he feared the crowd, because they counted him as a prophet. ⁶But while Herod’s birthday was being celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and she pleased Herod. ⁷So he promised with an

^a Although 70% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘the’ field, the best line of transmission has ‘a’ field, which is correct.

^b Both of these parables are to the same point, and in Philippians 3:7-9 Paul illustrates that point.

^c Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘Lord’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^d A ‘scribe’ was instructed in the Law and the prevailing interpretations of it (the ‘old’), but if he had also been disciplined into the Kingdom, his thinking would be re-oriented about many things (the ‘new’).

^e Here we have the names of Jesus’ four half-brothers, and the plural ‘sisters’ means there were at least two of them (the use of ‘all’ probably indicates more than two). Joseph and Mary had a normal family.

^f The impression one gets is that John took Herod to task several times—a coward he was not.

oath to give her whatever she might ask. ⁸So she, having been prompted by her mother, she says, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptizer!” ⁹And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and those who were reclining *at the table* with him, he commanded it to be given. ¹⁰So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. ¹¹And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. ¹²Then his disciples came forward and took the body and buried it,^b and they went and told Jesus.

Food for 15,000

¹³Upon hearing it, Jesus departed from there by boat to a deserted place privately.^c But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴So when Jesus disembarked He saw a large crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick.^d

¹⁵Now with evening coming on His disciples approached Him saying: “The place is uninhabited and the hour is already late. Dismiss the crowds, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” ¹⁶But Jesus said to them: “They do not need to go away. You give them to eat.”^e ¹⁷But they say to Him, “We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸So He said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹Then He commanded the crowds to recline on the grass. And taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, He blessed; and breaking the loaves He gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. ²⁰So they all ate and were filled; and they took up the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full. ²¹Now those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.^f

Peter walks on water

²²Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. ²³And having dismissed the crowds He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. So when night came He was alone there.^g ²⁴But the boat was already in the middle of the sea,^h being harassed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. ²⁵So in the fourth watch of the nightⁱ Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. ²⁶And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they became agitated saying, “It’s a ghost!” And they cried out

^a What would seeing that head do to your appetite?

^b The body was buried without the head—one wonders what became of it.

^c From Mark we learn that Jesus and the disciples were under heavy pressure from the crowds—no time even to eat. So when He hears of John’s death, and under such ignominious circumstances, Jesus wants to get away so He can grieve and assimilate the news.

^d In Mark it is even clearer that the people ran along the shore and got to the destination first, before the boat (please see the note at Mark 6:34). Naturally the faster runners were there first, but others kept arriving so that in the end there were thousands of people. In the town there was not space for everybody to get to Jesus, but out in the open—so when the news got around people came from all over.

^e Really now, with what? Although Jesus had to take the initiative, the disciples did participate in the miracle.

^f Since any large crowd is likely to have more women and children than men, there were probably at least 15,000 people there. “They were filled”—how much food does it take to ‘fill’ 15,000 hungry people? Notice the care not to waste anything—the fragments were collected.

^g Finally, Jesus manages to be alone, to think and pray.

^h Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read “many furlongs away from the land” (as in NIV, NASB, LB,TEV, etc.).

ⁱ The fourth watch, using Roman time, was from 3 to 6 a.m.—the disciples had had a rough night!

for fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying: “Courage! It is I; don’t be afraid!” ²⁸So in answer Peter said, “Lord, since it’s you, command me to come to you on the water.” ²⁹So He said to him, “Come!” And stepping down from the boat Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. ³⁰But seeing the strong wind he became afraid, and beginning to sink^a he cried out saying, “Lord, save me!” ³¹And immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him and says to him: “You little-faith! Why did you doubt?” ³²And when they got into the boat the wind ceased.^b ³³Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him saying, “Truly you are the Son of God!”^c

At Genesaret

³⁴When they had crossed over they came to the land of Genesaret.^d ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Him they sent *messengers* into all that surrounding region and they brought to Him all who were sick. ³⁶And they would beg Him that if only they might at least touch the hem of His garment; and as many as touched were completely healed.

Jesus antagonizes the Pharisees—29 AD

15 ¹Then the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem approached Jesus saying: ²“Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands whenever they eat bread.” ³So in answer He said to them: “Why do you even transgress the commandment of God through your tradition? ⁴For God commanded saying,^e ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ⁵But you say: ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever you might be profited by me is a gift to God”—⁶then he must not honor his father or mother.’^f Thus you have nullified the commandment of God through your tradition. ⁷Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying:

⁸These people draw near to Me with their mouth
and honor Me with their lips,^g
but their heart is far away from Me.

⁹But in vain do they worship Me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”^h

^a Peter knew how to swim (John 21:7), but he was walking on top of the water (a totally new experience) and then he was wading; and the storm was scary.

^b Why did the wind cease? Was it a supernatural wind? If so, who caused it?

^c They took a lot of convincing, but are we not the same way?

^d The best line of transmission, along with the Targum, spells the place with one ‘n’; 70% of the Greek manuscripts follow the LXX in using two.

^e Instead of “commanded saying”, perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, have ‘said’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “or mother” (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.). NASB informs us that “many” manuscripts omit “or his mother”—by ‘many’ they mean three, against some 1700! That is a dishonest use of language.

^g Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts omit “draw near to me with their mouth and” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h See Isaiah 29:13. Are there no such ‘doctrines’ in our churches? The Lord Jesus declares that such worship is **in vain**—if it does you no good, you are wasting your time (and it may be doing you harm).

That which defiles

¹⁰Then summoning the crowd He said to them: “Hear and understand. ¹¹Not what goes into the mouth defiles the man, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles the man.” ¹²Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do you know that upon hearing this saying the Pharisees were offended?” ¹³But in answer He said: “Every plant that my heavenly Father did not plant will be uprooted. ¹⁴Leave them alone.^a They are blind guides of the blind; and if the blind guides the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

¹⁵Then Peter answered and said to Him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶So Jesus said: “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is expelled into the sewer? ¹⁸But the things coming out of the mouth *actually* come from the heart; those are the things that defile the man. ¹⁹Because out of the heart proceed malignant thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications,^b thefts, false witness, blasphemies. ²⁰These are the things that defile the man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”

A crumb for a little dog

²¹Going out from there Jesus withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²And then, a Canaanite woman coming from those parts cried out to Him saying: “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demonized.” ²³But He answered her not a word.^c So His disciples came and urged Him saying, “Send her away, because she is crying out after us.” ²⁴But in answer He said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”^d ²⁵So she came and worshipped Him saying, “Lord, help me!”^e ²⁶But in answer He said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs.” ²⁷So she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.”^f ²⁸Then Jesus answered and said to her: “O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed from that *very* hour.

Food for 4,000 men

²⁹Moving on from there, Jesus went alongside the Sea of Galilee, and going up on the mountain He sat down there. ³⁰And large crowds approached Him, having with them lame, blind, mute, maimed and many others, and they placed them at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. ³¹So the crowds marveled—seeing mutes speaking, maimed made whole, lame walking, and blind seeing—and they kept glorifying the God of Israel.

³²Then Jesus summoned His disciples and said: “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have already remained with me three days, and have nothing

^a Jesus makes no effort to conciliate or to convert the Pharisees. For all that, some did convert.

^b This is one of a number of places where ‘adultery’ and ‘fornication’ both occur in a list of sins—it is clear that they are distinct in meaning, and so ‘fornication’ does not include ‘adultery’; and so to render ‘fornication’ as ‘sexual sin/immorality’ is misleading.

^c “Son of David”—as a Canaanite she appealed to the Jewish Messiah, upon whom she had no claim. But how did she know that? I suspect there is more to this story than meets the eye.

^d Although His ultimate mission included the whole world (see the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20), His earthly ministry was directed to the “house of Israel”.

^e Here she drops the appeal to the Messiah—evidently the Lord spoke loudly enough for her to hear.

^f We may feel that Jesus was harsh with her, but in this way He put into bold relief her faith and humility—and she got her crumb!

to eat; and I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.”
³³So His disciples say to Him, “Where could we get, in an uninhabited place, enough bread so as to satisfy such a great crowd?”³⁴Jesus says to them, “How many loaves do you have?” And they said, “Seven, and a few small fish.”³⁵So He commanded the crowds to recline on the ground.³⁶And taking the seven loaves and the fish, He gave thanks, broke and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the crowd.³⁷So they all ate and were filled; and they took up seven hampers full of the fragments that remained.^a³⁸Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.^b³⁹And having dismissed the crowds He got into the boat and went to the region of Magdala.^c

The sign of the prophet Jonah

16¹The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.^d²But in answer He said to them: “When it is evening you say, ‘Fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘Today will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times. ⁴A malignant and adulterous generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.” And leaving them behind He went away.^e

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”

⁵Upon arriving at the other side His disciples had forgotten to take bread.
⁶Then Jesus said to them, “Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”⁷So they reasoned among themselves saying, “It’s because we didn’t bring any bread.”⁸But Jesus, being aware, said to them: “You little-faiths! Why are you reasoning among yourselves because you didn’t bring any bread? ⁹Do you not yet perceive nor remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? ¹⁰Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many hampers you took up? ¹¹How come you don’t perceive that it wasn’t about bread that I told you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?”¹²Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus openly declares His death and ministers on that basis

¹³When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi He questioned His disciples saying, “Who do people say that I, the Son of the Man, am?”^f¹⁴So they said, “Some say John the Baptizer, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”¹⁵He says to them, “But you, who do you say that I am?”¹⁶So in answer Simon Peter said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!”¹⁷And

^a Where did the “hampers” come from? Probably from fishing boats that stopped by.

^b Again, the crowd was much larger than just the 4,000 men; probably at least 10,000 people.

^c Magdala was Mary Magdalene’s hometown; perhaps this was when Jesus delivered her from the demons (Mark 16:9). Less than 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “Magadan” instead of Magdala (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The parallel passage in Mark 8:10 has ‘the region of Dalmanutha’—I assume that Magdala was in that region.

^d Pharisees and Sadducees were theological enemies, but they join forces against Jesus.

^e He left by boat—He did not want to waste time with them. Jesus calls them “malignant”—they are aggressively evil.

^f Instead of “I, the Son of the Man, am”, perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘the Son of the Man is’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The change is significant.

in answer Jesus said to him: “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in the heavens. **18**And I further say to you that you are a stone, but on this bedrock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not withstand her.^a **19**And I will give you (sg) the keys of the kingdom of the heavens, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in the heavens, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in the heavens.”^b **20**Then He ordered His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah.^c **21**From then on Jesus began to show to His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. **22**So taking Him aside Peter began to rebuke Him saying: “Mercy to you, Lord! This shall not happen to you!” **23**But turning He said to Peter: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you are not mindful of God’s values, but of men’s values.”^d

How to save your life

24Then Jesus said to His disciples: “If anyone desires to come after me, let him really deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. **25**For whoever desires to save his life will waste it, but whoever ‘wastes’ his life on my account will find it.^e **26**For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but forfeits his life? Or what will a man give in exchange for his life? **27**For the Son of the Man will certainly come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will recompense each according to his performance.^f **28**Assuredly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of the Man coming in His kingdom.”^g

Jesus meets with Moses and Elijah

17 **1**Now after six days Jesus takes Peter, James and his brother John and leads them up on a high mountain, in private. **2**And He was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, while His clothes became as white as the light. **3**When wow, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with Him. **4**Then Peter reacted and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you

^a There is a play on words here, *petros* VS *petra*—the bedrock was obviously not Peter. The bedrock presumably has to do with the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. ‘Gates’ do not attack, but are the last line of defense—it is the Church that is attacking Hades. Hades is not hell. Hell is the Lake of fire, the second death; Hades is the halfway ‘house’ where departed spirits await the judgment.

^b Please see the note at Matthew 18:18.

^c As is clear from Luke 9:20-22, verses 21-23 here form part of the same conversation. At this point Jesus changes the game plan—He declares that He is going to die and orders the disciples to stop presenting Him as the Messiah. Some 65% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Jesus, the Messiah’ (as in AV and NKJV); I follow the best line of transmission.

^d Satan put those words in Peter’s mouth, but he agreed with them. Note that within 3-5 minutes Peter spoke twice, under inspiration: the first time inspired by God (verses 16-17) and the second by Satan (verses 22-23). It is God the Son who tells us what really happened. Since Sovereign Jesus said it was Satan, it was Satan, and if he could do it to Peter, he can do it to us. The almost total ignorance on the subject of biblical spiritual warfare that prevails in North America is having serious consequences.

^e What is in view here is the potential your life represents.

^f We will be judged on the basis of what we did with our potential.

^g Presumably this was fulfilled at the transfiguration—a manifestation, in miniature, of the Kingdom (Jesus the King, Moses and Elijah representing glorified saints [who will participate in the administration] and the three disciples representing the normal inhabitants of the earth at that time).

MATTHEW 17

wish, let us^a make three booths: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”^b
⁵While he was still speaking a brilliant cloud overshadowed them, and then, a **Voice**^c came out of the cloud saying: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am *always* well pleased. Hear Him!”⁶As the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. ⁷Then Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up, don’t be afraid.”⁸So lifting up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only.

Elijah and ‘Elijah’

⁹As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them saying, “Tell no one the vision until the Son of the Man is risen from the dead.”¹⁰So His disciples questioned Him saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”¹¹In answer Jesus said to them: “Elijah is indeed coming first, and he will restore all things. ¹²But I say to you that ‘Elijah’ has come already, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. Thus also the Son of the Man is about to suffer at their hands.”¹³Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptizer.^d

A tough kind of demon

¹⁴As they came to the crowd a man approached Him and kneeling to Him said: ¹⁵“Lord, have mercy on my son, because he is moonstruck and suffers badly! For he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶So I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him.”¹⁷Then in answer Jesus said: “O faithless and perverse generation,^e how long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me.”¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him, and the boy was healed from that *very* hour.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why were we not able to cast it out?”²⁰So Jesus said to them: “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly I say to you, if you have faith like a mustard seed *has*, you (ye) will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be

^a Instead of “let us”, perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “I will” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b So how did Peter know who they were? Photography had not yet been invented. Luke 9:37 makes clear that they spent the night on the mountain. Evidently what has been recorded here (and in Mark and Luke) gives but a thumbnail sketch of all that took place.

^c Peter never forgot that **Voice** (2 Peter 1:17)! He even coined the phrase, Magnificent Glory, to describe the source. Evidently what happened on that mountain was totally overwhelming.

^d At this point John is already dead, but in verse 11 the Lord declares that Elijah is still going to come—John performed the function for Christ’s first advent that Elijah (literally) will perform for the second advent.

^e Why “perverse”? To reject the truth and the evidence is to be perverse. This word was presumably directed to the disciples, who should have known better by now. So how about us—are we living on the basis of the truth and the evidence? Really?

impossible for you.^a ²¹However, this class does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”^b

²²While they were staying^c in Galilee Jesus said to them, “The Son of the Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, ²³and they will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised.” And they were seriously grieved.

Money from a fish

²⁴When they entered Capernaum those who collected the temple tax approached Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?” ²⁵He says, “Yes.” So when they entered the house Jesus anticipated him saying: “Simon, what do you think? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or poll tax, from their sons or from strangers?” ²⁶Peter says to Him, “From the strangers.” Jesus said to him: “Well then, the sons are free. ²⁷But, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And opening its mouth you will find a ‘stater’ [a coin]; take that and give it to them for me and you.”^d

How to be ‘big’ in the Kingdom

18 ¹At that time the disciples approached Jesus saying, “Who then is greater in the kingdom of the heavens?” ²So Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³and said: “Assuredly I say to you, unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of the heavens. ⁴Therefore whoever will humble himself like this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of the heavens.

About offenses

⁵“Whoever receives one little child like this in my name, receives me; ⁶but whoever should cause one of these little ones who believe into me^e to fall, it would be better for him if a large millstone were hung on his neck and he were drowned

^a What kind of ‘faith’ might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, our spiritual ‘climactic circumstances’, we should indeed move mountains, literally. Or to put it another way, a seed has the faith to die, like the Lord said in John 12:24: “unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone”. In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul said that he died daily. How so? Obviously he did not die physically; he died to himself, his own ideas and ambitions, so as to embrace God’s will. Dying to self is a prerequisite for moving mountains.

^b Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit this whole verse (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.). I take it that this was true up until the Lord’s victory on the cross and the resurrection. Now we are in Christ at the Father’s right hand, far above all principality and power, etc., which includes Satan and all classes below him in rank—Ephesians 1:19-21, 2:6. (There is nothing wrong with Christ’s victory and authority, but our spiritual condition does not always permit us to make full use of that victory.)

^c Instead of “staying”, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘gathering together’ (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^d The *stater* was the exact amount for two people. Presumably somebody had lost the coin in the water.

^e ‘Into’ not ‘in’. The Lord Jesus always said “believe into [Greek εἰς] Me”, never “believe in [Greek ἐν] Me”. (In John 3:15 a very few Greek manuscripts of inferior quality have “in”, against 99.5% that have “into”.) People believe in Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the goodness of man, or whatever, but it does not change their lives. Similarly there are many who say they believe in Jesus, but it makes no difference in their lives. You have to believe **into** Him—commitment and identification are involved—it is a move from being outside to being inside.

MATTHEW 18

in the depth of the sea!^a ⁷Woe to the world because of offenses! Now it is necessary that offenses come, but woe to that person by whom the offense comes!

⁸If your hand or your foot is causing you to fall, cut them off and throw them away! It is better for you to enter into the life lame or maimed than to be thrown into the everlasting fire, having two hands or two feet. ⁹And if your eye is causing you to fall, tear it out and throw it away! It is better for you to enter into the life one eyed than to be thrown into the fiery Hell, having two eyes.^b

God loves children

¹⁰“See to it that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father, who is in the heavens.^c ¹¹For the Son of the Man came to save the lost.^d ¹²What do you think? If some man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the mountains^e to go and search for the stray? ¹³And if he happens to find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. ¹⁴Likewise it is not a desire, in the view of your Father in heaven, that one of these little ones should be wasted.^f

Handling a recalcitrant brother

¹⁵“Now if your brother sins against you, go, confront him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶But should he not hear, take along with you one or two more, so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷And should he refuse to hear them, tell it to the congregation. But should he refuse to hear even the congregation, let him be to you just like the heathen and the tax collector.^g

Agreeing in prayer

¹⁸“Assuredly I say to you, whatever (pl.) you (pl.) may bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.^h ¹⁹Assuredly again, I say to you that if two of you should agree on earth about any subject whatever that they may ask, it will be done for them

^a It is preferable to suffer an ignominious physical death than to destroy the faith of a child who believes into Jesus. What is worse than an ignominious physical death? Spiritual death—in verses 8-9 Jesus refers overtly to hell fire. If you send a child to hell, you go too! What about all the teachers who have dedicated themselves to destroying the faith of their students?

^b I believe this is literal, but largely hypothetical—by the time someone realizes what is happening, it is usually too late. Maybe that is why we are supposed to exhort one another daily (Hebrews 3:13).

^c “These little ones” refers to the literal children who were in the room. In verse 2 Jesus called one over, so it was obviously in the room, but the playmates would naturally stop to see what was going to happen, so there were several in the room. This verse suggests the existence of guardian angels.

^d Just 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit verse 11 (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.).

^e “In the mountains”—note that the 99 were not left in a safe fold somewhere; they were left unprotected. The shepherd takes a calculated risk.

^f The Lord’s statement here is round about, not direct—I tried to reflect that ‘round-aboutness’.

^g In other words, such a person is to be excommunicated, ostracized.

^h The tense of the Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic future perfect, passive voice (so also in 16:18). Thus, “will have been bound/loosed” not “will be bound/loosed”. We are not telling God what to do; we are to apply down here that which He has already done in heaven. What had been just for Peter is now given to all the disciples. For more discussion, please see the Appendix: Do we command God? Matthew 18:18.

by my Father who is in heaven.^a **20**Because where there are two or three gathered together into my name, there I am in their midst!”^b

About forgiveness

21Then Peter approached Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him; up to seven times?” **22**Jesus says to him: “Not, I tell you, up to seven, but up to seventy-seven times!”^c

23“Therefore the kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. **24**And as he began to settle up, one debtor of ten thousand talents was brought to him. **25**But since he had nothing with which to repay, his lord commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and everything he had, so as to be repaid. **26**So then the servant fell down and did obeisance to him saying, ‘Lord, be patient with me and I will repay you all.’ **27**So the lord of that servant, having compassion, released him and forgave him the loan.

28“But when that servant went out he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and grabbing him he started choking him saying, ‘Pay me back what you owe!’ **29**So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and kept begging him saying, ‘Be patient with me and I will pay you back.’^d **30**But he would not; instead he went and threw him into prison until he should pay back what was owed. **31**But when his fellow servants saw what had happened they were really grieved, and they went and reported to their lord everything that had happened. **32**Then summoning him the lord says to him: ‘Malignant servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. **33**Were you also not obligated^e to have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ **34**So in anger the lord handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed to him.

35“My heavenly Father will handle you just like that, if each of you does not forgive his brother his trespasses, from the heart.”^f

Jesus ministers in Perea—29/30 AD

19 ¹Now it happened, when Jesus had finished these words, that He departed from Galilee and went to the borders of Judea beyond the Jordan. ²And large crowds followed Him and there He healed them.

Jesus denies divorce

³The Pharisees also came to Him to test Him, saying to Him, “Is it permissible for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any cause?” ⁴So in answer He said to them: “Have you never read that the Creator at the beginning made them a male and a female? ⁵And He said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father

^a If you are like I am, you have probably tried this, and it didn’t work! Why not? I suppose because verses 19 and 20 must be taken together. The ‘because’ that begins verse 20 gives the clue—if Jesus is part of the group that is asking, then His will limits the asking.

^b The Greek text has “into my name”, not “in”—commitment is involved.

^c Why 77 and not 490? Well, actually the Greek phrase is ambiguous—it could be either. In either case Jesus is saying that forgiveness should not be limited by number.

^d The picture is that he kept begging all the way to the prison.

^e Notice the verb ‘obligated’; verse 35 makes clear that this is the way God looks at it—His having forgiven me obligates me to forgive others. Observe that the king reversed his pardon—what might the implications of that be? “My heavenly Father will handle you just like that!”

^f This is a very strong statement! Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “his trespasses” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Note the ‘fellow servant’ and ‘his brother’—presumably declared enemies of Sovereign Jesus are not in view.

and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be turned into one flesh.^a
⁶So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God joined together let not man separate!" ⁷They say to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her?"^b ⁸He says to them: "Because of your hard-heartedness Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been so. ⁹And **I** say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries a divorcee commits adultery."^c ¹⁰His disciples say to Him, "If that's the situation of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry!"^d ¹¹So He said to them: "Not all *can* assimilate this word, but those to whom it has been given."^e ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way, from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were castrated by men; and there are eunuchs who castrated themselves for the sake of the kingdom of the heavens. He who is able to assimilate it, let him assimilate."^f

Jesus blesses children

¹³Then little children were brought to Him, that He might lay hands on them and pray; but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴So Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens." ¹⁵And after laying hands on them He moved on from there.

It is difficult for a rich person to enter the Kingdom

¹⁶And then, a certain one came and said to Him, "Good teacher, what good thing must I do so that I may have eternal life?" ¹⁷But He said to him: "Why do you call me good? No one is good except One, God.^g But if you want to enter into the life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He says to Him, "Which ones?"^h So Jesus said: "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not give false witness,' ¹⁹Honor your father and your mother,' and 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁰The young man says to Him: "I

^a "Two"—not three, four, five, etc. "The two" refers to one man and one woman—not two men, a man and an animal, a woman and a demon, or whatever. The 'one flesh' is not just poetic language, it refers to a chemical reality.

^b They distorted the Text: Moses did not command divorce. The Lord corrects their distortion.

^c "Fornication" is distinct from "adultery" and does not include it. Here, it is presumably a reference to pre-marital sex, where a groom discovers that his bride is no longer a virgin (like the situation that Joseph faced in Matthew 1:18-19). Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 9 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Why the strong reaction from the disciples? Obviously Jesus did not give the expected answer, namely that infidelity justifies divorce.

^e The demonstrative pronoun 'this' is probably cataphoric, referring forward to the content of verse 12.

^f What in the world do 'eunuchs' have to do with divorce and remarriage? Well, do eunuchs have sexual relations? A eunuch castrated by others was a victim of the actions of others. We also may be victimized by others, and be obliged to take the consequences.

^g Jesus is not denying that He is good. He is challenging the man's opinion about Himself. The man was not recognizing Jesus to be God—if he had, Jesus would not have objected. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Good" before "teacher" in verse 16 and have Jesus saying, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is One who is good" here in verse 17 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The minority reading makes Matthew contradict Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:9; it probably originated in Egypt, that was dominated by Gnosticism.

^h Did he think that some were not necessary?

have kept all these things since my youth.^a What do I still lack?” ²¹Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me.” ²²So upon hearing that word the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.^b

²³Then Jesus said to His disciples: “Assuredly I say to you that *only* with difficulty will a rich person enter into the kingdom of the heavens. ²⁴And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God.”^c ²⁵Upon hearing it His disciples were really flabbergasted saying, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁶So looking at them Jesus said, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

It pays to serve Jesus

²⁷Then Peter answered and said to Him: “See, we have left all and followed you. So what will we have?” ²⁸So Jesus said to them: “Assuredly I say to you that in the Regeneration,^d when the Son of the Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.^e ²⁹And, everyone who left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^f or children or fields for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit life eternal. ³⁰But many ‘first’ will be last, and ‘last’ first.

The desperate landowner

20 ¹“For the kingdom of the heavens is like a certain landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²And agreeing with the workers for a denarius a day he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour [9 a.m.] he saw others standing idle in the marketplace. ⁴And he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard and I will give you whatever is right.’ So off they went. ⁵He went out again about the sixth hour, and the ninth, and did the same. ⁶Now about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and he says to them, ‘Why have you stood here idle all day?’^g ⁷They

^a “Since my youth” is omitted by 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Jesus emphasized the commandment about loving one’s neighbor because that was precisely the one that the young man was not keeping. He went away sorrowful because Jesus made him see that he was not keeping it, and worse yet, was not prepared to keep it.

^c This seemingly difficult statement has given rise to several attempts to avoid the literal meaning. However, since in verse 26 Jesus says it is “impossible” we may stay with the literal meaning. Jesus had already said that one cannot serve God and money, so someone who “trusts in riches” (Mark 10:24, as in 99.5% of the Greek manuscripts) simply cannot be saved (unless he abandons that trust).

^d I take it that Jesus is referring to His millennial reign, the Messianic Kingdom, when the earth will be ‘regenerated’, being restored to conditions reminiscent of Eden. For instance, if He does not regenerate the magnetic field that surrounds it pretty soon, life on this planet will become less and less viable.

^e I wonder who will occupy the Iscariot’s throne? I see no reason to doubt that the Lord is being literal here.

^f Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “or wife” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)—the idea of having 100 wives was no doubt objectionable. Actually, the ‘hundredfold’ should presumably not be taken in a strictly literal sense. I take it that the Lord is saying that we will be abundantly recompensed, if not down here, certainly in heaven. In my own experience, in the absence of my real mother, whenever I needed one God provided one. If you only have one brother, that is all you can leave, obviously, so the plural nouns are also contingent on the facts in the case. ‘Eternal’ life is a quality of life, and it begins down here.

^g How did he know they had been there all day? He had seen them, and had himself refused to hire them until the end. As his desperation level increased, he became less and less choosy about the quality of the workers [I take it that for some reason the grapes had to be collected that day; any that were left

say to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He says to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and you will receive whatever is right.'^a **8**So when evening had come the owner of the vineyard says to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wage, beginning at the last to the first.'^b **9**The eleventh hour ones came and each received a denarius. **10**So when the first ones came they supposed that they would receive more; yet each of them also received a denarius. **11**When they received it they began grumbling against the landowner **12**saying, 'These last worked *only* one hour, and you made them equal to us who bore the burden and the heat of the day!' **13**But in answer he said to one of them: 'Friend, I am not wronging you. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?' **14**Take what is yours and go. I wish to give to this last one just as to you. **15**Or is it not permissible for me to do what I want with what is mine? Is your eye evil because I am good?' **16**Just so the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen."^c

Jesus alerts the disciples, again

17As Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem He took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them privately: **18**"Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of the Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, **19**and they will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify. And on the third day He will rise!"

Selfish ambition rebuked

20Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him, with her sons, and kneeling down she asked something from Him. **21**So He said to her, "What do you wish?" She says to Him, "State that these my two sons may sit one on Your right and one on Your left in Your kingdom." **22**But in answer Jesus said: "You (pl.) do not know what you are asking.^d Are you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink, or to be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with?"^e They say to Him, "We are able." **23**And He says to them: "You will indeed drink my cup, and you will be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with, but to sit on my right and on my left is not mine to give; rather it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."^f

24Now when the ten heard it they were indignant at the two brothers.^g **25**But summoning them Jesus said: "You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over

until later would be lost]. As the Church is in its eleventh hour, or later, it seems to me that we see God doing just like the landowner—He is using some rather 'unusual' workers.

^a Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Presumably the usual procedure would be to pay the first ones first, so they could head for home; by inverting the order the owner provoked the confrontation. What about our own notions of 'fairness'? People who trust in Christ at the end of a misspent life get to go to Heaven, just like those who have served God all their lives. Of course there is the matter of rewards, but they scarcely compare with the fact of spending eternity in Heaven, rather than Hell.

^c Just 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last sentence (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Jesus sees that the sons had put their mother up to it and answers them, not her.

^e Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "or be baptized with the baptism that I am being baptized with" and also the corresponding clause in verse 23 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f We may well be surprised at the Father's choices.

^g Why were they indignant, unless they had similar ideas?

them, and the great exercise authority over them; ²⁶but it must not be so among you. Rather, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸just like the Son of the Man—He did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Two blind men^a

²⁹Now as they went on from Jericho a large crowd followed Him. ³⁰And then, two blind men sitting alongside the road and hearing, “Jesus is passing by!” cried out saying, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!” ³¹So the crowd threatened them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more saying, “Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!!” ³²Jesus stopped, called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?”^b ³³They say to Him, “Lord, that our eyes may be opened!” ³⁴So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes, and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.

The last week

The triumphal entry—Sunday, 03/31/30AD

21 ¹Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethsphage, opposite the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them: “Go into the village opposite you and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *her* and bring *them* to me. ³And if anyone says anything to you, *just* say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴Now all this happened so that what was spoken through the prophet should be fulfilled, namely:

⁵“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Look, your King is coming to you,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
in fact, a young donkey,
foal of a beast of burden.’”^c

⁶So going and doing just as Jesus had commanded them, ⁷the disciples brought the *female* donkey and the young donkey. And they placed their clothes on them and He sat down on them [the clothes].^d ⁸And the very large crowd spread their clothes on the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them on the road. ⁹Then the crowds who went in front and those who followed kept crying out, saying:

^a Comparing this account with the parallels in Mark and Luke, there appear to be several discrepancies. For a detailed discussion, please see the Appendix: Entering or leaving Jericho?

^b The question may seem unnecessary, but Jesus obliged them to state plainly what they wanted.

^c The quote is from Zechariah 9:9. Unfortunately the KJV (corrected by the NKJV) mistranslates both the Hebrew and the Greek, making it appear that Jesus rode both animals, which was not the case: He rode only the colt. For a more complete discussion, please see the Appendix: How many animals?

^d It must have been a curious sight—no one had ever seen anything like it. Mark 11:2 and Luke 19:30 make clear that no one had ever ridden the colt. It was so young it was still staying close to ‘mother’, so if she was tied he was too. Jesus was going to expose the colt to a frightening experience—be ridden for the first time, by a stranger, someone perhaps heavier than the colt, and in the middle of a noisy crowd! So He has them bring the mother along as moral support. The disciples put clothes on both animals (the clothes would be very strange to the young donkey, but seeing his mother take it patiently would help his peace of mind), but Jesus rode only the colt—maybe He had to lift His feet so they didn’t drag! It was probably comical, a strange way for a King to present Himself.

MATTHEW 21

“Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!^a
Hosanna in the highest *heaven!*”

¹⁰So when He came into Jerusalem the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”^b ¹¹And the crowds kept saying, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Natsareth of Galilee.”

The second cleansing of the temple

¹²Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold the doves. ¹³And He says to them, “It is written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it ‘a cave of bandits.’”^d ¹⁴And the lame and the blind came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

¹⁵But seeing the wonders that He did, and the children calling out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” the chief priests and the scribes became indignant ¹⁶and said to Him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” So Jesus says to them: “Yes. Have you never read that

‘Out of the mouth of babies and nursing infants
You have prepared praise *for Yourself?*’^e

¹⁷Leaving them behind He went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

“If you have faith”—Monday, 04/01/30 AD

¹⁸Now in the early morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He went up to it and found nothing on it, just leaves.^f And He says to it, “May you never again produce fruit!” And forthwith the fig tree started to wither.^g ²⁰And seeing it the disciples marveled saying, “How quickly the fig tree became withered!”^h ²¹So in answer Jesus said to them: “Assuredly I say to you, if you (pl.) have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you should say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and be thrown into the sea,’ it will happen. ²²And anything whatever you may ask in the believing prayer, you will receive.”

About John’s baptism—Tuesday, 04/02/30 AD

²³So He came into the temple, and as He was teaching the chief priests and the elders of the people approached Him saying, “By what kind of authority are you doing these *things?*” and “Who gave you this authority?” ²⁴But in answer Jesus said to them: “I also will ask you one question, which if you tell me, I also

^a See Psalm 118:26.

^b Really and truly: can’t you just see the hubbub! The crowd with Jesus was not from Jerusalem (John 12:12), so the locals were taken by surprise.

^c Mark and Luke have the correct sequence of events for that Sunday, Monday and Tuesday—Matthew rearranges the material for stylistic reasons (presumably). For the correct sequence of events, read Matthew 21:1-11, 18-19, 12-17, 20-22, 23-46. Chapters 22-26 are in sequence.

^d See Isaiah 56:7 (Jeremiah 7:11).

^e See Psalm 8:2.

^f As Mark points out (Mark 11:13), it was not fig season, but a tree with leaves might have some dried figs. Since dried figs are very good eating, any visible figs would have been eaten long since (the tree was near the road).

^g The Text has ‘the sap was cut off’; the result would not be visible immediately.

^h According to Mark this was 24 hours later.

will tell you by what authority I do these *things*:²⁵The baptism of John—where was it from: from heaven or from men?” So they reasoned among themselves saying: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’²⁶But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the crowd, for all consider John as a prophet.”²⁷So in answer to Jesus they said, “We do not know.” So He said to them: “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these *things*.”

Two parables against the Pharisees

²⁸“But what do you think? A certain man had two sons, and going to the first he said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’²⁹But in answer he said, ‘I don’t want to’ (but later he changed his mind and went).³⁰And going to the other he said likewise. And in answer he said, ‘I go, Sir’; yet he did not go.³¹Which of the two did the will of the father?” They say to Him, “The first.” Jesus says to them: “Assuredly I say to you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will go into the kingdom of God before you do.^a³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, yet when you saw it you did not afterward repent, so as to believe him.

³³“Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to farmers and went on a journey.³⁴When vintage-time drew near he sent his servants to the farmers to receive his fruits.³⁵But the farmers took his servants—one they beat, one they killed, one they stoned.³⁶Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did to them likewise.³⁷So finally he sent his son to them saying, ‘They will respect my son.’³⁸But when the farmers saw the son they said among themselves: ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and take possession of his inheritance.’³⁹And taking him they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.⁴⁰Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those farmers?”⁴¹They say to Him: “He will miserably destroy those miserable men! And he will lease the vineyard to other farmers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”⁴²Jesus says to them: “Did you never read in the Scriptures:

‘A stone which the builders rejected,
this one became the cornerstone.
 This was the LORD’s doing,
 and it is marvelous in our eyes’?^b

⁴³Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.^c⁴⁴Also, whoever falls upon this stone will be broken to pieces; but upon whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”^d

^a The Lord’s words were definitely not designed to make them happy! In effect, He goes on to show that their refusal to answer His question was duplicitous. They knew good and well that John’s baptism was from heaven.

^b See Psalm 118:22-23.

^c That is what the Text says, ‘a nation’, which makes me wonder which ‘nation’ that might be. Since at any given time a nation is made up of the people alive at the moment, an Israel in the distant future would be a different ‘nation’. However, in 1 Peter 2:9 the Church is called “a holy nation”, so perhaps the reference is to the Church.

^d Two Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality: D and 33—Codex D is possibly the worst copy in existence), against some 1700, omit verse 44. In consequence the so-called ‘critical’ text, UBS⁴/N-A²⁷ (which reproduces the text of UBS³/N-A²⁶), places the verse within brackets, thereby affirming that in their opinion

⁴⁵As the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables they knew that He was speaking about them.^a ⁴⁶And although they wanted to seize Him, they were afraid of the crowds, because they considered Him as a prophet.

Parable of the wedding feast

22 ¹Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables saying: ²“The kingdom of the heavens is like a certain king who prepared a wedding feast for his son. ³And he sent out his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, but they did not want to come. ⁴Again he sent out other servants saying: ‘Say to those who have been invited: “See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!”’ ⁵Now the indifferent ones *just* took off—one to his own field, another to his business. ⁶But the rest, seizing his servants mistreated and killed them! ⁷So when that king heard *about it* he was furious; and sending his troops he destroyed those murderers and burned up their city.^b

⁸“Then he says to his servants: ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹So go on the roads leading out *of town*, and as many as you may find invite to the wedding feast.’ ¹⁰And going out on the roads those servants gathered together everyone they found, both evil and good; and the wedding *hall* was filled with guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had not been clothed with a wedding garment.^c ¹²So he says to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the servants, ‘Tie him up hand and foot, take him away and throw him out into the darkness farthest away.’^d There there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few chosen.”

Jesus bests the Herodians

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might trap Him in *some* word. ¹⁶So they send their disciples to Him, with the Herodians,^e saying: “Teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth; and you are not impressed by anyone, for you do not look at people’s faces.^f ¹⁷So tell us, what do you think: is it lawful to pay tax to Caesar, or not?” ¹⁸But perceiving their malignancy Jesus said: “Hypocrites! Why do you test me? ¹⁹Show me the tax

the verse is not genuine. NIV informs us that “Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.” By “some” they mean two against 1700—is that not a dishonest use of the English language? To join Jesus means you have to be broken (so you can be re-made), but to reject Him...

^a They understood, so they were warned; but they did not pay attention to the warning. They went to hell with their eyes open. They would rather go to hell than acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. Today it is the same way—many would rather go to hell than acknowledge Jesus as Creator and Savior.

^b There is a contrast between the indifferent (verse 5) and the malignant (verse 6)—the indifferent missed out on the feast, but the malignant were destroyed. In the kingdom of the heavens there is only one wedding feast for the King’s Son, so far as I know, called “the marriage supper of the Lamb” in Revelation 19:9. So who might the ‘indifferent’ be?

^c Obviously people grabbed off the street would not have appropriate attire—the wedding garment must have been issued to each one as he went in.

^d Someone tried to ‘crash the party’ and had even taken a place at a table, but it did not work. I suppose there may be those who think they can crash “the marriage supper of the Lamb”, but if you are not dressed in the righteousness of the Bridegroom you will not make it.

^e The Pharisees and the Herodians were political enemies, but in their desperation they joined forces against Jesus.

^f They really tried to butter Him up.

coin.” So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰And He says to them, “Whose image and inscription is this?” ²¹They say to Him, “Caesar’s.” Then He says to them, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s!” ²²And hearing it they marveled, and leaving Him they went away.

Jesus bests the Sadducees

²³The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him ²⁴saying: “Teacher, Moses said that if someone dies having no children his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring he left his widow to his brother. ²⁶So also the second, and the third, up to the seventh. ²⁷Last of all, the woman died too. ²⁸Therefore in the resurrection whose wife, of the seven, will she be? For they all had her.”^a ²⁹So in answer Jesus said to them: “You are deceived,^b not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God!^c ³⁰For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.^d ³¹But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God saying, ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’^e God is not God of dead *people* but of living.”^f ³³Now as the crowds heard *Him* they were astonished at His teaching.

Jesus bests the Pharisees

³⁴Now when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they got together. ³⁵And one of them, a lawyer, testing Him, questioned and said, ³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷So Jesus said to him:^g “You must love the LORD your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind.”^h ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it, ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ⁱ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets.”

David’s Son and Lord

⁴¹While the Pharisees were assembled, Jesus asked them ⁴²saying, “What do you think about the Christ; whose Son is He?” They say to Him, “David’s.” ⁴³He says to them: “How then does David in *the* Spirit call Him ‘Lord’ saying,

^a To dream up hypothetical situations is typical of those who really do not want to acknowledge or obey the truth. No doubt they thought they were being clever.

^b I started out putting ‘self-deceived’, but the verb is passive Indicative and not inherently reflexive—it could be Satan deceiving them.

^c Alas! Is this not true of large segments of so-called evangelical Christianity? The Lord puts His finger on the Sadducees’ real problem—they were spiritually bankrupt.

^d Jesus does not say that angels do not have sex/gender. Evidently no baby angels (good or fallen) are born, but if angels are of only one gender they cannot reproduce in kind. Whenever an angel takes on human form in the Bible, it is always the form of a man. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “of God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e See Exodus 3:6,15,16—Jesus attributes this text to God!

^f Jesus argues on the basis of the present tense of the verb—if Abraham was simply eradicated it would have to be “was”. Jesus implies that they should have figured it out for themselves.

^g Evidently Jesus answered without hesitation: this one was easy!

^h See Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12.

ⁱ See Leviticus 19:18. Jesus gave him more than he asked for.

⁴⁴The LORD said to my Lord,
 “Sit at my right until I place your enemies
 as a footstool for your feet”^a

⁴⁵Really now, if David calls Him ‘Lord’, how can He be his son?” ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare to question Him anymore.

Jesus excoriates the scribes and Pharisees

23 ¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples ²saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees are seated upon Moses’ chair; ³so whatever they may tell you to observe, you should observe and do; but do not do according to their deeds, for they say and do not do. ⁴For they package loads *that are* heavy and hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of the people; but they *themselves* do not want to move them with one of their fingers.

⁵“Rather, they do all their works in order to be seen by people. They make their phylacteries broad and the tassels on their garments large;^b ⁶they love the place of honor at dinners and the first seats in the synagogues, ⁷and the greetings in the marketplaces, namely to be called ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’ by the people.

We have only one Teacher and one Father

⁸“But you (pl.), do not be called ‘Rabbi’; because your Teacher is one, the Christ,^c and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth your ‘father’; because your Father is one, He who is in the heavens.^d ¹⁰Neither be called leaders/guides; because your Leader is one, the Christ.^e ¹¹On the contrary, the greatest among you must be your servant. ¹²And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

A series of ‘Woes’

¹³“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you devour the houses of the widows,^f while making long prayers as a pretense. Therefore you will receive a greater condemnation.^g ¹⁴Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!! Because you bar *the entrance to* the kingdom of the heavens in the face of the people; for you neither go in *yourselves* nor do you allow those who are trying

^a See Psalm 110:1—note that Jesus affirms that David was inspired.

^b They were big on ostentation.

^c Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “the Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Since the second person here is plural, the Lord is evidently referring to calling someone your spiritual father; He is not saying not to acknowledge your physical father. “Your (pl.) Father is one”—obviously they did not all have the same physical father.

^e This may be why we have no record in Scripture of a Christian calling someone his disciple; even in 1 Corinthians 3:4 Paul evidently avoids using the term. I take it that our Lord is forbidding any effort by one Christian to control the spiritual life of another. He had already told the Samaritan woman that the Father must be worshipped “in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24). Therefore, that worship may not be forced or imposed, or controlled by someone else.

^f How did that work? I suppose that if the widow was in debt, they would just foreclose and put her out on the street.

^g They are already condemned, but are making it worse. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit this verse (as in NIV, [NASB], LB, [TEV], etc.). A very small minority, perhaps another 1%, reverse the order of verses 13 and 14 (as in KJV and NKJV).

to enter to go in.^a **15**Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!! Because you travel all over, land and sea, to make one convert, and when he joins up you make him twice as much a son of Hell^b as yourselves.

16“Woe to you blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is obligated.’ **17**Stupid and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? **18**And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it is obligated.’ **19**Stupid and blind!! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?^c **20**Therefore he who swears by the altar swears by it and by all the things on it. **21**And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by Him who used to dwell in it.^d **22**And he who swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

23“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you pay a tithe of mint and dill and cummin, but have neglected the weightier items of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These it was obligatory to do, while not neglecting those. **24**Blind guides, who strain out a gnat but gulp down a camel!

25“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!! Because you cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of plunder and injustice.^e **26**Blind Pharisee! First cleanse the inside of the cup and the dish, so that their outside may also be clean.

27“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!! Because you resemble whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but inside are full of dead bones and of all uncleanness. **28**Just so, you also outwardly appear *to be* righteous to the people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29“Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!!!! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous; **30**yet you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.’ **31**Therefore you testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32**So fill up the measure of your fathers’ *guilt!*

Snakes!

33“Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape from the condemnation of Hell?^f **34**So take note: I will send you prophets and wise men and Biblical scholars;^g some of them you will kill, even crucify; some of them you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from city to city **35**—so that upon you may come all

^a Those guys were really perverse! If you don’t want to go in yourself, that’s your problem; but to try to keep others from going in is satanic, really and truly satanic.

^b Where do you suppose a ‘son of hell’ is going to spend eternity?

^c Wow, they really were stupid and blind! which raises the obvious question: How did they get that way? According to Ephesians 2:2, ‘sons of the disobedience’ suffer direct satanic influence.

^d Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts have “dwell” in the present tense (as in most versions), rather than the past. I take it that Jesus was telling them that God had left their temple (see verse 38). Thus verse 22 is in contrast with verse 21, with reference to God’s presence.

^e Instead of “injustice”, perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘self-indulgence’ (as in most versions).

^f Would you say that Jesus is trying real hard not to hurt their poor little feelings? So are we supposed to avoid hurting people’s feelings? When and why?

^g Jesus makes this statement knowing that He will die within a few days. Obviously He also knows that He will rise from the dead and return to the Father’s right hand—it is from that position that He will do the sending.

the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel up to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah,^a whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.^b ³⁶Assuredly I say to you that all these things will come upon this generation.

Jesus laments over Jerusalem

³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, she who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children, just like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you did not want to. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you abandoned! ³⁹For I say to you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”^c

The Olivet Discourse

24 ¹So as Jesus was going out, departing from the temple, His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. ²But Jesus said to them: “Do you not see all these things? Assuredly I say to you, absolutely not a single stone here will be left upon another, that will not be thrown down.”^d

“A beginning of birth pains”

³Now as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately saying: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming and of the completion of the age?”^e ⁴So in answer Jesus said to them: “Watch out, so that no one deceives you. ⁵Because many will come in my name saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will deceive many. ⁶You will be concerned when you hear^f of wars and rumors of wars; see to it that you not get worked up; for all of it has to happen, but the end is not yet. ⁷For nation will be raised up against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places; ⁸but all these things are *only* a beginning of birth pains.^g

The increase of lawlessness

⁹“Then they will hand you over to oppression and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake. ¹⁰And then many will be offended, and they will betray one another and will hate one another. ¹¹And many false pro-

^a The only ‘Zechariah son of Berechiah’ recorded in the O. T. was the author of the book of prophecy that bears his name. The temple was rebuilt during his time, so it would be possible for him to have been killed there, but his death is not recorded. The Lord may have known something we do not, or He may have been referring to someone else.

^b A terrible statement! But Jesus is addressing persons who will condemn the Messiah to death with total premeditated malice.

^c See Psalm 118:26. Apparently He did not return to the temple anymore; He had declared judgment upon it: “your house is left to you abandoned”.

^d This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD. The Jews used the temple buildings as their last bastion of defense. They themselves set fire to some buildings and the Roman soldiers finished the job. Apparently the gold on the dome melted and ran down the cracks between the stones. So the looters literally tore stone from stone to make sure they got all the gold.

^e There are two questions: “When these things?” and “What the sign?” The answer to the first is given in Luke 21:20-24. The answer to the second begins here in verse 5.

^f I follow the best line of transmission, with 25% of the Greek manuscripts, in reading “You will be concerned when you hear”, instead of ‘you will be about to hear’ (more or less followed by most versions).

^g The Text has ‘birth pains’, so what is the ‘baby’? I suppose the ‘baby’ is the Messianic Kingdom.

phets will be raised up and they will deceive many.^a **12**And because of the increase of the lawlessness the love of the majority will grow cold. **13**So the one who perseveres to the end, he will be saved.^b **14**And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in the whole inhabited earth as a witness to all the ethnic nations, and then the end will come.^c

The Great Tribulation

15“So then, when you (ye) see the ‘abomination of desolation’, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place”^d (let the reader understand), **16**“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **17**Anyone on the housetop should not go down to take things out of his house, **18**and anyone in the field should not go back to get his cloak.^e **19**But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing a baby in those days! **20**And pray that your flight may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath.^f **21**Because then there will be a great tribulation, such as has never been since the beginning of the world until now, and never again will be.^g **22**And unless those days were cut short no flesh would be saved;^h but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.ⁱ **23**Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, the Messiah is here!’ or ‘there!’ do not believe him. **24**Because false christs and false prophets will be raised up,^j and they will give great signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. **25**See, I have told you beforehand. **26**So if they should say to you, ‘Look, He is in the wilderness!’ do not go out; ‘Look, in the secret rooms!’ do not believe it. **27**Because just as the lightning

^a The verb is in the passive voice, ‘will be raised up’: the obvious question is, by whom? Here we have a clear hint of supernatural activity behind the scenes.

^b The Greek text is emphatic here—it is the one who perseveres who will be saved.

^c The ‘end’ of what? There are at least four possible relevant ends here—of the world, of the Millennium, of the Great Tribulation, of the Church Age. Just as this day, this week, this month, this year, etc. all have ends, but those ends are rarely coincidental, so the four ends above are not coincidental. So which ‘end’ is it? The immediately following context points to the Great Tribulation. In that event, any unreached ethnic nations in our day cannot impede the Rapture, since the angel in Revelation 14:6 will finish the job.

^d “Standing”—presumably a person, therefore. See Daniel 11:31 and 12:11.

^e Wait a minute! If you are on the housetop or in the field, how can you “see” the ‘abomination’ so you know it’s time to run? Well, how about wrist TVs, hand held computers, cell phones with internet access, etc.? So how did Jesus know about these gadgets 2,000 years ago? If you are still around when that happens, and if you do not want the ‘mark’, you had better disappear in a hurry.

^f Well now, any such praying needs to be done before the fact to do any good. Do you know anyone who is praying like this?

^g There has always been tribulation and distress in the world, and continues to be, but nothing to compare with the Great Tribulation, which has not yet happened.

^h Adding up the percentages of destruction in Revelation, it appears that only one sixth of those who are alive at the beginning of the Great Tribulation will still be alive at its end. If six billion go in, only one billion will come out. So much for the overpopulation problem!

ⁱ Just who are the “elect” here (and in verse 31), if the Rapture has already taken place? I believe there will be many millions of conversions immediately after the Rapture—unsaved church members who are left behind. And if the Rapture is partial (Matthew 25:1-13), all the lukewarm Christians will all of a sudden get serious.

^j Here is the passive voice again, ‘will be raised up’. In this context it seems clear that they are Satan’s servants.

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comes from east and shines to west, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man; **28**for wherever the carcass may be there will be a gathering of vultures.^a

The King's return to earth

29“Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.^b **30**And then the sign of the Son of the Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn^c—they will see the Son of the Man coming on the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory. **31**And He will send out His angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will collect His elect from the four winds, from one extreme of the heavens to the other.

Learn from the fig tree

32“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that the summer is near. **33**So you also, whenever you see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors! **34**Assuredly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen.^d **35**The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.^e

The Rapture

36“But no one knows concerning that day and hour,^f not even the angels of the heavens, except my Father alone.^g **37**But just as were the days of Noah, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man. **38**For just as they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, in the days before the flood until the day that Noah entered the ark, **39**and were not aware until the flood came and took all away, so also will be the coming of the Son of the Man. **40**Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left. **41**Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other will be left. **42**So be watchful, because you (pl) do not know in what hour^h your Lord is coming. **43**But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not allowed his house to be broken into.

^a The point of verses 26-28 seems to be that the Lord's return will be very obvious, like the lightning or the circle of buzzards above a carcass—so if someone says He has returned secretly, don't believe it (see verse 30). The word “then” in verse 23 makes clear that what is being described here is the Lord's return to the earth after the Great Tribulation, to set up the Millennial Kingdom.

^b ‘Stars’ often refer to angels, in the Scriptures, and “the powers of the heavens” most probably refers to high ranking fallen angels. It is at this time that Satan will be confined in the Abyss (Revelation 20:1-3). (Just one literal star hitting the earth would reduce it to dust, so the reference cannot be to them.)

^c Literally, ‘beat the breast’—in Semitic cultures this action expresses strong emotion, involving some combination of grief, fear and despair. This will be the attitude of everyone who is wearing the ‘mark’.

^d “This generation” could refer to the Jewish race (render ‘this race’), but I think it more probable that it refers to the generation that “sees all these things”. To be more precise, I think that those who were alive on the planet in 1967 (when the city of Jerusalem returned to the political control of the nation Israel) are the generation in question.

^e The Lord Jesus declares the eternal authority of His own word.

^f It is typical of Hebrew prose (Jesus is a Jew) to re-tell a sequence of events from different perspectives. He is still answering “What is the sign?” but here He starts over and comments upon something that will happen before the ‘abomination’ (see the second footnote after this one).

^g While walking this earth as Jesus, the Son was not omniscient.

^h Instead of “hour”, perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘day’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

⁴⁴Therefore you also be ready, because the Son of the Man is coming at an hour that you do not suppose.^a

⁴⁵“Who then is the faithful and prudent servant whom his lord placed over his corps of servants to give them food on schedule? ⁴⁶Blessed be that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find doing so. ⁴⁷Assuredly I say to you that he will place him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸But if that bad servant should say in his heart, ‘My lord is delaying his return,’ ⁴⁹and should begin to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰the lord of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour when he is not aware, ⁵¹and will cut him in two and appoint his portion with the hypocrites.^b There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.^c

Parable of the ten virgins

25 ¹“Then^d the kingdom of the heavens will be like ten virgins who, taking their lamps, went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were prudent and five foolish. ³Those who were foolish, taking their lamps, did not take [extra] oil with them, ⁴but the prudent ones took oil in their vessels along with their lamps.^e ⁵Now while the bridegroom delayed they all dozed and slept, ⁶but at midnight there was a shout: ‘Attention! The bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish ones said to the prudent, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the prudent ones answered saying, ‘No, in case there not be enough for you and us; instead, go to those who sell and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰But while they went to buy, the bridegroom arrived, and the ones who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast—and the door was shut! ¹¹Later the other virgins arrived too saying, ‘Lord, lord, open for us!’ ¹²But in answer he said, ‘Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Therefore, keep alert, because you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of the Man is coming.^f

^a I take it that for there to be the element of surprise the Rapture of the Church must occur before the “abomination of desolation”. When the Antichrist takes his place in the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be god there will be precisely 1,290 days until the return of Christ to the earth. “An hour that you do not suppose” presumably requires a pre-‘abomination’ rapture—if the rapture is pre-wrath but post-abomination, only a fool will be taken by surprise, unless the Rapture happens immediately after the ‘abomination’ (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). For a fuller discussion of this question, please see the Appendix: Before or after?

^b Notice that the Lord consigns hypocrites to hell. That servant pretended to be faithful while the owner was around, but as soon as he turned his back...

^c This is a servant who had gained his master’s confidence, but then betrayed it—he winds up in hell. He was director of food services, and if he had been faithful there he would have been promoted to general director (verse 47), but...

^d “Then”—this temporal adverb links the parable to the prior context, which is dealing with the Rapture (I think). Since the foolish ones are virgins, not prostitutes, and since they also had some oil (does the oil represent the Holy Spirit?), this parable may point to a partial rapture; only those who are ready are taken.

^e From verse 8 it is clear that they all had oil in the lamp, but even with the wick down low their lamps were lit (they wouldn’t wait in total darkness) and were burning oil (4-5 hours). So the delay of the bridegroom meant that the oil in the lamps was used up—the wise ones had extra oil.

^f About 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit “in which the Son of the Man is coming” (as in NIV, NASB, [LB], TEV, etc.).

Parable of the talents

¹⁴“Because *the kingdom is also* like a man about to go on a *long* journey, who called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on the journey. ¹⁶So the one who received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷So also the *one who received* the two gained another two as well. ¹⁸But he who received the one went off and dug in the ground and hid his lord’s silver.

¹⁹“Then, after a long time, the lord of those servants comes and settles accounts with them.

²⁰So the one who had received the five talents approached and brought five more talents saying, ‘Lord, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I gained five more talents besides them!’ ²¹His lord said to him: ‘Super, you good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ ²²So the one who had received the two talents also approached and said, ‘Lord, you entrusted two talents to me; see, I gained two more talents besides them!’ ²³His lord said to him: ‘Super, you good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things, I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’^a

²⁴“Then he who had received the one talent also approached and said: ‘Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter. ²⁵And being afraid I went off and hid your talent in the ground; here, take what is yours.’^b ²⁶So in answer his lord said to him: ‘You wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter.’^c ²⁷Therefore you were obligated to deposit my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received what is mine with interest. ²⁸Therefore, take the talent away from him and give it to the one having the ten talents. ²⁹For to everyone who has, *more* will be given, and he will have abundance; but the one who does not have, even what he thinks that he has^d will be taken away from him.’^e ³⁰And throw out the useless servant,^f into the darkness farthest out! There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Judgment in preparation for the Millennium

³¹“When the Son of the Man comes in His glory,^g and all the holy angels with Him,^a then He will sit on His throne of glory. ³²And all the nations will be

^a The two-talent man was just as faithful as the first one—he also doubled the principal—so he gets the same commendation. We are judged on the basis of what we do with our potential.

^b Evidently the third man did not identify with his lord’s interests. He served out of fear or necessity, but his heart wasn’t in it. He has a negative opinion of his lord and is unrepentant: “here, take what is yours”. He winds up in hell. Are there not many ‘Christians’ today who have a low opinion of God? Who feel that He is hard, unfair, unjust—and who ‘serve’ out of fear or a sense of obligation? If you believe into Jesus you identify with Him.

^c Observe that the owner did not deny the description. The first two servants identified with the owner’s interests anyway.

^d I follow the best line of transmission, with 30% of the Greek manuscripts, in reading “he thinks that he has”, rather than ‘he has’ (as in most versions).

^e Use it or lose it!

^f To be “useless” is not a valid option. We are here for a purpose, to serve, to be useful.

^g The Lord Jesus uses “the coming of the Son of the Man” to refer to both the Rapture and the Second Advent.

gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another,^b just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And the sheep He will place on His right, but the goats on His left. ³⁴Then the King will say to those on His right: ‘Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you at the foundation of the world.’^c ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer Him saying: ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’ ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothe you?’ ³⁹Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ ⁴⁰And in answer the King will say to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’^d

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left: ‘Go away from me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.’^e ⁴²For I was hungry and you did not give me food; I was thirsty and you did not give me drink; ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not take me in; I was naked and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵Then He will answer them saying, ‘Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these,^f neither did you do it to me.’^g ⁴⁶And they will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

26 ¹Now it happened, when Jesus had finished all these words, that He said to His disciples, ²“You know that after two days the Passover takes place, and the Son of the Man will be handed over to be crucified.”^h

^a Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “holy” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). From Revelation 5:11 it appears that the holy angels are well over 100 million.

^b It is clear that the King is dealing with individuals here; nations are made up of people, and each person will be evaluated individually.

^c Wow!

^d The King demands practical demonstrations of righteousness. As James says, a ‘faith’ that does not produce will not save anyone. “These my brothers” refers to those on the King’s right.

^e The Lake of fire was prepared for Lucifer (now Satan) and those angels that joined his rebellion (about a third of the angelic beings—Revelation 12:4). Human beings who side with Satan (there are various ways of doing that) will also share his destiny. The basic meaning of the word translated ‘angel’ is ‘messenger’; many human beings are Satan’s messengers.

^f “These” presumably refers to those on His right, the righteous. The wicked will be judged for how they treated the righteous (among other things).

^g These people are basically selfish and self-centered, and self-centeredness is the essence of sin. That is why Lucifer rebelled against God, etc.

^h Jesus knew just how He was going to die. I take it that our Lord’s statement here settles the question of the exact day of the crucifixion. It was late Tuesday afternoon, probably about 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore Jesus died on a Friday [not Thursday]. Our Lord’s own statements have given rise to some confusion: referring to the time period between His death and resurrection He said—“on the third day”, “after three days” and “three days and three nights”. So some have argued that Jesus died on a Thursday, or even a Wednesday. Well, Wednesday won’t work because that would make 3 days and 4 nights; but Thursday gives 3 nights and 2 full days, plus a part of a third day; while Friday gives 2 nights and 1 full day, plus a part of a second day. We take it that “3 days and 3 nights” was an idiomatic expression that could refer to three 24 hour days represented by some part of each, but in sequence—in this case: Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The Sanhedrin conspires—04/03/30

³Then the chief priests, the scribes and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, the one called Caiaphas,^a ⁴and they plotted to seize Jesus by trickery and kill Him. ⁵But they said, “Not during the feast, in order not to have an uproar among the people.”

Someone anoints Jesus’ head

⁶Now when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, ⁷a woman approached Him,^b having an alabaster *flask* of very expensive perfume, and she began to pour it on His head as He reclined *at the table*. ⁸But upon seeing it His disciples were indignant saying: “Why this waste? ⁹For this perfume could have been sold for a good deal and given to the poor.” ¹⁰But being aware Jesus said to them: “Why are you bothering the woman? She has done something beautiful to me. ¹¹You will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.^c ¹²In putting this perfume on my body she did it with a view to my burial. ¹³Assuredly I say to you, wherever this gospel may be proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman did will also be told in her memory.”^d

Judas offers to betray Jesus

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, the one called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, “What are you willing to give me so that I deliver Him to you?”^e So they counted out to him thirty silver *coins*. ¹⁶From then on he kept looking for an opportunity to betray Him.

The last night—begins Thursday evening, 04/04/30, and ends the next morning

¹⁷Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, “Where do you want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸So He said: “Go into the city to ‘you know who’ and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, ‘My time is near, I will do the Passover with my disciples at your *place*.’”^f ¹⁹And the disciples did as Jesus directed them and prepared the Passover.^f

The traitor identified

²⁰When it was evening He was reclining *at the table* with the twelve. ²¹And as they were eating He said, “Assuredly I say to you that one of you will betray me.” ²²This really upset them and they each^g began to say to Him, “It isn’t me, is

(See also Luke 23:54-24:1—Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon; then the women rested during the Sabbath [singular = just one day]; then early the first day of the week they went to the tomb.)

^a The real high priest was Annas, but in an effort to diminish the political power of the high priest the Romans obliged the Jews to name a different one every year, and that year it was Caiaphas.

^b This incident must not be confused with the one in John 12:1-11. In John, Mary anoints His feet on Saturday (03/30/30), while in Matthew and Mark an unidentified woman anoints His head on Wednesday (04/03/30). The houses are also different. In the earlier incident only Judas ventured to criticize the hostess, but here a number of them chime in—He had already been anointed once, so why do it again?

^c Jesus is referring here to His physical presence (see Matthew 28:20).

^d So it has been, to this day.

^e Apparently the ‘wasted’ perfume was the last straw for Judas. (If he also finally got the message that Jesus was about to be killed instead of setting up the Kingdom, he may have rebelled.)

^f Clearly the use of the upper room had been arranged beforehand.

^g Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, have “one after another” (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.), as if it were an orderly proceeding, each one politely waiting for his turn. Not really—they were shocked: what Jesus had just said couldn’t be true! As a gut reaction each one started saying, “It cannot be me, can it?”, all at once. Apparently none of them suspected Judas.

it, Lord?” ²³In answer He said: “It is the one who dipped his hand in the bowl with me, he will betray me. ²⁴The Son of the Man is really going just as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of the Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man not to have been born.”^a ²⁵Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “It isn’t me, is it, Rabbi?” He says to him, “You said it!”^b

Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper

²⁶Now as they were eating,^c after taking the bread and blessing it, Jesus broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷And taking the cup and giving thanks He gave it to them saying: “Drink of it, all of you; ²⁸for this is my blood, that of the new covenant,^d that which is being shed on behalf of many for forgiveness of sins. ²⁹Furthermore, I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”^e ³⁰And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus predicts Peter’s denials^f

³¹Then Jesus says to them: “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written:

I will strike the Shepherd
and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’^g

³²But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee.” ³³Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if everyone *else* is caused to stumble because of you, I will never be caused to stumble.” ³⁴Jesus said to him, “Assuredly I say to you that this night, before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”^h ³⁵Peter says to Him, “Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you!” And all the *other* disciples said the same.

^a In John 17:12 the Lord calls him “the son of perdition” and declares him to be “lost”.

^b Judas phrases his question just like the others, only saying ‘Rabbi’ instead of ‘Lord’. The Lord’s answer confirms that it is Judas. Mark and Luke also record this incident, but the one recorded in John 13:21-30 happened later.

^c In John 13:1 we read, “before the feast of the Passover”, and in 13:2, “supper being ended” [less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘during supper’—as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.]. They ate an ordinary meal before the Passover ritual. In John 13:4-11 Jesus washes their feet because they could not proceed with the ritual while ceremonially unclean. In Matthew 26:21 they were eating the ordinary meal. Here in verse 26 they are now into the ritual (I think)—the foot washing happened between verse 25 and verse 26.

^d Here, and in Mark 14:24, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘new’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The original reading, as also in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, is new covenant.

^e “With you”—presumably at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb? The vinegar in John 19:29 would not qualify as “this fruit”.

^f For a detailed discussion of Peter’s denials, please see the Appendix: How many times did Jesus say that Peter would deny Him?

^g See Zachariah 13:7.

^h The emphasis here is on the silence of all roosters until Peter denies at least three times. This is actually the third prediction—the first is in John 13:36-38 and the second is in Luke 22:31-34.

Gethsemane—Jesus almost dies!

³⁶Then Jesus comes with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He says to the disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷And taking Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along He began to be troubled and distressed. ³⁸Then Jesus says to them: “My soul is in anguish, to the point of death.^a Stay here and watch with me.” ³⁹And going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by; nevertheless not as I wish, but as you do.”^b ⁴⁰Then He comes to the disciples and finds them sleeping, and He says to Peter: “So, you (pl.) were not able to watch with me one hour! ⁴¹Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit on its part is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ⁴²And going away a second time He prayed saying, “My Father, if this cup cannot pass from me unless I drink it, let your will be done.”^c ⁴³And coming He finds them sleeping again, because their eyes had been weighed down.^d ⁴⁴So leaving them He went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing. ⁴⁵Then He comes to His disciples and says to them: “Sleep some more and take your rest!”^e Actually, the hour is here and the Son of the Man is being betrayed into sinners’ hands. ⁴⁶Get up, let’s go; see, the one who is betraying me has come!”

Jesus is betrayed

⁴⁷And while He was still speaking, there was Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a large crowd with swords and clubs,^f sent from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸(Now His betrayer had given them a sign saying, “Whomever I kiss, it is He; take Him!”) ⁴⁹And he went right up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁵⁰So Jesus said to him, “Friend, what brings you here?”^g Then approaching they laid hands on Jesus and took Him. ⁵¹And then, one of those with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, and

^a I take it that Jesus faced the full implications of the cross at this point—that He would be made sin, be separated from the Father—and the anguish of soul was so terrible that He almost died. Luke 22:44 records that Jesus sweat blood, “great drops” of it—a rare condition that is usually fatal. Verse 43 records that an angel from heaven strengthened Him. I believe Hebrews 5:7 refers to this moment: Jesus cried out to be delivered from a premature death in the Garden, He had to get to the cross, and the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him. [Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit Luke 22:43-44.]

^b How did Matthew know what Jesus prayed? It is not clear whether the “stone’s throw” (Luke 22:41) refers to the nine, or the three, but even if the three were within earshot how much would they hear asleep? Did Jesus tell them after His resurrection? Or did the Holy Spirit simply reveal it? And how did they know about the blood if they were asleep?

^c Notice that the second prayer is less ‘desperate’—Jesus is getting the victory over His anguish. I believe the real battle was won in Gethsemane—the cross was just the mopping-up.

^d The Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic pluperfect, passive voice = ‘had been’. The clear implication is that there was supernatural involvement. Just as Jesus had to face the devil alone in the desert, without angelic help (Matthew 4:11), so here He faced His trial alone, without human help.

^e I take it that Jesus is reproving them with a bit of gentle sarcasm, since He goes on to say, “Get up”—although there could have been an interval between verses 45 and 46.

^f Jesus had repeatedly demonstrated unusual power, and they were probably expecting some resistance—hence the crowd.

^g Jesus knew perfectly well why Judas was there, so why did He call him “friend”? Perhaps to show that He held no personal animosity against him. Here read John 18:4-9. Jesus is clearly in control. They finally laid hands on Him only because He allowed it—it had to be; it was the Father’s will.

striking the servant of the high priest he cut off his ear!^a **52**But Jesus says to him: “Put your sword back into its place, for all who take the sword will die by the sword. **53**Do you actually suppose that I cannot call upon my Father right now and He will place beside me more than twelve legions of angels?^b **54**But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it has to happen this way?” **55**At that time Jesus said to the crowd: “Have you come out with swords and clubs, as against a bandit, to arrest me? I used to sit daily with you in the temple, teaching, and you did not seize me. **56**But all this has happened so that the Scriptures of the prophets should be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples forsook Him and ran away.

57So those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. **58**Now Peter was following Him at a distance, up to the high priest’s courtyard. And going inside he sat down with the attendants, to see the end.

Jesus tried by the Council

59The chief priests and the elders, in fact the whole Council, kept looking for false witnesses against Jesus so that they could put Him to death, **60**but did not find any. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they did not find any. But at last two false witnesses came forward **61**and said, “This *fellow* said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’”^c **62**And standing up the high priest said to Him: “Do you answer nothing?^d What is it that these men are testifying against you?” **63**But Jesus kept silent. So reacting the high priest said to Him, “I put you under oath by the Living God so that you tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God!”^e **64**Jesus says to him: “You said it. Furthermore, I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of the Man sitting at the Power’s right, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”^f **65**Then the high priest tore his clothes saying: “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? See, now you have heard His blasphemy! **66**What do you think?” So in answer they said, “He deserves death!” **67**Then they spat in His face and punched Him, while others slapped Him **68**saying, “Messiah, prophesy to us! Who is the one who hit you?”^g

Peter denies Jesus

69Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a certain servant girl approached him saying, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” **70**But he denied be-

^a From John 18:10 we know that it was Peter, and that the servant was Malchus. The Text has ‘the servant’, so the high priest had probably put him in charge of the operation. Obviously Peter is not used to wielding a sword.

^b That would be a minimum of 36,000—probably enough to handle the situation, don’t you think?

^c Of course, Jesus had said nothing of the kind, but even if He had, it would just be stupid, not criminal.

^d A freer rendering would be, “Aren’t you going to answer?”—the priest was frustrated, getting desperate. He had to get results.

^e What the priest did was cowardly and illegal. He had to come up with two witnesses on his own. Of course, under oath to the Living God Jesus had to answer, and of course He would tell the truth. And if He told the truth it wasn’t blasphemy. During His ministry He had given more than enough evidence in support of His claim. They simply refused to acknowledge it. From the way Caiaphas framed the oath, I think he knew in his heart that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (just as Satan knows it) but had determined to rebel against Him.

^f Jesus made it easy for him, gave him more than he asked. According to the Plan, He had to be condemned.

^g Just like Satan entered Judas (John 13:27), the gang here was probably under satanic influence (which would help to explain their perversity).

fore them all saying, “I don’t know what you are saying.” ⁷¹And having gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and says to those who were there, “This *fellow* also was with Jesus the Natsorean.” ⁷²And he denied again, with an oath, “I do not know the man!” ⁷³But a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Really, you too are one of them, because your very accent gives you away!” ⁷⁴Then he began to curse and to swear, “I do not know the man!!” And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵And Peter remembered^a the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me three times.” And going out he cried bitterly.

Crucifixion Day—Friday, 04/05/30

27 ¹When early morning came, all the chief priests and elders plotted against Jesus to kill Him. ²And having bound Him they went and handed Him over to Pontius^b Pilate, the governor.

The end of Judas—parenthetical

³(Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, felt regret and returned the thirty silver *coins* to the chief priests and elders ⁴saying, “I sinned, by betraying innocent blood.” But they said: “What do we care? It’s your problem!” ⁵So throwing the silver down in the sanctuary he left, and went and hanged himself!^c ⁶Then the chief priests took the coins and said, “It isn’t lawful to put them into the treasury, being blood money.”^d ⁷So after consultation they bought the potter’s field with them, as a burial ground for strangers. ⁸Therefore that field has been called ‘field of blood’ to this day. ⁹Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet,^e namely: “And they took the thirty silver *coins*, the value of the one who was priced, whom some of the children of Israel priced, ¹⁰and they gave them for the potter’s field, just as the LORD directed me.”)

Jesus before Pilate

¹¹So Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him saying, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus said to him, “As you say.” ¹²But although the chief priests and elders kept accusing Him, He answered nothing. ¹³Then Pilate says to Him, “Don’t you hear all that they are saying against you?” ¹⁴But He did not answer him, not even one word, so that the governor was really amazed.

“We want Barabbas!”

¹⁵Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release one prisoner to the crowd, whomever they wanted. ¹⁶Just then they had a notorious prisoner

^a Yes, but only after Jesus looked at him (Luke 22:61) and broke the satanic spell (Luke 22:31).

^b Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Pontius” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c For a discussion of the seeming discrepancy with Acts 1:18-19, please see the Appendix: How did Judas die?

^d Having gulped down a camel they now strain out a gnat. When you put on legalistic blinders you lose moral perspective.

^e The quote resembles Zechariah 11:12-13 (not a perfect fit) but really has no counterpart in the canonical Jeremiah. However, Daniel (9:2) refers to “the books” (plural) in connection with Jeremiah the prophet. Just as Jude (verse 14) had access to a prophecy by Enoch, of which no copy survives, Matthew may have had access to other writings of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2), of which no copy survives. For further discussion of this, please see the Appendix: Jeremiah? Matthew 27:9-10.

called Barabbas. ¹⁷So while they were assembled Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Messiah?” ¹⁸For he knew that they had handed Him over through envy.

¹⁹Now as he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, because I suffered a great deal in a dream today because of Him.”

²⁰But the chief priests and elders had persuaded the crowds that they should ask for Barabbas, but destroy Jesus. ²¹So the governor spoke up and said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” And they said, “Barabbas!” ²²Pilate says to them, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Messiah?” They all say to him, “Let Him be crucified!” ²³So the governor said, “But, what evil did He do?” But they kept yelling all the more saying, “Let Him be crucified!” ²⁴When Pilate saw that nothing was being gained but rather a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying: “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man.^a It’s your problem!” ²⁵So in answer all the people said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children!”^b ²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them, but Jesus, after flogging Him,^c he delivered to be crucified.

Soldiers make fun of Jesus

²⁷Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸They stripped Him and put a scarlet cloak on Him. ²⁹They plaited a crown out of thorns and put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and kneeling before Him they would mock Him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”^d ³⁰Spitting on Him they took the reed and hit Him repeatedly on the head.^e ³¹After they had mocked Him they took the cloak off Him and put His own clothes back on; and they led Him away to be crucified.

The crucifixion

³²Now as they went out they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; they compelled him to carry His cross. ³³Upon arriving at a place called Golgotha, which means ‘place of a skull’, ³⁴they gave Him sour wine mixed with gall to drink;^f but having tasted it He would not drink. ³⁵Having crucified Him they div-

^a Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “righteous” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Notice that Pilate declares Jesus to be righteous.

^b Terrible, terrible, terrible! This may well be the worst curse that any parents ever placed upon their descendants. Just terrible!!

^c Apparently flogging was considered to be a necessary part of the ritual/procedure—you had to flog first, and then crucify!

^d They were really having fun! The soldiers were not Jews and presumably did not know anything about Jesus. They probably held a low opinion of Jews in general, and some ‘peasant’ who thought he was a king, well...

^e Here they get nasty. The thorns were probably poisonous and the blows drove the points into His scalp down to the bone. His face began to swell from the poison; the blood oozing from the wounds was mixed with the spit. We assume from Isaiah 50:6 that the soldiers also yanked out parts of His beard, which would have torn away the skin as well. The total effect must have been horrible, leaving Jesus unrecognizable—Isaiah 52:14 was literally fulfilled.

^f This was a small humanitarian gesture—gall is a crude anesthetic, and would deaden the pain. But Jesus refused it, so He remained fully alert on the cross and felt it all. For a discussion of the seeming discrepancy with Mark, please see the Appendix: ‘Gall’, or ‘myrrh’?

ided up His clothes by casting lots.^a **36**And sitting down there they guarded Him.^b **37**And they put the charge against Him over His head in writing:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.^c

38Then they crucified two bandits with Him, one on His right and one on His left. **39**And the passers-by kept blaspheming Him, wagging their heads **40**and saying: “You who destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself!” “If you are ‘Son of God’, come down from the cross!” **41**Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders and Pharisees, said: **42**“He saved others; himself he cannot save!” “If he is ‘King of Israel’ let him come down from the cross now and we will believe him!”^d **43**“He trusted in God; let Him rescue him now, if He wants him; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” **44**Even the bandits who were crucified with Him were reviling Him in the same way.^e

Jesus takes the ‘wages’ for our sin

45Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour a darkness came over all the land. **46**And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, “*Eli, Eli, lima sabachtani!*” which means, “My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?”^f **47**So upon hearing it some of the bystanders said, “This *man* is calling Elijah.” **48**Right then one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed and started to give Him a drink; **49**but the rest said: “Don’t! Let’s see if Elijah comes to save Him.”^g

*The shout of **victory***

50Then Jesus called out again with a great shout and dismissed His spirit.^h **51**And then, the veil of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom!^a And the

^a If they divided up His clothes it means they were no longer on Him—one last bit of humiliation. Perhaps 95% of the Greek manuscripts do not have the rest of verse 35 as found in the KJV and NKJV, although it would make a nice addition.

^b The Lord was alive on the cross for some six hours, and the soldiers had to stay there to make sure no one tried to interfere with ‘justice’. So naturally they sat down.

^c The board must have been of fair size, because the full Accusation, in three languages (John 19:20), was: “This is Jesus the Natsorean, the king of the Jews”.

^d This was a lie; they already knew that Jesus was the Messiah but had deliberately rejected Him. However, if Jesus had descended from the cross (as presumably He had the power to do) we would be without hope. The people were being satanically nasty, but Jesus was totally committed to the Father’s will and thus the redemptive program was not aborted.

^e Evidently they both started out by reviling Him, but later one of them repented—they were on the cross about three hours before the supernatural darkness, so there was time to think.

^f I take it that the Father turned His back on the Son during those three hours—to be separated from the Father is spiritual death. For Jesus to pay for my sin and yours He had to take our wages: “The wages of sin is death”—both physical and spiritual.

^g Comparing this verse with Mark 15:36 we have an apparent discrepancy: Matthew records that others told the man to stop, while Mark records that the man told them to stop! So which is it? What I imagine is this: as both accounts state, a certain man [could it possibly have been John Mark himself?] decides to offer Jesus a drink of wine vinegar; several others, supposing that Jesus had just called on Elijah, tell him to stop; to which he retorts, “You (pl) stop!” and repeats their statement with sarcasm [anyone who really understood the language would have known that Jesus wasn’t calling Elijah at all]. However, it does appear that the man stopped his action before Jesus could drink, since a bit later Jesus says, “I’m thirsty” (John 19:28).

^h Oh praise God! Jesus dismissed His spirit (see also John 19:30)—it was not the cross that killed Him (for details see the note at 27:54 below). As He said in John 10:18, “no one takes it from me, but I lay it

earth was shaken, and the rocks were split, ⁵²and the graves were opened. (And many bodies, of the saints who had fallen asleep, were raised; ⁵³and coming forth out of the graves after His resurrection, they entered the holy city and were made visible to many.^b) ⁵⁴Now when the centurion and those with him guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that happened they were scared stiff and said, “This *Man* really was the Son of God!”^c

⁵⁵Many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were also there looking on from a distance;^d ⁵⁶among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

The burial

⁵⁷Now at evening there appeared a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.^e ⁵⁸This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered that the body be given. ⁵⁹So taking the body Joseph wrapped it in clean linen cloth ⁶⁰and placed it in his *own* new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Then he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb and left. ⁶¹And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

The tomb is guarded

⁶²The next day, which is after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees went together to Pilate ⁶³saying: “Sir, we remember that that deceiver, while still alive, said, ‘After three days I am going to rise.’ ⁶⁴Therefore command that the grave be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him and say to the people, ‘He was raised from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵So Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go make it as secure as you can!”^f ⁶⁶So they went and secured the grave with the guard, having sealed the stone.^a

down of myself”. I take it that John 19:30 gives the content of the shout—*Τετέλεσται!* = “Paid in full!” It was a shout of victory.

^a God Himself ripped the veil (or ordered it done). Access to God’s presence is no longer limited to one man once a year. See Hebrews 10:19-22.

^b Wow! How would you like a departed saint to knock at your door?! It would be tremendous confirmatory evidence for Christ’s resurrection. The Text does not say what happened to these resurrected saints, but to be sent back into the ground would be a real drag. It is more likely that they went with the risen Christ to heaven.

^c “All that happened” is better explained in Mark 15:39—the loud shout followed immediately by death convinced the centurion. He had seen many crucifixions and was doubtless hardened to it. He knew that a person on a cross dies from asphyxiation. The weight of the body pushes the diaphragm against the lungs and you cannot breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure that prolonged the agony—rather than die they would push against the nail to get a breath. Finally, when too weak to do that they would die for lack of air. (That is why they broke the legs of the two thieves; they then died within a few minutes.) Obviously, if you are dying without air you cannot shout! The centurion knew that the cross had not killed Jesus. But what mere human can just tell his spirit to leave? $2 + 2 = 4$. Jesus had to be the Son of God.

^d “Ministering to Him”—here we may have a clue as to how Jesus was maintained financially during His ministry, since He presumably did not have time for carpentry.

^e He “appeared”—he had been waiting in the wings. Just as with the owner of the donkey, and the owner of the upper room, who were doubtless advised in advance that their services would be needed, Joseph was prepared. He didn’t just “happen” to have a tomb he didn’t know what to do with, complete with a large stone just right for sealing. According to Isaiah 53:9 He was to have a rich man’s grave, not whatever the common criminals got (the Father did not allow the Son’s body to suffer that humiliation).

^f Was Pilate happy? No he was not! And maybe, just maybe, he was not as stupid as some might like to think. From Mark 15:44-45 we know that he debriefed the centurion, who had to explain why Jesus

Resurrection Day—Sunday, 04/07/30

28 ¹Now after the Sabbath, at the dawning of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, came to see the tomb. ²Now then, a big earthquake had occurred, because an angel of the Lord, descending out of heaven, had come and rolled back the stone from the door,^b and sat on it!^c ³And his appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴So the guards were shaken for fear of him, and became like dead men.

The angel does his duty

⁵Now the angel spoke up and said to the women:^d “Do not be afraid! I know that you are looking for the Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here, because He is risen, just like He said! Come, see the place where the Lord was lying.^e ⁷Now go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and get this, He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. There, I have told you!”^f ⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to report to His disciples.

Jesus’ second appearance

⁹But as they were going to report to His disciples,^g wow, Jesus met them saying, “Rejoice!” So approaching, they held His feet and worshipped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus says to them: “Do not be afraid! Go report to my brothers^h that they must go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Guards are bribed

¹¹Now while they were going, get this, some of the guard went into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened.ⁱ ¹²When they had met with the elders and consulted together, they gave plenty of money to the soldiers ¹³saying: “Say that his disciples came at night and stole him while you were sleeping. ¹⁴And should this get to the governor, we will persuade him and make you

died sooner than expected! “Make it as sure as you can.” Right. For a detailed analysis concerning Pilate, please see the Appendix: Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time.

^a Ironically those great champions of the Sabbath had to violate the Sabbath to secure the tomb. They thought they were being shrewd, but only played into God’s hand. Their effort only made the evidence for the resurrection all the stronger.

^b Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “from the door” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c The stone was not removed to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses in.

^d Comparing this account with Mark 16:5-7 we conclude that the women did not see the angel outside on the stone—he only appeared to them inside the tomb. And if a shining angel had been on the stone Magdalene would not have assumed that the body had been stolen (John 20:2). If I had been one of those guards I think I would have converted on the spot—surely some of them believed and later they gave their eyewitness account to the Christian community.

^e Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “the Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f It almost sounds like he was glad to get it off his chest. I wonder why.

^g Some 12% of the Greek manuscripts omit this first clause (as in NIV, NASB, [LB], TEV, etc.). Mark 16:9 makes clear that the first appearance was to Magdalene.

^h The angel said “disciples”, but Jesus said “brothers”. It may be that He was referring precisely to His half-brothers James, Jude, etc. They would not have been in the upper room with the Eleven, and so did not see Him at that time.

ⁱ “Some”—so where were the rest? Those who were converted, as I suppose, would not want to be part of the cover-up.

safe.” ¹⁵So taking the money they did as they were instructed. Their tale is widely spread among the Jews until this day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶The eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain that Jesus had indicated to them. ¹⁷When they saw Him they worshipped Him; but some doubted.^a ¹⁸And approaching Jesus asserted to them saying: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹As you go,^b make disciples in all ethnic nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;^c ²⁰teaching them to obey everything that I commanded you;^d and take note, I am with you every day, until the end of the age!”^e

Amen.

^a The Text actually says “they doubted”—it seems improbable that all of them would doubt (after all, they had seen Him at least twice already), so most translations render “some”. Although verse 16 refers specifically to the eleven, there may have been others (like His half-brothers, verse 10) along who had not seen Him yet.

^b The familiar ‘therefore’ is found in perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts.

^c Our Lord defines the Trinity here. According to Greek grammar the use of ‘and’ plus the definite article with items in a series makes clear that the items are distinct entities. So “the Father” is different from “the Son” is different from “the Holy Spirit”. So we have three persons. But He also said, “in the name”, singular, not ‘names’. So we have only one name. God is one ‘name’ or essence subsisting in three persons.

^d The ‘you’ here refers to the eleven (see verse 16), so they were to pass down all the commands that Jesus had given them. To be a disciple of Jesus you have to do everything that Jesus had commanded the eleven to do—this includes healing and casting out demons, as well as preaching the Gospel.

^e Since the age has not ended, Jesus is still with us. Praise God!

The Gospel According to

MARK

1 ¹A beginning^a of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God!^b

John the Baptizer

²As it is written in the prophets^c

—”Take note, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.”^d

³“A voice calling out:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make His paths straight!’^e—

⁴John started baptizing in the wilderness^f and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins.^g ⁵Well, the whole Judean countryside and the Jerusalemites started going out to him, and were all being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁶Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist; and he was eating locusts and wild honey.^h ⁷And he was proclaiming: “After me my Superior is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loosen. ⁸I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with Holy Spirit.”ⁱ

Jesus is baptized

⁹Well it happened in those days that Jesus came from Natsareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And immediately upon coming up from^j the water He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, des-

^a There is no definite article with ‘beginning’; and of course the other three Gospels have different ‘beginnings’.

^b There is no definite article with ‘Son’, which in this case emphasizes the inherent quality of the noun.

^c Around 3.3% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Isaiah the prophet’ instead of ‘the prophets’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 96.7% are correct.

^d See Malachi 3:1.

^e See Isaiah 40:3. My rendering follows that of the translation of the Jewish Publication Society, which reflects normal Hebrew parallelism.

^f He was ‘preparing the way of the Lord’, and doing so in the wilderness.

^g There are those who squirm at the plain meaning of the Text—John was offering forgiveness of sins. Well, throughout the Old Testament, if you brought an animal offering you were confessing to being a sinner, and expecting to be forgiven. As forerunner to the Lamb of God, who would provide the ultimate payment for sin, John represented a transition, from the old to the new.

^h Honey is an excellent food; his locusts were probably considerably larger than our grasshoppers.

ⁱ There is no definite article with Holy Spirit, so I take it that we should consider the phrase as a proper name. Two baptisms are here contrasted: 1) John the agent with water as the vehicle; 2) Jesus the agent with the Holy Spirit as the vehicle. A baptism where the Holy Spirit is the agent is distinct from these. But how and when does Jesus baptize us with the Holy Spirit? He does so from His position at the Father’s right hand, when we believe into Him. From then on the Spirit indwells us, and is closely associated with our ‘new man’.

^j Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘out of’ instead of ‘from’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ending upon Him. ¹¹And a **Voice** came from the heavens: “You are my Son, the beloved, in whom I am well pleased!”^a

Jesus is tested

¹²Immediately the Spirit impelled Him into the wilderness. ¹³And He was there in the wilderness forty days being tested^b by Satan, and was with the wild animals:^c and the angels were ministering to Him.^d

Jesus ministers in Galilee

¹⁴Now after John was put in prison,^e Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom^f of God, ¹⁵and saying: “The time has been fulfilled and the Kingdom of God has approached. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”^g

Peter, Andrew, James, John

¹⁶Then, as He was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother, of Simon,^h casting a circular net onto the water,ⁱ for they were fishermen. ¹⁷So Jesus said to them: “Come, follow me and I will turn you into fishers of men.”^j ¹⁸At once they left their nets^k and followed Him. ¹⁹And going on from there a little ways He saw James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John; they were in their boat mending their nets. ²⁰Right away He called them, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men they followed Him.

A demonized man

²¹Then they went into Capernaum.¹ The very next Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. ²²And they kept on being amazed at His teaching, because He was teaching them as one having authority, and not like the scribes.^a

^a Here we have the three persons of the Godhead clearly represented: the Father by the Voice, the Holy Spirit by the dove, and Jesus was the Son. This was doubtless an important affirmation for Jesus.

^b Our ‘test’ and ‘tempt’ are translations of a single Greek word, the context determining the choice. To tempt is to test in the area of morals. In this context I consider that ‘tempt’ is too limited, but it is included in the wider meaning of ‘test’. Note that the Spirit impelled Him, which means that this was a necessary part of the Plan. The three specific tests recorded by Matthew and Luke presumably happened near the end of the forty days.

^c The Creator had nothing to fear from the animals.

^d The parallel passage in Matthew 4:11 gives the impression that the angels waited until the devil left. In that event, Jesus bested Satan without angelic help.

^e This was probably around a year after His baptism, during the second half of 27 AD.

^f Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘of the Kingdom’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g John, His herald, is in prison—his ministry and function have ended. So Jesus takes up John’s message and continues with it.

^h Some 90% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘his brother, of Simon’—presumably a reference to their father. If Peter was the eldest son, he would have been named for his father.

ⁱ Fishing with a circular net is very common here in Brazil. You have to throw it with a circular motion so it spreads out and lands on the water as a full circle. The lead weights around the edges then start sinking and hopefully some fish will be caught in the middle.

^j They had already spent time with Jesus—at the wedding in Cana, in Judea, in Samaria—so their reaction is not surprising.

^k They had an assortment. They probably also had hired men (verse 20), so their equipment would be cared for.

¹ By this time Jesus had been rejected in Natsareth (Luke 4:16-30) and had moved to Capernaum, which became His base of operations (Luke 4:31-32).

MARK 1

²³Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, ²⁴saying: “Hey, what do you want with us, Jesus Natsarene?!”^b Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” ²⁵So Jesus rebuked him saying: “Shut up and get out of him!”^c ²⁶The unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.^d ²⁷And all were astounded, so that they questioned among themselves, saying: “What is this? What can this new doctrine be?^e Because with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him!” ²⁸So His fame spread directly into the whole surrounding area of Galilee.

Peter's mother-in-law

²⁹Immediately upon exiting the synagogue they went into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Simon's mother-in-law was lying down with a fever,^f so without delay they told Him about her. ³¹So He went and grasping her hand lifted her up; immediately the fever left her and she began to serve them.^g

Many healings

³²That evening, when the sun had set, they started bringing to Him all who were sick and the demonized. ³³So much so that the whole town was gathered at the door, ³⁴and He healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out

^a Presumably the scribes would cite ‘authorities’ for more than one position, and leave the conclusion up in the air—but not Jesus.

^b The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants נצנ (resh, tsadde, nun), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means ‘branch’. Greek has the equivalent for ‘ps’ and ‘ks’, but not for ‘ts’, so the transliteration used a ζ (zeta) ‘dz’, which is the voiced counterpart of ‘ts’. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as ‘z’! But Hebrew has a ‘z’, ז (zayin), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants נזנ, replacing the correct tsadde with zayin. Neither ‘Nazareth’ nor ‘Nazarene’, spelled with a zayin, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, netser—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, tsemach—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew (2:23) is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the ‘Branch-man’, from ‘Branch-town’. Which brings us to the word ‘natsorean’. The familiar ‘Nazarene’ (Ναζαρηνοσ) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is ‘Natsorean’ (Ναζωραιωσ), which is quite different. I have been given to understand that the Natsareth of Jesus’ day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family, who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. “Can anything good...?”

^c The demon had no business piping up, and he did so without due respect, so the Lord did not waste any kind words on him. Since the speaker said ‘us’, there may have been more than one.

^d Demons like to put on a show; personally, I like to deprive them of that ‘pleasure’ by forbidding any manifestation at the outset.

^e Instead of ‘what can this new doctrine be’, perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘a new doctrine’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^f The parallel passage in Luke 4:37 specifies that it was a high fever—she was burning. The case mentioned in Matthew 8:14-15 is probably different, happening some time later.

^g A high fever usually leaves a person weak, even after it passes, so we really have a double miracle here: Jesus dismissed the fever, but also reversed its effect.

many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew He was Messiah.^a

Alone to pray

³⁵Now very early, still night, He got up, slipped out, and went off to a solitary place, where He was praying. ³⁶Simon and those with him hunted for Him, ³⁷and upon finding Him they said to Him, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸But He said to them: “Let us go to the neighboring towns, so I can preach there also; that is why I have come.”^b

³⁹He was constantly preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and also casting out demons.^c

The hinge—proof, evaluation, rejection, blasphemy

A leper—the proof

⁴⁰A leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling before Him and saying to Him, “If you want to, you are able to cleanse me.” ⁴¹So being moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him,^d and said to him: “I want to; be cleansed!” ⁴²And when He said this, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. ⁴³And He sent him away at once, sternly warning him, ⁴⁴by saying: “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing the things that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”^e ⁴⁵However he went out and began to proclaim it freely, spreading the news,^f so that He was no longer able to enter a town openly, but remained outside in deserted places; yet they kept coming to Him from all over.^g

A paralytic—the evaluation

2 ¹Well a few days later, He again entered Capernaum, and it was heard that He was at home. ²Without delay so many were gathered together that there was no more room, not even around the door, and He was speaking the Word to them. ³Then four men came, carrying a paralytic to Him. ⁴And not being able to get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof where He was;^h upon

^a I here follow some 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission; most versions omit “He was Messiah”.

^b I here follow some 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission; most versions have ‘come forth’, presumably referring to why He had slipped out of town (which doesn’t make very good sense).

^c Was Galilee infested with demons? Beginning with Abraham, God declared a special interest in that area, so it is predictable that Satan would also devote special attention to it.

^d Wow! In those days, no one would touch a leper, because of contamination. Notice that Jesus agreed with the leper: “I want to; be cleansed!” Beautiful!

^e This would be the first case the priest had ever had of evaluating a cleansed leper, because only the Messiah could cure leprosy. By instructing the cleansed leper in this way, Jesus was serving notice to the priests that the Messiah had come.

^f But he did go to the priest, which resulted in the following evaluation—Luke makes this point clearly in his parallel account. That said, however, I can sympathize with that leper—he had good reason to sound off! But it did increase the pressure on Jesus.

^g There were an awful lot of sick people who all of a sudden had hope.

^h The roof was presumably flat, with an outside staircase leading up to it. I suppose damaging someone else’s roof could be considered a crime, but they were determined. If Jesus was in His own house, there would be no problem.

MARK 2

breaking through they lowered the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵So seeing their faith Jesus says to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts: ⁷“Why does this guy speak blasphemies like that? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸Immediately Jesus perceived in His spirit what they were reasoning within themselves^a and said to them: “Why are you reasoning these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier:^b to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins have been forgiven’, or to say, ‘Get up, pick up your pallet and start walking!’? ¹⁰But so that you may know that the Son of the Man^c has authority on the earth to forgive sins”—He says to the paralytic: ¹¹“To you I say, get up, pick up your pallet and go to your house!” ¹²So forthwith he got up, picked up his pallet and went out in front of them all; so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw *anything* like this!”^d

Matthew called

¹³Then He went out again by the sea; and the whole crowd came to Him, and He began to teach them. ¹⁴As He passed by,^e He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, “Follow me!” So he got up and followed Him.

¹⁵Now it happened, as He was reclining at the table in his house,^f that many tax collectors and sinners^g joined Jesus and His disciples at the table; for there were many and they followed Him. ¹⁶The scribes and the Pharisees, seeing Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, said to His disciples, “Why is it that He is eating and drinking with the tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷Upon hearing it Jesus said to them: “It is not the healthy who have need of a doctor, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”^h

Fasting

¹⁸Now John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, “Why do John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not?” ¹⁹So Jesus said to them: “Can the groomsmen fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom to them-

^a Time and again the Inspired Record will point out that Jesus could read people’s thoughts.

^b I suppose the point to be that the first is easier to **say**, because no one can see whether it happened or not. But if you tell a paralytic to get up and he doesn’t, you get egg on the face. The Lord did it that way to help them believe that He could really forgive sin. There was nothing wrong with the scribes’ inference; indeed only God can forgive sin, so in fact Jesus was claiming to be God!

^c That is what the Text says, “the Son of the Man”, which appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself. The phrase does not make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if “the man” refers to pristine Adam and “the son” to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

^d Quite right; they never had!

^e Presumably this happened as He headed out toward the sea.

^f Matthew’s—he evidently put on a big dinner and invited all his associates.

^g ‘Tax collectors and sinners’ seems to have been almost a frozen idiom. A Jew who collected taxes for Rome was viewed as a traitor and held in very low esteem.

^h Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘to repentance’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

selves they cannot fast. ²⁰But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast, in those days.^a

Cloth and wineskins

²¹“Further, no one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, or else the new tears away some of the old, and a worse hole results. ²²And no one puts new wine into old wineskins, or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine spills out and the skins will be ruined; rather, new wine must be put into new wineskins.”^b

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

²³Now it happened, on a Sabbath, that He was passing through some grain fields, and His disciples began to make a path, picking the heads of grain. ²⁴So the Pharisees said to Him, “Just look, why are they doing on a Sabbath that which is not permitted?” ²⁵And He said to them: “Did you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him? ²⁶How he entered the house of God (making Abiathar high priest)^d and ate the consecrated bread, which only priests are permitted to eat, and shared it with those who were with him?” ²⁷Then He said to them: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.^e ²⁸Therefore the Son of the Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”^f

A Sabbath healing—the rejection

3 ¹Another time He went into the synagogue, and there was a man there with a withered hand. ²So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. ³Well, He says to the man with the withered hand, “Come out in the middle!” ⁴Then He said to them: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. ⁵After looking around at them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts,^g He says to the man, “Stretch out your hand!” So he stretched, and his hand was restored as healthy as the other!^h ⁶Then the Pharisees went straight

^a Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘day’ instead of ‘days’ (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.), but presumably the fasting would take place on more than one day.

^b There is no way of renewing an old wineskin. Whenever a church becomes an ‘old wineskin’, any introduction of new wine will always cause a split. Anyone who wants to obey the Holy Spirit will probably not be welcome in such a church. To be with Jesus it is often necessary to go ‘outside the camp’ (Hebrews 13:13).

^c Between verses 22 and 23 all of John chapter 5 takes place—that chapter revolves around the second Passover of His public ministry, in 28 A.D. A year and a half have passed since His baptism.

^d My rendering is rather different than the ‘in the days of Abiathar the high priest’ of the AV. We are translating three Greek words that very literally would be ‘upon Abiathar high priest’. As a direct result of David’s visit, Abiathar became high priest. For a complete discussion please see the Appendix: Abiathar is not Ahimelech.

^e This is a crucial point. The Pharisees, etc., had turned the Sabbath into an instrument of domination that they used to impose their authority on the people.

^f The Lord of the Sabbath can change the rules, or even retire it! Jesus’ claim was totally unacceptable to the Pharisees; He was depriving them of their favorite instrument.

^g They had no compassion, no *agape*; their only concern was to preserve their system, their position and authority.

^h Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘as healthy as the other’, as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

MARK 3

out, and with the Herodians^a started hatching a plot against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Healings by the sea

⁷Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea; and a large crowd from Galilee followed Him—also from Judea, ⁸from Jerusalem, from Idumea and beyond Jordan; even those around Tyre and Sidon. A huge crowd came to Him, having heard the sorts of things He kept doing. ⁹So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the crowd, lest they should press in on Him. ¹⁰Because He had healed many, so that as many as had afflictions were pushing toward Him so as to touch Him. ¹¹And the unclean spirits—whenever one saw Him, he would fall down before Him and cry out, saying, “You are the son of God!” ¹²And He kept giving them strict orders that they should not make Him known.^b

The Twelve chosen

¹³He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴He appointed twelve,^c that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach ¹⁵—also to have authority to heal sicknesses and^d to cast out demons: ¹⁶namely Peter (a name He gave to Simon); ¹⁷James son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (and a name He gave to them was *Boanerges*, that is, ‘Sons of thunder’); ¹⁸Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

²⁰Then they went into a house;^e and again a multitude gathered, so that they were not even able to eat bread. ²¹Well upon hearing this His family came to apprehend Him, because they were saying, “He is out of his mind!”^f

Scribes blaspheme the Holy Spirit

²²Then some scribes who had come down from Jerusalem^g started saying, “He has Beelzebul,”^h and “It is by the ruler of the demons that he casts out demons.” ²³So summoning them He started saying to them in parables: “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a household is divided against itself, that household cannot stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and become divided, he cannot

^a Pharisees and Herodians were political opponents, so this was a strange alliance; evidently they perceived Jesus as a common enemy; such a serious enemy that He needed destroying.

^b I wonder why the demons felt compelled to proclaim who Jesus was, evidently. I would say that He generally has the opposite problem with us!

^c Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, add ‘whom He also named apostles’, presumably imported from Luke 6:13, to be followed by NIV, LB, TEV, etc.

^d Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘to heal diseases and’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e This may well have been His own house in Capernaum. If He were in someone else’s house, the hosts could have protected Him so He could at least eat.

^f Go down to verse 31 for more about this.

^g They had come all the way to Galilee, just to combat Jesus.

^h All Greek manuscripts have ‘Beelzebul’, rather than the familiar ‘Beelzebub’, that is a carry-over from the Latin.

stand, but is finished. ²⁷No one can plunder the strong man's goods,^a invading his house, unless he first binds the strong man—then he may plunder the house.

²⁸“Assuredly I say to you: all the sins of the sons of men can be forgiven, including whatever blasphemies they may utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation”^b ³⁰—because they were saying, “He has an unclean spirit.”^c

Jesus goes on the offensive

New relationships

³¹Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. ³²A crowd was sitting around Him; so they said to Him, “Look, your mother and your brothers and your sisters^d are outside asking for you.” ³³He answered them saying, “Who is my mother or my brothers?” ³⁴And looking around at those seated in a circle around Him He said: “Behold my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Because whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, my mother.”^e

Many parables

4 ¹Once again He began to teach beside the sea. And a large crowd was gathered to Him, so that He got into the boat and sat down, out on the water, while the whole crowd was on the land, at the water's edge. ²Then He began teaching them many things by parables and said to them in His teaching:

Parable of the soils

³“Listen! Yes, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell along the path, and the birds^f came and devoured it. ⁵Some fell on the rocky area where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly because it had no depth of soil. ⁶But upon the sun's rising it was scorched, and because it had no root it was withered up. ⁷And some fell among the thorns, and the thorns grew up and smothered it, and it yielded no fruit. ⁸And some fell into the good ground, and coming up and growing it started to produce fruit—yielding thirty times as much, sixty times as much, even a hundred times as much.” ⁹Then He said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

^a Since the definite article occurs with ‘strong man’ the first time the phrase occurs, the entity has already been introduced, so the reference is to Satan. Here is a biblical basis for binding Satan, which is now possible because of Christ's victory. Hebrews 2:14 informs us that Jehovah the Son took on human form to destroy the devil, while 1 John 3:8 affirms that He was manifested to undo the works of the devil. But in John 20:21 the resurrected Jesus said, “As the Father has sent me, so send I you”, and not long after that He returned to the Father. He defeated Satan alright, but it is up to us to ‘undo the works’.

^b Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read ‘sin’ instead of ‘condemnation’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^c Those scribes committed the unpardonable sin. They said that the Holy Spirit was Satan; that His work was Satan's. Are there not those in our day who have done the same thing?

^d The reference to ‘sisters’ makes clear that the ‘brothers’ were indeed Mary's sons. Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘and your sisters’ (as in TR, AV and NKJV).

^e The claims of Christ's Kingdom are more important than the claims of one's family. Of course, if a true disciple's family does not share his commitment, they are not going to like it.

^f The AV and NKJV add ‘of the air’, following the TR and perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts.

MARK 4

The why of parables

¹⁰But when He was alone, those who were around Him, with the twelve,^a asked Him about the parable. ¹¹So He said to them: “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, every-thing is being given in parables, ¹²so that:

‘Seeing they may see, and not perceive;
and hearing they may hear, and not understand;
so that they should not return
and their sins be forgiven them.’^b

‘The soils’ explained

¹³Then He said to them: “Don’t you understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴The sower sows the Word. ¹⁵These are the ones where the Word is sown along the path: as soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts.^c ¹⁶Similarly, these are the ones sown on the rocky area: as soon as they hear the Word they receive it with joy, ¹⁷but since they have no root in themselves they are temporary—when op-pression or persecution comes because of the Word, they quickly fall away.^d ¹⁸And these are the ones sown among the thorns: they hear the Word, ¹⁹but the worries of this age, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the undue desires for other things

^a Evidently there were some regular followers beyond the twelve. In fact, later on He would send out seventy, two by two (Luke 10:1).

^b See Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus only started using parables after He had been rejected by the religious leaders. As Jesus clearly states, He started using parables so the people would not understand. (Any claim that Jesus was a ‘great teacher’ based on His use of parables is just hot air.) If parables are not to be under-stood, then no doctrine should ever be based on one—but if the Lord interpreted it, the interpretation may be used. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “their sins” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^c This statement is really a continuation of that given in Mark 3:27. The Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan’s goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of “no one” it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those ‘goods’ be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the ‘goods’ are people who are subject to Satan’s power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan’s power over a person so that he or she can be saved! But what does Satan do to people that makes it necessary to “bind” him?

We find the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Let us begin with verse 3: “If our gospel is veiled it is veiled to them who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine in them.” The Text clearly states that Satan, ‘the god of this world’, is in the business of blinding the minds of unbe-lievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth, the most terrible truth in the world, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he has the power or ability to in-vade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning. The Lord Jesus declared this truth when He explained the parable of the sower. “These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the Word that was planted in their hearts” (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: “lest they believe and be saved”. Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and “takes away” that Word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it. Perhaps 3% of the Greek manu-cripts, of inferior quality, read ‘them’, instead of ‘their hearts’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Note that with both the stones and the thorns, the seed did germinate; there was life.

come in and smother the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰And these are the ones sown on the good ground: such people hear the Word, welcome it and produce fruit—thirty times as much, sixty times as much, even a hundred times as much.”

The candlestick

²¹Also He said to them: “The lamp is not brought to be put under a box^a or under a bed, is it? Is it not to be placed on its stand? ²²For there is no ‘hidden’ that may not be exposed, nor has anything been concealed but that it should come to light. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” ²⁴Then He said to them: “Pay attention to what you hear. With the same measure you use it will be measured to you in return; and to you who hear,^b more will be added. ²⁵Because whoever has, to him more will be given; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.”^c

Spontaneous growth

²⁶He also said: “The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter the seed on the ground ²⁷and should sleep and get up night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. ²⁸All by itself the earth produces fruit: first a shoot, then a head of grain, then full grain in the head. ²⁹But as soon as the grain is ready, he sends in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”^d

The mustard seed

³⁰Again He said: “To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God, or with what sort of parable should we illustrate it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, that when it is sown on the ground is the smallest of all such seeds,^e ³²yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden herbs and produces big branches, so that the birds of the air are able to rest in its shade.”^f

³³It was with many such parables that He was speaking the word to them, as they were able to hear it. ³⁴But apart from a parable He did not speak to them; privately, however, He would explain everything to His disciples.

^a The reference is to a peck measure, whether a box or a basket (or a basin).

^b Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘to you who hear’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. The phrase is relevant to verse 25.

^c To stand still spiritually is not an available option. Either we grow, or we lose. Spiritual growth is like riding up an incline on a bicycle with no brakes—if you stop pedaling, you go backwards. ‘The same measure’ includes effort; ‘hearing’ implies doing something about it.

^d We do not have to understand how God works; we just have to do our part, and the harvest will come.

^e The rendering ‘the smallest seed in the world/earth’ is unfortunate and misleading. The Text has ‘of those on the ground’, repeating the phrase above it, only eliding the verb. The Lord was not making a global botanical statement, as the next verse makes clear—He was referring to vegetables planted in a garden in His day and in that area, and of such herbs mustard had the smallest seed. To object that tobacco and orchid seeds are smaller is beside the point.

^f The verb I have rendered ‘to rest’ is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. The Text says that the birds can use the shade, not the branches. But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says ‘under its shade’)?

A supernatural tempest

³⁵On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶Since He was already in the boat,^a they took off with Him, leaving the crowd behind (other little boats were also with Him).^b ³⁷Well a strong cyclonic wind came up, such that the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling up. ³⁸But He was on the poop deck, sleeping on the cushion;^c so they awakened Him and said to Him, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are perishing?”^d ³⁹Then, having been awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Shut up; be muzzled!” So the wind stopped and there was a complete calm.^e ⁴⁰And He said to them: “Why are you so afraid? How is it that you have no faith?”^f ⁴¹They were terrified and started saying to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”^g

The ‘legion’

5 ¹Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gadarenes.^h ²And when He got out of the boat, right away a man with an unclean spirit met Him, coming from the tombs. ³—He had his dwelling among the tombs. No one could bind him, not even with chains, ⁴because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, only to have had the chains torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; no one had been strong enough to tame him. ⁵Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and cutting himself with stones.ⁱ—⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and kneeled down to Him,^j ⁷and with a loud cry he said: “What do you want with me, Jesus,

^a Going back to 4:1, He was already in the boat. I would say that the explanations recorded in 4:10-20 actually happened later.

^b I do not know why Mark mentions the other boats—maybe some of the crowd had come in them. In any case, they evidently did not follow Him across the lake (they may have been dangerously small to attempt it).

^c In keeping with the size of the boat, the poop deck was probably just big enough for someone to lie down on it. Jesus was not down in the boat or He would already be covered with water. He was so worn out that not even the storm aroused Him—they probably had to shake Him.

^d There were professional fishermen in that boat, who had seen no end of storms on that lake, but this one was unusual. Satan saw where Jesus was heading and did not want to lose his prize victim, so he made a valiant effort to stop Him.

^e Jesus performed a double miracle here. First, He made the wind stop short. But once water is agitated, it takes a while to calm down, even if the cause is gone, so second, He smoothed out the water immediately.

^f Jesus is evidently saying that they should not have been afraid, and that they themselves could have solved the problem—if they had the faith. I imagine that the Lord would say something similar to us, when we fail to respond appropriately to difficult circumstances that take us by surprise.

^g Well really, what were the options?—human being, angelic being (good or bad), God. Who can turn water into wine, cleanse lepers, raise dead, feed 5,000 with five loaves, etc.?

^h A very small handful (0.3%; 5 mss out of some 1,700) of objectively inferior Greek manuscripts have ‘Gerasenes’ instead of ‘Gadarenes’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Gadara being the Roman capital of the province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee, ‘the region of the Gadarenes’ is a perfectly reasonable description of the site, especially since Mark was writing for a Roman audience. For a more detailed discussion, please see the Appendix: The ‘Legion’ and the pigs: where was it?

ⁱ Here in Brazil, where Spiritism and Satanism are out in the open, this sort of thing is well known. The demons ‘heal’ the victims so they don’t become incapacitated.

^j I find this to be curious: this was an unusually powerful demon, yet he kneeled to Jesus, whereas many lesser ones evidently did not (although they all knew who Jesus really was).

Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God,^a don't torment me!"⁸ Because He was saying to him, "You unclean spirit, come out of the man!"⁹ Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "Legion^b is my name, because we are many."¹⁰ He started begging Him repeatedly that He would not send them out of that region.^c ¹¹ Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. ¹² So all the demons^d begged Him saying, "Send us into the pigs, so that we may enter them." ¹³ And forthwith Jesus gave them permission; and coming out the unclean spirits went into the pigs (there were about two thousand); but the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and they were drowned by the sea.^e

¹⁴ So those who were tending the pigs ran off and reported it in the town and the country-side. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demonized, who had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it related to them how it happened to the demonized man, and about the pigs. ¹⁷ Then they began to implore Him to depart from their borders.^f

¹⁸ Well upon His getting into the boat, the man who had been demonized started begging Him that he might be with Him. ¹⁹ But Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your family and report to them how much the Lord^g has done for you; and He had mercy on you." ²⁰ So he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all were marveling. ²¹ Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered to Him; and He was by the sea.

A hemorrhage and a dead girl

²² And then, one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, comes, and upon finding Him he falls at His feet ²³ and pleads earnestly with Him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; do come and lay your hands on her^h so that

^a Now really, a demon appealing to God! Since he had recognized, correctly, that Jesus was 'Son of the Most High God', he was appealing to Him through His Father—pretty shrewd! (I assume that he had been informed that the attempt to destroy Jesus with the storm had failed.)

^b A full Roman legion was 6,000 men, but many legions had only half that many. On the basis of verse 12, one wonders if there could have been 2,000 demons. This being the only recorded instance where Jesus asked a demon's name, I wonder why He did. Since He presumably already knew, I take it that He did it so we would have a record of demonic infestation. I see no basis here for needing to know a demon's name before you can cast it out.

^c Demons are territorial. (See also Daniel 10.) The parallel passage in Luke records that they also begged not to be sent to the Abyss.

^d Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'all the demons', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. (except that some supply 'the demons', but not 'all').

^e For the demons to destroy the herd would be self-defeating; I take it that the pigs preferred death to demons (animals often show better sense than people do). Since the Law forbade eating pork, presumably Jesus was not particularly disturbed (and I suppose it is possible that He Himself stampeded the pigs).

^f So far as we know, Jesus never went back there. The loss of the pigs was a hard blow to the local economy, so Jesus was obviously a 'dangerous' person to have around. The pigs were more important to them than the man.

^g Note that the Text has 'the Lord', not 'God'—since Jesus presumably was speaking Hebrew, He probably used God's personal name, Jehovah, to give that translation. In verse 20 the man credits 'Jesus'.

^h This sort of thing happened more than once; the Jews evidently believed that His physical presence was necessary.

MARK 5

she may be saved, and she will live.”²⁴ So He went with him. A large crowd was also following Him, and they were pressing around Him.

The hemorrhage

²⁵ Now a certain woman—who had been bleeding for twelve years, ²⁶ and had suffered many things under many doctors, and had spent all that she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse—²⁷ when she heard about Jesus, she came from behind in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ (She had kept saying, “If I can just touch His clothes, I will be healed.”)^a ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she knew in her body that she was healed from the affliction. ³⁰ And instantly Jesus perceived within Himself that some power had gone out of Him, and turning around in the crowd He said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ So His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’?” ³² But He kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ So the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.^b ³⁴ And He said to her: “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go into peace^c and be healed from your affliction.”

The dead girl

³⁵ While He was still speaking, they came from the synagogue ruler’s house saying: “Your daughter died. Why trouble the teacher further?”^d ³⁶ But immediately upon hearing the spoken message Jesus said to the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe!” ³⁷ He allowed no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.^e ³⁸ Then He came to the synagogue ruler’s house and found a commotion—weeping and loud wailing. ³⁹ So upon entering He said to them: “Why are you making such a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but is asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they started ridiculing Him.^f After He put them all out, He took the child’s father and mother, and those with Him,^g and went in where the child was lying. ⁴¹ And taking the child by the hand He said to her, “*Talitha koumi*,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” ⁴² Immediately the girl got up and started walking around (she was twelve years old). And they were overcome with great amazement. ⁴³ He gave them strict orders that no one should know about it, and said to give her something to eat.^h

^a The street was packed with people; the crowd was on both sides of Jesus, as well as behind. So she had to push her way forward, and no doubt got plenty of dirty looks, and maybe a few elbows—it would have been easy to give up, but she kept repeating her expectation to herself to keep up her courage (and she was desperate).

^b That was not easy, in front of the crowd.

^c That is what the Text says, ‘into’ not ‘in’. To go in peace is to leave on good terms, no hard feelings. But what might going into peace be? I would say that you take the peace with you; you live within an atmosphere of peace. Now that is a proper ‘blessing’!

^d Healing is one thing, raising the dead is another!

^e At this point He told the crowd to stop, so He could proceed at a brisk pace, accompanied only by the three disciples and the father (the messengers doubtless followed).

^f They knew that she was dead, as indeed she was.

^g Peter was there, and he helped Mark write this Gospel.

^h Nothing like being practical! It had doubtless been a while since the last decent meal. Given the crowd that was there, it would be impossible to hide what had happened.

A visit to Natsareth

6 ¹Then He went out from there and came to His hometown,^a and His disciples followed Him. ²And when the Sabbath came He began to teach in the synagogue. And many who heard were astonished, saying: “Where did this man get these things? What wisdom is this that is given to him? Such mighty works are being performed by his hands! ³Isn’t this the carpenter,^b the son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon? And aren’t his sisters here with us?”^c So they took offense at Him. ⁴But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown, among his relatives, even in his own house.”^d ⁵He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶And He marveled at their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.

The Twelve commissioned and sent

⁷Then He summoned the twelve and began to send them out, two by two, giving them authority over the unclean spirits as He did so. ⁸And He commanded them to take nothing for the road, except just a staff—no knapsack, no bread, no coin in the belt—⁹but to wear sandals, and not put on two tunics. ¹⁰And He said to them: “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from that place.”^e ¹¹And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, as you depart from there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them.^f Assuredly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on Judgment Day than for that city.”^g ¹²So they went out and started preaching that people should repent, ¹³and they were casting out many demons, and anointing with oil and healing many who were sick.

Herod had executed John the Baptizer

¹⁴Now King Herod heard of *Him*, because His name had become well known, and he said, “John the Baptizer has been raised from the dead, and that is why the powers^h are at work in him.” ¹⁵Others said, “He is Elijah.” Still others said, “He is a prophet like one of the prophets.” ¹⁶But when Herod heard, he said: “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!”ⁱ

^a It had probably been over a year since they tried to kill Him (Luke 4:28-30), and He now had a significant ‘body guard’.

^b They call Jesus ‘the carpenter’, so Joseph had died.

^c I placed all the statements within a single set of quotes, but they probably came from different people. Four brothers are named, and ‘sisters’ is plural, so there were at least two of them (Matthew 13:56 has “all his sisters”, so there were probably more than two). After Jesus, Joseph and Mary had a full family.

^d In fact, His brothers did not believe in Him until after His resurrection (John 7:3-5).

^e Jesus was obliging the disciples to be dependent on others for food and lodging, since they were not to take money—if no one fed them, they would go hungry; if no one took them in, they would have to sleep under a tree. How many of us would follow such instructions?

^f Note that this is a command. Paul did this at least once (Acts 13:51), and the Lord Jesus Himself gave the example (Matthew 11:23-24), except that He spoke the curse. (I have had occasion to do it, and the consequences were serious.)

^g Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last sentence of verse 11, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^h Just what he meant by ‘the powers’, we do not know. His view of the supernatural was probably not strictly biblical.

ⁱ Do you suppose Herod had a guilty conscience?

MARK 6

¹⁷You see, Herod himself had ordered John arrested, and bound him in prison, on account of Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife; because he had married her ¹⁸—John had kept saying to Herod, “It isn't lawful for you to have your brother's wife.”^a ¹⁹So Herodias nursed a grudge against him and wanted to kill him;^b but she couldn't, ²⁰because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a just and holy man. And consulting him he would do many things;^c indeed, he would hear him with pleasure.

²¹Then an opportune day came^d when on his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his courtiers, the military commanders, and the chief men of Galilee. ²²When the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those reclining with him, the king said to the girl, “Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.” ²³He even swore to her, “Whatever you may ask me I will give you, up to half of my kingdom!”^e

²⁴So she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist!” ²⁵Hurrying in directly to the king she requested, saying, “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter!” ²⁶Though the king became very sorry, because of his oaths and of his guests he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded the head to be brought. So he went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸brought the head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.^f ²⁹Upon hearing of it, his disciples came, removed the corpse and placed it in a tomb.^g

The Twelve return

³⁰Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and reported all to Him, both what they had done and what they had taught. ³¹Because so many were coming and going that they did not even have leisure to eat, He said to them, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.”

^a A coward John was not.

^b I suppose that Herodias was ambitious and figured that Herod offered more than did Phillip, so it was probably she who took the initiative; but she hadn't counted on John being a persistent and vocal 'conscience'.

^c I here follow the best line of transmission, albeit representing only 20% of the Greek manuscripts, that has 'consulting' in the present tense; the rest, followed by all versions, have the verb in the past. But the immediately following 'he would do many things' is attested by over 99%—a mere handful (0.4%), of objectively inferior quality, have 'greatly disturbed' or 'very perplexed' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). But why then did Herod hear John with pleasure, and why was he 'very sorry' (verse 26)? But what sorts of things would Herod take to John for his opinion? I suggest that Herod used John as a sounding board for administrative problems, and since he often followed his advice, he had an unusually good administration, there for a while. That is why he was genuinely sorry to lose John.

^d Opportune for Herodias.

^e Herod had doubtless already drunk more than was good for him (he had probably started before the banquet), so his judgment was impaired. The girl's request sobered him up—too late.

^f What effect do you suppose all that had on the party? The sight of that gory head would be enough to turn anyone's stomach. (And I wonder what she did with the head.)

^g If I were one of those disciples, I probably would have been just a little dissatisfied with God—how could He permit His servant to suffer such a ridiculous and humiliating death? God is under no obligation to explain Himself. All accounts will be settled at the Judgment.

Bread for 5,000 men

³²So they went away in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. ³³But many saw them going and recognized them,^a and they ran there on foot from all the towns and arrived before them, and came together to Him.^b ³⁴Well upon disembarking Jesus saw a large crowd^c and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things.

³⁵When it was late in the day, His disciples came to Him and said: “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. ³⁶Send them away so they may go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.”^d ³⁷But in reply He said to them, “You feed them!”^e They say to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and feed them?” ³⁸So He says to them: “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” When they knew they said, “Five, and two fish.”

³⁹Then He directed them all to recline in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they reclined in ‘plots’ of hundreds and of fifties. ⁴¹And taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to His disciples to serve the people;^f He also divided the two fish among

^a There is an even split in the attestation: half the Greek manuscripts have ‘them’ and the other half ‘him’, but the best line of transmission has ‘them’. Consider: if the fishing boat were setting out to fish, there would not be 13 men in it; also, the boat was known and there was only one large group of men like that going around together: the people would not have to single out Jesus to know who they were. So ‘them’ is correct.

^b Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘and came together to Him’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^c Let us try to get the picture. There is a large bay between Capernaum and Tiberias, the ‘mouth’ being some ten miles across. Just from the direction the boat took, many people would have a pretty good idea where they were headed. Unless there was a good tail wind, and especially if they had to row, people on the shore could easily outrun the boat, even covering a greater distance. Much like a modern marathon, the people would be scattered out along the shore for several miles, and any stragglers could follow the action. The front runners got ahead of the boat, and the followers were strung out, so whenever the boat put in, there would be people waiting; any who had gone too far would just double back. But people kept arriving and the crowd kept getting bigger (by the end of the day there were 5,000 men, plus women and children). The crowd frustrated the plan, but instead of being angry, Jesus felt compassion. [I’m afraid I often do just the opposite.]

^d This was an obvious cop-out; the surrounding area would not have enough extra bread to feed 10,000 people (or more).

^e They had no way of expecting such a response, since humanly speaking it was ridiculously impossible. In the end, the solution did pass through their hands, but unless Jesus was joking (which I doubt), He was telling them to perform the miracle, before they had seen it done. Wow!

^f Let us pause and recall the scene. The Sacred Text affirms that there were about five thousand men, **without counting the women and children**. Now then, whenever you see a crowd of people, what is there usually the most of—isn’t it women and children? In other words, I suppose that crowd was made up of at least 15,000 people. Okay, now try to imagine that you are one of those twelve disciples and you have just heard the Master say: “**You** feed them!” Now what? Did the disciples have anything? As a matter of fact, no. They had neither money (which would not have helped much since they were a long way from town) nor food. Even the five loaves and two fish belonged to somebody else.

Can it be that Jesus was playing a joke on them, or was He serious? I don’t know, but I prefer to think that He would not make a joke out of such a situation. But if He was serious, how could the disciples obey? Only with a miracle. In fact, they could not see a solution and gave the problem back to Jesus to solve; which He did. But did Jesus Himself hand the bread and fish to the crowd? No. Let us think about that scene a little more and we will see that the disciples still had to exercise faith.

The Record affirms that they all ate until they were “full” or “satisfied”. It was not just a little something to tide them over. Have you ever considered how much bread and fish it would take to “fill” 15,000 people (who had gone without lunch)? It seems to me certain that when Jesus blessed and broke

MARK 6

them all. ⁴²Well they all ate and were filled.^a ⁴³And they^b picked up twelve full baskets of broken pieces; also of the fish.^c ⁴⁴There were five thousand men who ate the loaves.^d

Jesus retires to pray

⁴⁵Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida,^e while He dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶And after taking leave of them He went up the mountain to pray.

A walk on water

⁴⁷Now when evening had passed, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. ⁴⁸And He saw^f them straining at rowing, because the wind was against them. Well about the fourth watch of the night^g He comes to them walking on the water, and would have passed by them;^h ⁴⁹but they saw Him walking on the water, supposed He was a ghost, and yelled! ⁵⁰Because they all saw Him and were terrified. Immediately He spoke with them and said: “Have courage! It is I; don’t be afraid!” ⁵¹Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were totally astounded within themselves, and kept marveling. ⁵²Because they had not understood about the loaves—their hearts had been hardened.ⁱ

those loaves and fish there was not an instant multiplication, such that there was enough for everybody; the tremendous pile would have buried Jesus, the disciples and the closest of the people! Really. Just stop and think about it. It must not have been instantaneous. When Jesus placed some bread and fish in the hands of each disciple that was all there was, up to that moment.

Now then, try to imagine that you are one of those disciples with a handful of bread and fish, and you have to feed at least a thousand people (12 disciples and 15,000 people). Can you picture it? Wouldn’t you feel just a little ridiculous taking that first step toward the crowd? Somehow the disciples find the courage and approach the people. The first one helps himself and, wonder of wonders, the supply is undiminished! The second one helps himself and the supply is unchanged. It was never used up—as they went around distributing, the food kept multiplying (to have twelve bushels of leftovers, the people were also involved in passing it on). If they had tired and stopped in the middle, half the people would have stayed hungry. If the disciples had decided to eat first, I rather imagine that the miracle would have been frustrated and the crowd would have gone hungry. The disciples ate last, but they ate very well, thank you very much! (Have you ever tried eating a bushel of bread?)

^a The Text is clear—they ate until they were full.

^b It probably was not the disciples who did the picking up, at least not by themselves. Also, those twelve baskets of pieces did not go with the disciples when they left.

^c The large baskets were probably borrowed from fishing boats near by (see the parallel accounts). Maybe the owners got their baskets back with interest!

^d The term here refers exclusively to males, so with the women and children the crowd was doubtless over 10,000.

^e For a detailed discussion about the location, please see the Appendix: Bethsaida or Tiberias?

^f It was night, and they were about eight miles away, so this was supernatural vision.

^g That was 3 a.m.!

^h They had been rowing for about nine hours, and when Jesus sent them off He presumably knew what was going to happen. (We should not be surprised if God does similar things with us.) He obviously intended for them to see Him, otherwise He would not have come near enough. But He did not go straight at the boat, but was walking off to one side. Just why He did it that way, the Text does not say, but from the parallel accounts we know that it gave Peter a chance to try a walk. As soon as He got in the boat it was transported several miles to the shore, immediately (John 6:21).

ⁱ By whom?

In Genesaret

⁵³After they had crossed over,^a they came to the land of Genesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴When they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ⁵⁵and running about that whole surrounding region they began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. ⁵⁶Wherever He entered—into villages, towns, or country-side—they would place the sick in the marketplaces, and they would beg Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment; and all who touched Him were healed.^b

Jesus rebuts scribes and Pharisees

7 ¹Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him, having come from Jerusalem.^c ²And upon seeing some of His disciples eating bread with ‘unclean’—that is, ceremonially unwashed—hands, they found fault. ³(Because the Pharisees, indeed all the Jews, do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things they have received and hold—washings of cups, pitchers, copper vessels and couches.)^d

⁵Then the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, “Why don’t your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders,^e but eat their bread with unwashed hands?” ⁶So in answer He said to them: “Well did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites,^f as it stands written:

“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me.

⁷But in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’^g

⁸Because having left the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men—washings of pitchers and cups, and many other similar things that you do.”^h ⁹Indeed He said to them: “You are very good at nullifying the commandment of God, so that you may keep your tradition. ¹⁰For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’ and, ‘He who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.’ⁱ ¹¹But you say that if a man should say to father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is *Korban*’ (that is, a gift *to God*),^j ¹²you don’t even allow him to do anything for his father or his mother any more, ¹³making the

^a For a fuller explanation of what went on here, see the footnotes with the parallel account in John 6:16-25.

^b Wow!

^c They were a long way from ‘home’. Doing something about Jesus had become a necessity.

^d Mark was writing for a Roman audience, hence this explanation (which helps other non-Jews as well).

^e They used tradition as an instrument of domination, to control the people. Jesus was challenging that control.

^f Jesus knows what they are about, and makes no effort to conciliate them.

^g See Isaiah 29:13. Do none of our churches have doctrines that are mere ‘commandments of men’? All such ‘worship’ is in vain.

^h Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘—washings of pitchers... that you do’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

ⁱ See Exodus 20:12, 21:17.

^j The inconvenient question begs to be asked, ‘Where did all the goods and money go?’ It went into the pockets of the leaders, presumably, so they were really stealing from the elderly.

MARK 7

Word of God of no effect by your tradition that you have handed down. Yes, you do many such things.”

That which really defiles

¹⁴Upon summoning the larger crowd He said to them: “Hear me, everyone, and understand: ¹⁵There is nothing outside a man that can defile him by going into him;^a rather, the things that come out of him, those are the ones that defile him. ¹⁶If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!”^b

¹⁷When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples started to question Him about the parable. ¹⁸So He said to them: “Can you really be without understanding? Don’t you perceive that nothing that enters a man from outside can defile him, ¹⁹because it doesn’t go into his heart, but into his stomach, which then expels the impure aspects of the food?”^c ²⁰He went on to say: “That which comes out of a man, **that** is what defiles him. ²¹Because from within, out of men’s hearts, the evil designs proceed—adulteries, fornications, murders, ²²thefts, covetings, malignancies; deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, arrogance, foolishness—²³all these malignant things proceed from within and defile the man.”

A ‘crumb’ for a ‘little dog’^d

²⁴Then He got ready and went from there into the region of Tyre and Sidon. He went into a house and did not want anyone to know it, but He could not escape notice. ²⁵In fact, as soon as she heard about Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at His feet.^e ²⁶Now the woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenecian by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.^f ²⁷But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first; it is not good to

^a As the following context makes clear, the Lord is talking only about food. People are constantly being contaminated by things they see and hear.

^b Just over 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit verse 16 entirely, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.

^c A literal rendering would be, ‘then into the latrine, thus making all foods clean’. I take it that Jesus was referring to the process in the stomach having a ‘purifying’ effect, since the sewer does just the opposite. Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts end the quote after ‘latrine’, and have Jesus declaring all foods clean.

^d This episode has puzzled me for quite some time. Consider:

a) In explaining His lack of response to the woman’s pleading, Jesus affirms that He was only sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24)—so what is He doing in Gentile territory?

b) The Text says He tried to get into a house without being seen; it follows that the group had kept a low profile, trying to avoid attention; and yet the woman intercepted Him well before He got there, and followed, crying out repeatedly (thereby blowing His ‘cover’)—so how did the woman learn of His presence, how did she know when and where to go, and how did she know to address Him as ‘Son of David’?

c) Although He may have done more than is recorded, and we do not know how long He stayed, expelling that demon is all that is recorded—so why did He undertake that journey, apparently the only side trip to that region?

I suspect that this was a special case, similar to Cornelius, or the Ethiopian treasurer—she had gotten God’s attention, somehow. I imagine that an angel told her where to go, and when, and to call Him, ‘Son of David’ (Messiah). Of course she gave us an unusual example of faith, humility and perseverance, but I wonder if God is not telling us something more: it is possible to get a ‘crumb’ (a real need), even when it is not the proper time-frame (*kairos*).

^e The parallel account in Matthew makes clear that this happened before He reached the house.

^f Matthew 15:21-28 gives more detail, which see.

take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."^a **28**So she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." **29**So He said to her, "Because of this saying you may go; the demon has gone out of your daughter." **30**She went away to her house and found that the demon was gone and the daughter had been placed on the bed.^b

Jesus heals a deaf mute

31Again, departing from the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee by way of the Decapolis region.^c **32**Then they brought to Him a deaf man with thick speech^d and begged Him to place His hand on him. **33**After taking him aside, away from the crowd, He put His fingers in his ears; He also spat and touched his tongue.^e **34**Then looking up to heaven He sighed, and said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" that is, "Be opened!" **35**Immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he began to speak clearly. **36**Then He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He would command them, so much the more they would proclaim it.^f **37**People were astonished beyond measure, saying: "He has done everything well. He makes both the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Food for 4,000 men

8 **1**In those days, the multitude being very large and not having anything to eat, Jesus called His disciples and said to them: **2**"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have stayed with me three days now and have nothing to eat. **3**If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will give out on the way, because some of them have come a long distance." **4**His disciples answered Him, "From what source could anyone satisfy these people with bread here in a wilderness?"^g **5**He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." **6**So He told the crowd to sit down on the ground; then taking the seven loaves and giving thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before the crowd, and they did. **7**They also had a few small fish; so blessing them He said to distribute them as well. **8**Well they ate and were filled; they even took up seven hampers of broken pieces that were left over. **9**Now those who had eaten were about four thousand; and He sent them away. **10**Then He got right into the boat with His disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.^h

^a Big dogs would not be in the house, so these would be little house pets, or perhaps puppies. This episode always moves me. In effect, Jesus called the woman a 'dog' (that is what Jews called Gentiles), and she accepted the classification. She was determined to get her 'crumb', and she did! And she left us a great example of humility and faith!

^b The verb 'place' is perfect passive; evidently the child was too small, or too weak, to have gotten there by herself.

^c He chose a round about way where He would not be known by sight, to avoid attention (presumably).

^d We learn to speak by imitating what we hear, so a deaf person will not speak correctly, even if there is nothing wrong with the tongue. In this case, the following verses indicate that there was also a problem with the tongue. If the man had never learned to speak correctly, this would be a further miracle.

^e The Lord seems to have varied His procedure on purpose: He could heal ears without using His fingers, and could heal tongues without spittle.

^f The news was so good they just could not contain it.

^g They had already forgotten the 5,000!

^h This was on the western side of the lake, so the feeding of the 4,000 probably took place on the Decapolis side.

Bad leaven

¹¹The Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, requesting of Him a sign from heaven, by way of testing Him. ¹²But He sighed deeply in His spirit and said: “Why does this generation seek a sign? I tell you emphatically, no sign shall be given to this generation!” ¹³Turning His back on them, He got back into the boat^a and went off to the other side.

¹⁴(His disciples had forgotten to take bread; they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat.)^b ¹⁵And He charged them, saying, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.”^c ¹⁶So they started reasoning among themselves, saying, “It’s because we have no bread.” ¹⁷Being aware of it Jesus said to them: “Why are you reasoning because you have no bread? Do you still neither perceive nor understand? Do you still have hearts that have been hardened?^d ¹⁸Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear, and do you not remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you take up?” They say to Him, “Twelve.” ²⁰“And when I broke the seven for the four thousand, how many hampers full of pieces did you take up?” And they said, “Seven.” ²¹So He said to them, “How is it that you still don’t understand?”^e

A blind man

²²Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him. ²³So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; then spitting into his eyes^f and laying hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. ²⁴And looking up he said, “I do see men, only they look like walking trees.”^g ²⁵Then He put His hands on his eyes again, and made him look up; and he was restored and saw everyone clearly. ²⁶Then He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the village nor tell anyone in the village.”^h

Jesus declares His death, and ministers on that basis*Peter is inspired*

²⁷Then Jesus and His disciples set out for the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who are people saying that I am?” ²⁸So they answered, “John the Baptist; others Elijah; still others one of the prophets.” ²⁹He said to them, “And who do you say that I am?” So Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ!” ³⁰Then He charged them that they should tell no one about Him.

^a One gains the impression that the Pharisees had not let Him get very far from the boat. Was Satan concerned to ‘protect’ Dalmanutha?

^b As with the 5,000, they did not keep the seven hampers of leftovers.

^c These would be two different ‘leavens’. Mathew 16:12 explains that ‘leaven’ refers to doctrine.

^d The verb is in the passive voice, so one wonders who did the hardening.

^e It is easy to criticize those disciples as slow learners, and indeed the Lord was evidently unhappy with them, but I wonder if we would have done any better.

^f Dear me, how unsanitary! Jesus used a variety of procedures to heal people, and here He used two stages.

^g Evidently he was not born blind, because he knew what men and trees looked like.

^h Evidently he did not live in that village. A small handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘nor tell anyone in the village’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of the Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said these things quite plainly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. ³³But He turned, looked at His disciples, and rebuked Peter, saying: “Get behind me, Satan!^a You have in mind men’s values, not God’s values.”

The cost of discipleship

³⁴He summoned the crowd, along with His disciples, and said to them: “Whoever wants to follow along behind me must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵Because whoever may resolve to ‘save’ his life will waste it; but whoever may ‘waste’ his life for my sake and the Gospel’s, he will save it.^b ³⁶Well,

^a From the parallel passage in Luke 9:18-22, where we have three present participles—‘answering’, ‘warning’ and ‘saying’—it is clear that Peter’s two efforts form part of a single conversation. Well that scares me; that sends shivers up my spine. Within three minutes, or five at the most (we can see in Luke that this was a single conversation), Peter spoke two times. The first time it was God who put the words in Peter’s mouth. It was Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explained the true nature of the transaction—Peter did not speak on his own but moved by the Father. So far so good; that God can do something like that comes as no surprise. It is the second time that is bothersome, because this time it was Satan who put the words in Peter’s mouth! Again, it is Jesus Christ, God the Son on earth, who explains the true nature of the transaction. When He uses the enemy’s proper name, Satan, His meaning is inescapable. It really was Satan. Once again we are face to face with the most terrible truth that there is in this life, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, he can put words in our mouths. I wish in the worst way that it was not true, but my wishes do not change reality.

^b What does the Lord mean when He speaks of saving or losing one’s ‘life’? One does not lose one’s soul for love of Christ. Nor is the reference to being killed. Rather, Jesus has in mind the life we live, the accumulated results of our living. All that I have done up to this moment plus all that I will yet do until overtaken by death or the rapture of the Church, whichever happens first—that is the ‘life’ that is at risk (in my own case).

Let us look at our Lord’s words a little more closely. There seems to be a contradiction here—if you lose, you save; if you want to save, you lose. How can it work? The parallel passage, Matthew 16:27, gives more context. “For the Son of the Man is going to come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will repay each according to his deeds.” Christ was thinking of the day of reckoning. In other words, “we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10) and “each of us will give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive his due according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). I understand that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is referring to the same occasion, the day of reckoning. After declaring that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, Paul speaks of different materials that one might use in building on it: “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay, straw”. (Although the primary interpretation of this passage presumably has to do with the performance of teachers and leaders in the church, I believe it clearly applies to the daily life of each believer as well.) The point is, our deeds will be tested by fire. If fire has any effect upon gold or silver it is only to purify them, but its effect on hay and straw is devastating! Okay, so what?

Let us go back to the beginning. God created the human being for His glory; to reflect it and contribute to it. I suppose we may understand Psalm 19:1 and Isaiah 43:7 in this way, at least by extension. But Adam lost this capacity when he rebelled against God. For this reason the sentence that weighs against our race is that we “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). But the Son came into the world to restore our lost potential. Ephesians 1:12 and 14 tell us that the object of the plan of salvation is “the praise of His glory” (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20). And 1 Corinthians 10:31 puts it into a **command**: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Now then, the point of all this is not to ‘ruin’ our lives, to take all the ‘fun’ out of them (as many seem to think). God isn’t being arrogant, unreasonable, too demanding. Quite the contrary—He is just trying to save us from throwing away our lives. Surely, because the glory of God is eternal (Psalm 104:31), and when I do something for His glory that something is transformed and acquires eternal value—it becomes ‘gold, silver, precious stones’. Works done for the glory of God will go through the fire without harm. On the other hand, what is done with a view to our own ambitions and ideas is ‘straw’. We all know what fire does to straw! To be a slave of Christ means to live with reference to the Kingdom; it means to do everything for the glory of God. In this way the slave ‘saves’ his life because he will be building it with

MARK 9

what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸Yes, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of the Man will also be ashamed of Him whenever He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels.”^a

A miniature of the Kingdom

9 ¹And He said to them, “I tell you assuredly: there are some standing here who will certainly not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God present with power.” ²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John and led them up on a high mountain alone by themselves. Then He was transfigured in front of them; ³His clothing became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth is able to whiten. ⁴And Elijah appeared to them, along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. ⁵Well Peter reacted by saying to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three shelters: one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(Because they were terrified, he didn’t know what to say.)^b ⁷With that a cloud was covering them and a **Voice**^c came out of the cloud: “This is my Son, the beloved. Listen to Him!” ⁸And then, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹Now as they were coming down from the mountain,^d He ordered them not to recount to any one the things they had seen until the Son of the Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the ‘rising from the dead’ meant. ¹¹And they asked Him, saying, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹²So in answer He said to them: “Elijah indeed does come first, and restores all things; also how it is written concerning the Son of the Man that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt. ¹³Still, I say to you that ‘Elijah’ has also come, and they did to him as they wished, as it is written about him.”^e

The nine couldn’t do it

¹⁴Upon coming to the disciples, He saw a large crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. ¹⁵Well as soon as the crowd saw Him they were excited and ran to greet Him. ¹⁶He asked the scribes, “What are you discussing with them?” ¹⁷In answer a man in the crowd said: “Teacher, I brought you my son, who has a mute spirit.^f ¹⁸And wherever it seizes him it throws him down, and he

‘gold and silver’, which will pass through the fire at the judgment seat of Christ without loss. In contrast, the believer who refuses to be a slave of Jesus builds his life with ‘hay and straw’, which will be consumed by the fire—and so he ‘loses’ his life; he lived in vain; the potential that his life represented was wasted, thrown away. What a tragedy!

^a The world in which we live is no longer ‘post-modern’, it is becoming increasingly anti Christian. In North America and Europe people have already been put in prison for preaching what the Bible says. To spend eternity in the Lake of Fire is the price you will pay for being ‘politically correct’ in today’s world.

^b He threw away an excellent opportunity to say nothing.

^c Peter never forgot that Voice! See 2 Peter 1:17-18.

^d This was the next day; they spent the night on the mountain (Luke 9:37).

^e The Lord stated plainly that the coming of the real Elijah was still future. Since the Baptizer was Messiah’s herald at His first advent, Jesus refers to him as ‘Elijah’ (recall that John was already dead).

^f Here was a desperate father who considered that his problem was more important than a theological discussion. So he interrupts (although the discussion may have been about the demon and their failure).

foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. Indeed, I spoke to your disciples, that they might cast it out, but they could not.”¹⁹ But He answered him by saying: “O unbelieving generation,^a how long shall I be with you, how long shall I put up with you? Bring him to me!”²⁰ So they brought him to Him. Upon seeing Him the spirit convulsed him, and falling to the ground he started wallowing, foaming at the mouth.²¹ Then He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said: “From childhood.”²² Really, it has often thrown him both into fire and into water to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”²³ Jesus said to him, “It’s ‘if you can believe’;^b all things are possible to the one who believes.”²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, “Lord,^c I believe; help my unbelief!”^d

²⁵ When Jesus saw that the crowd was running up, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit,^e I am commanding you, get out of him and never enter him again!”^f ²⁶ Then it yelled, convulsed him violently, and came out. Well he looked to be dead; so much so that many said, “He’s dead.”²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he stayed on his feet.²⁸ Well upon His entering a house His disciples asked Him privately, “Why couldn’t we cast it out?”²⁹ He said to them, “This kind can come out by nothing except prayer and fasting.”^g

^a I suspect that He was looking at the nine, not the crowd.

^b Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘believe’, which alters the meaning (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Around 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘with tears’ and ‘Lord’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^d I can sympathize with this father. When I consider all the things that the Lord Jesus said could be done with faith, and that I have yet to do, I too must say, “Help my unbelief!”

^e The father had said it was a mute spirit; Jesus adds that it is also deaf—the two often go together.

^f Note that Jesus forbid any return. Demons will do anything to deceive, confuse or demoralize us. If you resist a spirit, he leaves, but another may immediately take the place of the first and produce the same effect, making you think that nothing happened, so that you feel demoralized. If you resist but do not forbid a return, he leaves but may come back, in an hour, a day or a week. If I have to rebuke the enemy I now rebuke not only the spirit actually at work but any and all others that might wish to attack the person in the same way. I used to forbid any repetition of the attack, but now I send them to the Abyss.

I believe Luke 8:31 give us basis for consigning demons to the Abyss, thereby reducing the number of the enemy’s forces (against us). There we read that the demons begged Jesus “not to order them to go into the Abyss” (“the Abyss” is the same phrase that the AV renders as “the bottomless pit” in Revelation 20:1). That means that He could have—I conclude that He refrained from doing so because He had not yet won the victory, at that time. But now it is different. In John 14:12 the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes into me, the works that I do he will do also; even greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father.” What does “because I go to my Father” imply? I conclude that it must be His victory—could He have returned if He had failed, if He had not succeeded in destroying the devil (Hebrews 2:14)? That is why we are supposed to be doing “**greater**” works—like ordering demons into the Abyss, for instance.

C. Fred Dickason, who has personally ministered to over 400 demonized believers, says that his experience indicates that once a demon is ordered into the Abyss it does not come back (*Demon Possession & the Christian*, Moody Press, 1987). Paul E. Billheimer says much the same in *Destined to Overcome* (Bethany House Publishers, 1982, p. 46). Can you imagine if God’s people really got a hold on this? We could continuously **reduce** the number of demons opposing us! Hallelujah! So then, why not order all recalcitrant demons into the Abyss? In fact, why not do the same for any and all that intrude upon our notice?

^g Four Greek manuscripts (all inferior), against 1651, omit ‘and fasting’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

Jesus predicts His death again

³⁰Having gone out from there they were passing through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know; ³¹because He was teaching His disciples and saying to them, “The Son of the Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill him; and once killed^a he will rise on the third day.” ³²But they were not understanding this information, yet were afraid to ask Him.

About humility

³³Then He came to Capernaum; and once in the house He asked them, “What were you debating among yourselves on the road?” ³⁴But they kept silent, because on the road they had debated among themselves who was greater. ³⁵So He sat down, called the twelve and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” ³⁶Then He took a child and stood him in their midst, and embracing him said to them, ³⁷“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives not *only* me, but the One who sent me.”

Either for, or against

³⁸So John answered Him saying, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, one who doesn’t follow us;^b and we forbade him, because he doesn’t follow us.” ³⁹But Jesus said: “Do not forbid him, because no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterward speak evil of me. ⁴⁰For he who is not against you is for you.^c ⁴¹Further, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ’s, I tell you with certainty, he will by no means lose his reward.^d

About offenses

⁴²“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe into me to fall,^e it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.^f ⁴³Further, if your hand is causing you to fall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into the Life maimed than having both hands to go away

^a This seems to us to be an awkward expression, but that is what the Text says.

^b Around 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘one who doesn’t follow us’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^c Instead of ‘you’, some 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘us’ (both times) (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d But how and where could an unbeliever be ‘rewarded’? I suppose with blessing in this life.

^e It is clear from the context that the verb ‘fall’ throughout this paragraph refers to a spiritual fall with eternal consequences. I believe that the Lord was being perfectly serious and literal here. I suppose most deadly temptations come at us through the eye. Obviously it would be better to pluck out an eye, literally, if it would stop you in time, than to fall from the Faith and wind up in the Lake. In the first place, most people are not prepared to take such drastic measures, and in the second, by the time they wake up to what is happening, they have already crossed the line. That is why Hebrews 3:12-14 is precisely to the point: “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today”, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

^f The implication is clear: anyone who deliberately destroys a child’s faith in Jesus has bought himself a one-way ticket to the Lake of Fire. I suppose that ‘child’ could include high school and college students.

into Gehenna,^a into the unquenchable fire—⁴⁴where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’^b ⁴⁵And if your foot is causing you to fall, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into the Life lame than having both feet to be thrown into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire—⁴⁶where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ ⁴⁷And if your eye is causing you to fall, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than having both eyes to be thrown into the Gehenna of fire—⁴⁸where ‘the^c worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’

⁴⁹“Further, everyone will be seasoned with fire,^d and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.^e ⁵⁰Salt is good, but if the salt loses its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”^f

Down with divorce!

10 ¹Then He set out from there and came into the borders of Judea, by way of the other side of the Jordan. Again, crowds gathered to Him, and as was His custom, He began to teach them once more. ²Then some Pharisees approached to test Him and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce a wife?” ³So in answer He said to them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴They said, “Moses permitted one to write a certificate of divorce and to put away.”^g ⁵Jesus answered and said to them: “It was due to your hardness of heart that he wrote you this precept. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, God made them a male and a female.^h ⁷For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two will be turned into one flesh.ⁱ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

¹⁰When they were in the house again, His disciples asked Him about the same subject. ¹¹So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if a woman divorces her husband and gets married to another, she commits adultery.”^j

^a Strictly speaking, ‘Gehenna’ was the local dump outside Jerusalem—something was always being burned, and there would be plenty of worms. But Jesus here uses it as a figure for the Lake of Fire, the ‘second death’.

^b See Isaiah 66:24. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘into the unquenchable fire’ at the end of verses 43 and 45, and also omit verses 44 and 46 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc., except that most keep ‘into the unquenchable fire’ in verse 43 (but not in verse 45). I find the figure of an immortal worm to be rather daunting—always chewing on you, but never finishing you off! (Evidently there were those who thought that saying it once was quite enough.)

^c I here follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the Greek manuscripts.

^d Now what might this mean? Well, those who believe into Him Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire; those who don’t, get a different fire.

^e Some 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit the second clause of this verse, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. But just what might this mean? Well, Romans 12:1 speaks of a ‘living sacrifice’ and in Matthew 5:13 Jesus calls His followers ‘the salt of the earth’. If you present yourself as a living sacrifice to Jesus, He will make you salty.

^f For ‘salty’ people living and working together, ‘peace’ may not be easy.

^g See Deuteronomy 24:1, 3.

^h See Genesis 1:27, 5:2.

ⁱ See Genesis 2:24. The Text says ‘two’, not ‘three’, ‘four’, or whatever. The ‘two’ are a man and a woman; not two men, not a woman and a demon, or whatever.

^j Note that Jesus recognizes that the woman may take the initiative. Whoever takes the initiative commits adultery.

Jesus blesses little children

¹³People started bringing little children to Him, that He might touch them; so the disciples started rebuking those doing the bringing. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw it He was indignant and said to them: “Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them, because the Kingdom of God is made up of such. ¹⁵I tell you assuredly, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child does^a will certainly not enter it.” ¹⁶And taking them in His arms and laying His hands on them, He blessed them.^b

A rich young man

¹⁷As Jesus set out on the road, someone came running up, knelt before Him and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸So Jesus said to Him: “Why do you call me ‘good’?^c No one is good except one—God. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not give false testimony,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and mother.’”^d ²⁰In answer he said to Him, “Teacher,^e I have kept all these since I was young.” ²¹Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him,^f and said to him: “One thing you lack; go, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, take up the cross,^g and follow me.” ²²But he was dismayed at the suggestion and went away sorrowing, because he had many possessions.^h

²³Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to get into the Kingdom of God!” ²⁴But the disciples were astounded at His words. So Jesus tried again and said to them: “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in richesⁱ to enter the Kingdom of God. ²⁵It is actually easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”^j ²⁶Then they were totally astonished, saying to each other, “Who

^a Jesus did not say that only children can be saved; rather, one must believe the way a child believes, without question, and literally.

^b Blessing children is an important thing to do.

^c Jesus was not denying that He was good; the trouble was that the man called him good without recognizing Him as God.

^d See Exodus 20:12-16, Deuteronomy 5:16-20.

^e He did not repeat the ‘mistake’.

^f The verb is *agapaw*; He was concerned for his wellbeing.

^g Scarcely 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘take up the cross’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h Jesus had put His finger on the one the man was not obeying—he was not loving his neighbor as himself.

ⁱ Five Greek manuscripts (all of objectively inferior quality), against 1650, omit ‘for those who trust in riches’, producing an obviously inferior text, but even so they are followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. NIV favors us with a footnote: “Some manuscripts *is for those who trust in riches*”. They use ‘some’ to refer to the 1,650, against only five. Is that not a dishonest use of the English language? (There are probably hundreds of such footnotes.)

^j Ouch! In the Old Testament it was expected that godly living would be accompanied by material blessing. The trouble is that we tend to get more attached to the blessing than to the Blessor. Our Lord’s words in Matthew 6:24 are to the point: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Anyone who serves ‘mammon’ is not serving God, and therefore is not in the Kingdom. As for the ‘camel’ and the ‘needle’, there have been attempts to explain this away, but since Jesus went on to say it was “impossible”, we may take them literally.

then can be saved?” ²⁷But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; because all things are possible with God.”

It pays to serve Jesus

²⁸Then Peter began to say to Him, “So, we have left all and followed you.”
²⁹In answer Jesus said: “I tell you assuredly, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^a or children or fields, for my sake and for that of the Gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundred times more,^b now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and father and mother^c and children and fields (with persecutions)—and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹But many first will be last, and last first.”^d

Jesus predicts His death a third time

³²Now they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going ahead of them; this surprised them,^e and as they followed they started to be afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that were about to happen to Him: ³³“Take note, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of the Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles; ³⁴and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And on the third day He will rise again.”^f

Selfish ambition rebuked

³⁵Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Him and said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we may ask.” ³⁶So He said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷They said to Him, “Grant to us that we may sit, one at your right and one at your left, in your glory.”^g ³⁸But Jesus said to them: “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹They said to Him, “We are able.”^h So Jesus said to them: “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; ⁴⁰but to sit at my right and at my left is not mine to grant, but is for whom it has been prepared.”ⁱ

^a Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘or wife’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Actually, the ‘hundredfold’ should presumably not be taken in a strictly literal sense. I take it that the Lord is saying that we will be abundantly recompensed, if not down here, certainly in heaven. In my own experience, in the absence of my real mother, whenever I needed one God provided one. If you only have one brother, that’s all you can leave, obviously, so the plural nouns are also contingent on the facts in the case. ‘Eternal’ life is a quality of life, and it begins down here.

^c I follow 40% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading ‘father and mother’. 55% have ‘mothers’, as in most versions. Note that Jesus does not promise more wives!

^d This sounds like a push-down stack—first one in, last one out.

^e I gather that Jesus was going forward with a determined pace, which at first surprised them, but then something about His demeanor made them apprehensive.

^f Jesus knew perfectly well that this was His last trip to Jerusalem, and He had detailed knowledge of what would happen. (He had been given the word by Moses and Elijah—Luke 9:31.)

^g Isn’t this a strange request? Evidently visions of the Messianic Kingdom drove all other considerations from their minds, only they wanted to be top dogs!

^h How did they know?

ⁱ If Jesus Himself is at the Father’s right, then it follows that the Father is on Jesus’ left, so only one of the spots is ‘available’, except that the occupant is already known.

⁴¹Well when the ten heard it they began to be indignant with James and John.^a ⁴²But Jesus summoned them and said to them: “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it must not be so among you, but whoever desires to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever desires to be your number one must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of the Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”^b

Blind Bartimaeus

⁴⁶They came to Jericho. Then as He was going out from Jericho,^c with His disciples and a large crowd, the blind Bartimaeus^d (son of Timaeus) was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷And when he heard that it was Jesus the Natsorean,^e he began to call out and say, “O Son of David,^f Jesus, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸Many started telling him to shut up, but he started calling out even louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁹So Jesus stood still and said to call him. Then they called the blind man, saying to him: “Courage! Get up! He’s calling you!” ⁵⁰Tossing off his cloak,^g he got up and went to Jesus. ⁵¹Jesus reacted by saying to him, “What do you want me to do for you?”^h The blind man said to Him, “Rabouni,ⁱ that I may see again!” ⁵²So Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has healed you.” And immediately he could see, and followed Jesus on the road.

The last week

The ‘triumphal’ entry—Sunday, 03/31/30 AD

11 ¹Now when they were drawing near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples, ²saying to them: “Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you enter it you will find a foal tied, on which no man has sat. Untie and bring it. ³And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it,’ and thereupon he will send it here.”^j

^a Now just why, do you suppose, were they upset?

^b The Lord Jesus is our example.

^c The parallel account in Luke has Jesus entering Jericho, not leaving it. At that time, there were two Jerichos, about a kilometer apart. What better place for an enterprising beggar than between the two towns? For a detailed discussion of the three accounts (also Matthew), please see the Appendix: Entering, or leaving Jericho?

^d Mark is the only account that gives the man’s name—evidently he was known (or at least became known).

^e The Text has ‘Natsorean’, not ‘Nazarene (Natsarene)’. Natsorean is presumably a reference to Isaiah 11:1, the Branch—Jesus was the Branch-man. Natsarene just means that He came from Natsareth.

^f Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as the Messiah.

^g Now why did he abandon his cloak? He expected to be healed—being able to see he could easily find it (and who else would want a beggar’s cloak?).

^h Does God ever take anything for granted from us? He knows what we need before we ask, but we must ask.

ⁱ Some 65% of the Greek manuscripts spell the word with two ‘b’s; I follow the best line of transmission, but there is no difference in meaning: ‘my teacher/master’.

^j At first glance the rendering, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly”, looks inviting, but it doesn’t quite fit. The animal would be gone for a number of hours, and one would expect a different verb. The seeming difficulty posed by the change from ‘he’ to ‘they’ (in verse 6) is easily answered: in verse 3 the ‘he’ agrees in number with the preceding ‘anyone’, and the owner of the animal may have

⁴So they went and found the foal tied at the door, out in the street, and they loosed it. ⁵Some of those who stood there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the foal?” ⁶So they answered them just as Jesus had instructed, and they let them go. ⁷Then they brought the foal to Jesus, and they placed their clothes on it, and He sat on it. ⁸And many spread their clothes on the road, while others were cutting leafy branches from the trees^a and spreading them on the road. ⁹Both those who went in front and those who followed started calling out, saying:

“Hosanna!”

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”^b

¹⁰“Blessed is the Kingdom of our father David that is coming in the name of the Lord!”^c

“Hosanna in the highest!”

¹¹So Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when He had looked around at everything,^d the hour being late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

A barren fig tree

¹²Now the next day, as they were leaving Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³And seeing from a distance a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it He found nothing but leaves, because it was not fig season.^e ¹⁴So Jesus reacted by saying to it, “Let no one ever eat fruit from you again!”^f And His disciples were listening.

Jesus ‘purifies’ the temple (2nd time)—Monday, 04/01/30 AD

¹⁵So they came to Jerusalem, and entering the temple Jesus began to drive out those who sold and bought in the temple, and He overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of the dove sellers. ¹⁶And He would not allow anyone to carry a container through the temple. ¹⁷And He kept teaching them by saying: “Is it not written, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations’?^g but you have made it ‘a den of robbers!’”^h

been among the bystanders (verses 5 & 6). In any case, the owner evidently knew who ‘the Lord’ was, and had presumably been forewarned—why else was the foal already tied outside?

^a Well under 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘fields’ instead of ‘trees’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b See Psalms 118:26.

^c Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘in the name of the Lord’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Different people were saying different things and Mark records some of the variety (he may well have been there; in fact I suspect that he probably was).

^d He knew what He had to do the next day (clean out the commerce), but there wasn’t enough time to do a proper job just then.

^e Even though it was no longer fig season, sometimes an occasional fig would dry on the tree, and of course a dried fig is edible. Had the leaves all fallen, He could have seen from a distance that there were not any figs (any fig that was visible would have been eaten long before).

^f Dear me; it would seem to be unreasonable to curse a tree out of season—it was not the tree’s fault that it had no figs! First, being the Creator, Jesus had the right to do as He did; but second, it was probably a prophetic act wherein the fig tree represented Israel; and third, He wanted to teach His disciples about faith.

^g See Isaiah 56:7. Note that it has always been God’s intention that the whole world know and worship Him.

^h See Jeremiah 7:11. I get the impression that He kept repeating this as He went about His task.

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¹⁸Well the scribes and the chief priests heard it, and kept on looking for a way to destroy Him;^a because they were afraid of Him, in that all the people were astonished at His teaching. ¹⁹When evening came, He went out of the city.

How to drown a mountain

²⁰Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. ²¹And Peter, remembering, said to Him: “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has dried up!” ²²So in answer Jesus said to them: “Have faith in God.^b ²³Because I tell you assuredly, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be picked up and be thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that the things he says will happen, he will have whatever he says.^c ²⁴That is why I say to you, whatever things you ask for in prayer, believe that you receive, and you will have them.

²⁵“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father, who is in heaven, may also forgive you your trespasses. ²⁶But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”^d

Jesus’ authority questioned—Tuesday, 04/02/30 AD

²⁷Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders came to Him. ²⁸And they said to Him, “By what authority are you doing these things?” and “Who gave you this authority to do these things?” ²⁹So in answer Jesus said to them: “I also will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰The baptism of John: was it from heaven or from men?”^e ³¹They considered among themselves, saying: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘So why did you not believe him?’ ³²But if we say, ‘From men’...”—they feared the people, for everyone held John to really be a prophet. ³³So they answered Jesus by saying, “We don’t know.”^f And in answer Jesus said to them, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Parable of wicked tenants

12 ¹Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard—put a hedge around it, dug a wine trough, built a tower—rented it to farmers and went on a journey. ²At the proper time he sent a slave to the farmers, that he might receive from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³But they took him, beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴Again he sent another

^a They had already determined that they had to kill Him, long before.

^b I wonder if the intended meaning might not be, ‘have the faith of a god’ (‘god’ is in the genitive case and without an article)—a god giving an order would expect to be obeyed.

^c It is an ongoing source of frustration to me that I have not yet attained to this level of faith.

^d Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 26 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc. The last three words of verses 25 and 26 are identical (in the Greek Text), giving rise to a common transcriptional error—after writing the first, the copyist’s eye returns to the second and he continues, having omitted what was in between. Verse 26 reinforces and emphasizes the need for forgiveness—the reference is to things done against us personally.

^e Some 80% of the Greek manuscripts continue with ‘answer me’, as in most (if not all) versions; I follow the best line of transmission, albeit representing only 20% of the manuscripts. ‘Answer me’ is already in verse 29.

^f Of course they did know, and they also knew who Jesus was, and the source of His authority, but they had chosen to rebel.

er slave to them, and that one they wounded in the head by stoning,^a and sent him away shamefully treated. ⁵Again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. ⁶Finally, still having his one beloved son, he even sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ ⁷But those farmers said to one another: ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸So they took him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.^b

⁹‘What therefore will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those farmers, and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Have you not even read this Scripture:

‘The stone that the builders rejected,
is the very one that became the cornerstone;
¹¹this was the LORD’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes?’^c

¹²So they started looking for a way to arrest Him, because they knew He had spoken the parable against them, but they were in fear of the crowd. Then they left Him and went away.

Render to Caesar

¹³Then they^d sent some of the Pharisees and of the Herodians to Him, in order to trap Him with a question. ¹⁴Upon arriving they said to Him: ‘Teacher, we know that you are honest—you do not ‘protect’ anyone, because you do not consider the position of people, but teach the way of God in truth^e—is it right to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? ¹⁵Should we pay, or should we not?’ But knowing their hypocrisy, He said to them: ‘Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at.’ ¹⁶So they did, and He said to them, ‘Whose image and inscription is this?’ They said to Him, ‘Caesar’s.’ ¹⁷Then Jesus answered them by saying, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’^f And they marveled at Him.

A hypothetical situation^g

¹⁸Then some Sadducees came to Him—they say there is no resurrection—and asked Him, saying: ¹⁹‘Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves behind a wife, but no children, then his brother should take that wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰Well there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and dying left no offspring. ²¹So the second one took her, and died; and neither did he leave any offspring. The third likewise. ²²In fact, all seven took

^a Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘by stoning’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b The details of this particular parable strike me as improbable. Most owners would take punitive measures after the second slave, if not the first. But the parable was a picture of how Israel had treated God, over the centuries, culminating in the death of His Son.

^c See Psalm 118:22-23.

^d The reference is presumably to the leaders mentioned in 11:27. They were hoping to be able to denounce Jesus to the Governor, who was Caesar’s representative.

^e They were really almost too obvious.

^f We are to do both: tithe and pay taxes. The Lord’s answer left them empty-handed.

^g If you ever have to deal with someone who wants to argue on the basis of a hypothetical situation—be careful! Like these Sadducees, they will have a hidden agenda.

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her, and left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. ²³In the resurrection, whenever they may rise, whose wife will she be?—because all seven had her as wife.”

²⁴Then in answer Jesus said to them: “You do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God^a—is this not the reason that you err? ²⁵Whenever people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in the heavens.^b ²⁶But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, about the Bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ ²⁷He is not the God of dead people, but the God of living ones. You are therefore badly mistaken.”^c

The greatest commandment

²⁸Then one of the scribes came on the scene, heard them arguing, realized that He had answered them well, and asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” ²⁹Jesus answered him:^d “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD your^e (pl) God, the LORD is one; ³⁰and you (sg) shall love the LORD your (sg) God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’^f This is the first commandment.^g ³¹And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’^h There is no other commandment greater than these.”

³²So the scribe said to Him: “Well said, teacher; you said truly that He is one, and there is no other except He. ³³And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soulⁱ and with all the strength, and to love the neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”^j And after that no one dared ask Him any question.

Is the Christ David's son?

³⁵Then, teaching in the temple, Jesus reacted by saying: “How is it that the scribes say that the Messiah is David's son? ³⁶Because David himself said by the Holy Spirit:

^a What a sad commentary! But is it not true of most religious leaders today, as well?

^b Jesus does not say that angels do not have gender. Angels are always treated as male, not female—without females there could never be baby angels. That may be why they are evidently fascinated by the female of our species (1 Corinthians 11:10). Because of death, on this planet we must reproduce, or the race will die out. Since there is no death in Heaven, there will be no need to reproduce; it follows that ‘marriage’ and ‘family’ will be irrelevant up there.

^c The Sadducees were basically materialists, and like them any materialists today will also be badly mistaken in their whole world view.

^d I take it that Jesus answered without hesitation—this one was easy.

^e I follow the best line of transmission in reading ‘your’, albeit some 75% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘our’, as in all versions.

^f See Deuteronomy 6:4-5. The ‘love’ here cannot be limited to emotion, obviously. We are to love God with our whole being, all we have. But how does that work? Love for God is demonstrated by obedience, so all we do is to be oriented by God's will.

^g Just over 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘this is the first commandment’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h See Leviticus 19:18.

ⁱ Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘and with all the soul’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j Quite right—all the man had to do was put it into practice.

The LORD said to my Lord,
 “Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies
 as a stool for your feet.”^a

³⁷Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so how can He be his son?” The large crowd listened to Him with pleasure.

Down with hypocrisy!

³⁸Then He said to them in His teaching: “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk about in long robes and to get greetings in the market places, ³⁹and the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts; ⁴⁰who devour the houses of widows,^b while praying long and loud for a show. These will receive a more severe judgment.”

A widow’s offering

⁴¹Then Jesus sat down opposite the offering chest and started watching how the people were depositing money into the chest. Many rich people put in large amounts. ⁴²A certain poor widow also came and put in two ‘lepta’, which equal a ‘quadrans’.^c ⁴³So summoning His disciples He said to them: “I tell you assuredly that this poor widow has put more in the chest than all these contributors; ⁴⁴because they all gave out of their excess, but she, out of her lack, put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”^d

The temple will be destroyed

13 ¹Then as He was going out from the temple, one of His disciples said to Him: “Teacher, just look! Such stones, such buildings!” ²In answer Jesus said to him: “Do you see these great buildings? Here not a single stone will be left upon another; each one will be thrown down.”^e

The Olivet Discourse

The end of the age

³Then as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple,^f Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him privately: ⁴“Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign whenever all these things are about to be fulfilled?”^g ⁵So by way of an answer to them Jesus began by saying: “Take care that no one deceives you. ⁶Because many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷But whenever you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not let it distress you; because happen they must, but the end is not yet. ⁸Because nation

^a See Psalm 110:1. Note that the Lord Jesus affirms that David wrote under divine inspiration!

^b Presumably, when the man died the widow no longer had the means to clear any debt; so they would just take over the house and put the widow out in the street.

^c The ‘lepta’ was a tiny coin used in Israel, but not in Rome; their smallest coin was a ‘quadrans’. Since Mark is writing for a Roman audience, he uses a value they can understand.

^d Wow! I imagine she was appealing to God for help.

^e This was literally fulfilled in 70 AD. The Jews used the temple buildings as their last bastion of defense. They themselves set fire to some buildings and the Roman soldiers finished the job. Apparently the gold on the dome melted and ran down the cracks between the stones. So the looters literally tore stone from stone to make sure they got all the gold.

^f I take the point to be that He could see the temple from where He was sitting.

^g There are two questions: “When these things?” and “What the sign?” The answer to the first is given in Luke 21:20-24. The answer to the second begins here in verse 5.

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will be raised against nation,^a and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and tumults.^b These things are the beginning of birth pains.^c

⁹“But watch out for yourselves, because they will deliver you up to councils and flog you in synagogues, and you will be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, as a testimony to them. ¹⁰Also, the Gospel must first be proclaimed to all the ethnic nations.^d ¹¹Now whenever they lead you away and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand nor premeditate what you will say;^e rather, whatever is given to you in that hour, speak that, because it will not be you doing the speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹²“Further, brother will betray brother to death and a father his child, and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ¹³And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake,^f yet he who endures to the end, he will be saved.^g

The Great Tribulation

¹⁴“Now whenever you see the ‘abomination of desolation’, the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet,^h standing where he should not”—let the reader understand—”then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house.ⁱ ¹⁶Let him who is in the field not return to his things to get his cloak. ¹⁷But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ¹⁸And pray that your flight not take place in winter,^j ¹⁹because those will be days of affliction such as there has not been the like from the beginning of the creation that God created until now,^k and never again shall be.^l ²⁰If the Lord did not cut those days short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He did shorten the days.^m

^a The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, who does the raising?

^b In our day we have seen violence and looting in the wake of earthquakes and food shortages. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘and tumults’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c The Text has ‘birth pains’, so what is the ‘baby’? I suppose the ‘baby’ is the Messianic Kingdom.

^d See the footnote at Matthew 24:14.

^e In Seminary I was taught that this instruction is for martyrs, not preachers! But churches today would be better off if their pastors got their messages from the Holy Spirit.

^f It is already the case in many places that anyone who takes a public stand in defense of biblical values is vituperated by the media—some have gone to prison in what once were ‘Christian’ countries.

^g We must endure persecution, without denying the Lord—if you deny Him, He will deny you.

^h Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘the one spoken of by Daniel the prophet’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

ⁱ I confess that I cannot imagine a situation where a few seconds would make any difference. Evidently the attack will be sudden.

^j I find this instruction to be curious. Is the Lord really saying that by praying we can influence the time of year when the ‘abomination’ will take place? I wonder.

^k The Lord Jesus Christ affirms that God created this world: anyone who embraces the evolutionary hypothesis of origins is calling Him a liar.

^l There has always been affliction and distress in the world, but not like what is coming.

^m The tense of the verb is definitely past. The Lord is evidently referring to something that has already been determined.

²¹“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ ‘Look, there!’ do not believe it; ²²because false christs and false prophets will be raised up,^a and they will show signs and wonders so as to even mislead the elect, if that were possible. ²³So you watch out! See, I have told you everything in advance.

The return of Christ

²⁴“But in those days, after that tribulation, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵the stars of heaven will be falling, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken.’^b ²⁶And then they will see the Son of the Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.^c ²⁷And then He will send His angels and gather together His elect from the four winds, from earth’s extreme point to heaven’s extreme point.^d

Example of the fig tree

²⁸“Now learn this example from the fig tree: whenever its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, one knows that the summer is near. ²⁹Even so you also, whenever you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁰Assuredly I tell you that this generation^e will certainly not pass away until all these things happen. ³¹The heaven and the earth will pass away, but my words will certainly not pass away.^f

Watch!

³²“Now concerning that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels who are in heaven, not the Son,^g but only the Father. ³³Watch! Keep alert! Pray!^h Because you do not know when that time will be. ³⁴It is like a man off on a journey, having left his house and given the authority to his slaves, and to each his work; and he commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. ³⁵Therefore be watchful, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming—at evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or early morning—³⁶lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ³⁷The things I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”ⁱ

^a Again, the voice is passive; I suppose it is Satan that does the raising up.

^b See Isaiah 13:10, 34:4. The reference is presumably to angelic beings, not literal stars (just one would demolish the planet).

^c Note that this Return will be visible, in contrast to the Rapture (as I understand it).

^d I have difficulty understanding this statement, if it is to be taken literally. That the elect will be collected from all over the world, no problem, but from all over heaven? However, since resurrected saints will participate in the administration of the Messianic Kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 5:10, 20:6), perhaps they are included in this statement.

^e “This generation” could refer to the Jewish race (render ‘this race’), but I think it more probable that it refers to the generation that “sees all these things”. To be more precise, I think that those who were alive on the planet in 1967 (when the city of Jerusalem returned to the political control of the nation Israel) are the generation in question.

^f Jesus affirms that His words have eternal validity/authority.

^g While He was walking this earth as Jesus, He didn’t know, but presumably now He does.

^h Since the Return draws ever closer, of necessity, we, of all people, should be doing this. A mere handful (0.6%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘pray’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ To whom does the ‘all’ refer? Those who are not followers of Christ will not pay attention in any case (presumably).

The Sanhedrin make plans

14 ¹It was two days before the Passover and the Unleavened Bread.^a The chief priests and the scribes were looking for an underhanded way to seize and kill Him. ²But they said, “Not during the feast, or the people may riot.”

An anointing in Simon’s house

³Being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He was reclining at a meal, a woman came having an alabaster vase of very costly perfume of pure nard. Then she broke the vase and began to pour it over His head. ⁴But there were some who were expressing indignation to one another and saying: “To what purpose was this perfume wasted? ⁵It could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor!” And they started censuring her.^b ⁶But Jesus said: “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done something useful to me. ⁷You will always have the poor with you, and whenever you wish you can do them good; but you will not always have me. ⁸She did what she could.^c She has perfumed my body for the burying before the fact. ⁹Assuredly I tell you, wherever this Gospel may be proclaimed throughout the whole world, what she has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”^d

Judas is hired

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, so as to betray Him to them.^e ¹¹Well upon hearing it they rejoiced and promised to give him silver coins.^f So he started figuring how he might conveniently betray Him.

The upper room is made ready

¹²Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they would sacrifice the Paschal lamb, His disciples said to Him, “Where do you want us to go and prepare, so that you may eat the Passover?” ¹³So He sent two of His disciples, saying to them: “Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a clay jar of water; follow him. ¹⁴Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The teacher says, ‘Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’” ¹⁵He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready; there prepare for

^a I take it that this statement settles the question of the exact day of the crucifixion. It was late Tuesday afternoon, probably after 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore Jesus died on a Friday [not Thursday]. (See also Luke 23:54-24:1—Jesus was buried on Friday afternoon; then the women rested during the Sabbath [singular = just one day]; then early the first day of the week they went to the tomb.) For further discussion, please see the Appendix: “How long was Jesus in the tomb?”

^b When Mary did it in her own house, only Judas complained. Now several others join in: it was getting to be too much of a good thing. See the footnote at verse 10 below.

^c She did what was in her power to do. I would be happy to have that epitaph on my tombstone (if I ever have one) —‘he did what he could’.

^d Yes indeed; we are still reading about it, some 2,000 years later.

^e It was too much for Judas. On Saturday (03-30-30) Mary of Bethany had anointed His feet with 300 denarii worth of the same perfume, and now four days later (Wed., 04-03-30) another woman anoints His head with another 300 denarii worth of perfume (that was a lot of money, and he liked money). In both cases Jesus affirms they are anointing Him for burial (and He had repeatedly told them He was going to be killed). Judas figured out that his expectation of an immediate kingdom was unfounded, and he rebelled. (He might even have convinced himself that Jesus had deceived him when He called him to be a disciple.)

^f I follow the best line of transmission and 40% of the manuscripts in reading ‘silver coins’ rather than ‘money’.

us.”^a **16**So His disciples set out and came into the city and found it just as He had said to them: and they prepared the Passover.

The last night—begins Thursday evening, 04/04/30, and ends the next morning

17When it was evening He came with the twelve.

The traitor identified

18Now as they were reclining and eating, Jesus said, “Assuredly I tell you, one of you who is eating with me will betray me.” **19**So they began to be sorrowful and to say to Him one by one, “Surely not I?” And another, “Surely not I?”^b **20**He answered and said to them: “It is one of the twelve, the one dipping with me in the bowl. **21**The Son of the Man is indeed going just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of the Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man not to have been born.”^c

Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper

22As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them and said, “Take, eat:^d this is my body.” **23**Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank it. **24**And He said to them: “This is my blood, that of the new^e covenant, that is being shed for many. **25**I tell you assuredly that I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.”^f **26**And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Peter will deny Him

27Then Jesus said to them: “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night,^g because it is written:

I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.^h

28But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” **29**But Peter said to Him, “Even if all are caused to stumble, yet not I.” **30**Jesus said to him, “I tell you assuredly that you, today, this very night, before a rooster crows twice,ⁱ you will

^a This had obviously been prearranged. I suppose that this was the upper room that the disciples continued to use.

^b Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘and another, surely not I’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Praying to His Father, Jesus said: “Those whom you gave me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). Judas was lost. But what are the implications of ‘better not to have been born’? I suppose it means that it is better to have never existed, than to spend eternity in the Lake. I find this line of reasoning to be uncomfortable.

^d Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘eat’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e A small handful (0.6%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘new’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. Hebrews 8:7-10:18 clearly links the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 to the shed blood of God’s Lamb.

^f Jesus affirms that He will drink it in the Kingdom. I imagine this will be during the Millennial Reign, not in Heaven.

^g Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘because of me this night’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h See Zechariah 13:7.

ⁱ For a full discussion of Peter’s denials, harmonizing all four accounts, please see the Appendix: How often did Jesus say Peter would deny Him? I argue that this is the fourth warning, and since Peter became increasingly belligerent and disrespectful, Jesus added a second crowing preceded by another three denials.

deny me three times.”³¹But he insisted even more vehemently, “If I have to die with you, I will absolutely not deny you!” And all the others said the same.

The agony in Gethsemane

³²Then they came to a place that was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”³³But He took with Him Peter, James and John, and began to be greatly troubled and distressed.³⁴And He said to them: “My soul is overwhelmed with grief, to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch.”³⁵Going on a little, He fell to the ground and started praying that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him.³⁶And He said: “*Abba* (Father), all things are possible to you. Please remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will.”³⁷Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter: “Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn’t you keep watch for even one hour?³⁸Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”³⁹Again He went away and prayed, saying the same thing.⁴⁰And when He returned He found them sleeping again, because their eyes were being weighed down;^a and they did not know how to answer Him.⁴¹Then He came the third time and said to them: “You are still sleeping and resting! It is enough, the hour has come; yes, the Son of the Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴²Get up, let’s be going. See, my betrayer has approached.”^b

The betrayal and arrest

⁴³And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him a considerable crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.^c⁴⁴Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, he it is; seize him and take him away securely.”^d⁴⁵So upon arriving he went directly to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.⁴⁶So they laid their hands on Him and secured Him.⁴⁷But a certain one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.^e⁴⁸Then Jesus reacted by saying to them: “You have come out with swords and clubs to arrest me, as if I were a bandit.⁴⁹I was with you daily in the temple, teaching, and you did not seize me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”⁵⁰Then they all deserted Him and ran away.^f

^a The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by whom? I follow some 35% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading ‘were being weighed down’, rather than ‘had been weighed down’, as in the rest.

^b There may have been pauses between the statements.

^c John 18:12 informs us that there was a ‘chiliarch’ present (a commander of 1,000 soldiers). An officer of such high rank could only be there by the Governor’s order (Pilate). Subsequent events make clear that Pilate had been consulted, and had agreed to play along.

^d Why the ‘securely’? Judas had seen so many manifestations of Jesus’ power that he should have known better, but of course he was under Satan’s control at that time. However, it appears that they expected resistance.

^e We know from Luke 22:51 that Jesus immediately healed the ear—otherwise things could have gotten nasty.

^f Mark’s account is brief. The parallel accounts fill in the picture of what actually happened.

A curious case

⁵¹Now a certain young man had followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. The young men grabbed him, ⁵²so leaving the linen cloth he fled from them naked.^a

At Caiaphas' house

⁵³They led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. ⁵⁴Well Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the operatives and warming himself at the fire.

A farcical trial

⁵⁵Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus so as to kill Him, but were not finding any. ⁵⁶To be sure, many were testifying falsely against Him, but their statements did not agree. ⁵⁷Then some stood up and started testifying falsely against Him, saying, ⁵⁸“We heard him saying: ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” ⁵⁹But not even then did their testimony agree.^b

⁶⁰Then the high priest stood up in the center and questioned Jesus, saying: “Are you not going to answer? What are these testifying against you?” ⁶¹But He remained silent and answered nothing.^c Again the high priest questioned Him and said to Him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”^d ⁶²So Jesus said: “I am, and you will see the Son of the Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of the heaven.”^e ⁶³Then the high priest tore his clothes and said: “What further need do we have of witnesses? ⁶⁴You heard the blasphemy!^f What do you think?” They all condemned Him to be deserving of death. ⁶⁵Then some began to spit on Him, to cover His face, punch Him and say to Him, “Prophecy!”^g And the operatives started slapping Him.

Peter's denials

⁶⁶Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Natsarene!” ⁶⁸But Peter denied, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.” And he went out into

^a Now why would Mark want to include an incident like this in his account? (None of the others do.) I rather imagine that he was that young man. Although not invited to the Passover, he probably waited outside and followed them to Gethsemane. In effect he is saying, “I was there.”

^b It was indeed false testimony, since that was not what Jesus said. But even if He had said that, it would just be stupid, not criminal. They were desperate.

^c It was so obviously a farce that no answer was required.

^d This was an illegal proceeding on the part of the priest: he was asking Jesus to testify against Himself. The priest was desperate.

^e Wow! Jesus gave him more than he asked for! But how and when will those men, certainly lost, “see the Son of the Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of the heaven”? They will still be in Hades when Christ returns. Will those in Hades be able to see what goes on outside? I don't have an answer.

^f Wait a minute! How could the truth be blasphemy? They rejected the truth.

^g They wanted Him to say who had hit Him. What they were doing was really cowardly, but they were probably under demonic influence.

the entryway, and a rooster crowed.^a ⁶⁹But that servant girl saw him again and began to say to those standing by, “This guy is one of them.” ⁷⁰But again he kept denying it. Again, after a little while, those who were standing by said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them; because you really are a Galilean, and your accent agrees!”^b ⁷¹Then he began to curse and to swear, “I do not know this man of whom you are speaking!” ⁷²And for the second time a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered^c the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” He broke down and started to cry.

Crucifixion Day—Friday, 04/05/30 AD

15 ¹As soon as it was early morning, having already formed a plan, the chief priests with the elders and scribes, indeed the whole council, bound Jesus, led Him away and handed Him over to Pilate.^d

Jesus before Pilate

²Pilate asked Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” So in answer He said to him, “You stated a fact!” ³But the chief priests kept accusing Him of many things. ⁴So Pilate asked Him again, saying: “Are you not going to answer? See how many things they are testifying against you!” ⁵But Jesus still gave no answer, so that Pilate marveled.^e

Barabbas

⁶Now at the feast he would release to them one prisoner, whomever they would request. ⁷Well there was one called Barabbas, who had been bound with his fellow insurrectionists, who in the insurrection had committed murder. ⁸Then the crowd began to call out^f and request that he do just as he always did for them. ⁹So Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” ¹⁰(He knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.) ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should release Barabbas to them instead. ¹²Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do to him you call ‘king of the Jews?’” ¹³Again they shouted, “Crucify him!” ¹⁴But Pilate said to them, “But what evil did he do?” They just yelled all the louder, “Crucify him!” ¹⁵So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them, and Jesus, after a flogging, he handed over to be crucified.^g

Soldiers have a little ‘fun’

¹⁶Then the soldiers led Him away into the courtyard (that is, the Praetorium) and assembled the whole garrison. ¹⁷They clothed Him with purple, plaited a crown of thorns and put it on Him, ¹⁸and began to ‘acclaim’ Him by saying,

^a Nine Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, against 1,623 (according to *TuT*), omit “and a rooster crowed”, to be followed by NIV and NASB (with their usual misleading footnotes).

^b Around 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘and your accent agrees’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^c But only after the Lord looked at him and broke the spell (Luke 22:61).

^d And just why was Pilate dressed and waiting for them at 5:30 in the morning? Obviously this was a put up job. Pilate knew it was a farce, but he soon found himself in over his head. For a detailed analysis concerning Pilate, please see the Appendix: Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time.

^e Jesus simply did not look or act like a criminal.

^f A mere handful [0.5%] of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘go up’ instead of ‘call out’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^g By comparing the parallel accounts we know that a great deal more happened than is given here.

“Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹They kept hitting Him on the head with a rod^a and spitting on Him, and kneeling down they would ‘worship’ Him. ²⁰When they had ridiculed Him, they took the purple off Him and put His own clothes on Him. Then they led Him out to crucify Him.

The crucifixion

²¹A certain passer-by, Simon a Cyrenian (the father of Alexander and Rufus),^b coming in from the countryside, was compelled to carry His cross.^c ²²They brought Him to a place *Golgotha*, which is translated, ‘Place of a Skull’. ²³They offered Him wine mixed with myrrh to drink,^d but He did not take it. ²⁴After crucifying Him, they divided His clothes by casting lots for them, to see who would take what. ²⁵It was the third hour^e when they crucified Him. ²⁶The statement of His ‘crime’ that had been written was:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁷With Him they also crucified two bandits, one on His right and one on His left. ²⁸So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with transgressors.”^f

²⁹Those who passed by kept ridiculing Him, wagging their heads and saying, “Hey! You who can destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰save yourself and come down from the cross!” ³¹Similarly, the chief priests, with the scribes, kept mocking among themselves saying: “He saved others; he can’t save himself!”^g ³²Let the Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe him.”^h Those who were crucified with Him insulted Him as well.ⁱ

³³Now when the sixth hour had come [noon], darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.^j ³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus called out strongly, saying, “*Eloi, Eloi, lima sabachthani?*” which is translated, “O God, my God, why have You forsaken me?”^k ³⁵When some of the bystanders heard it they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” ³⁶Then someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a reed and started offering it to Him to drink, saying, “You let him be! ‘Let’s see if Elijah is coming to take him down!’”^l

^a This drove the thorns into His scalp, and since they were probably poisonous, His face began to swell.

^b After carrying the cross, Simon doubtless stayed around to see what happened. In consequence he was no doubt converted, as were his two sons.

^c A condemned person usually had to carry his cross, but this one was doubtless heavy, and evidently Jesus was having difficulty carrying it.

^d This was a humanitarian gesture—myrrh is a crude analgesic and would deaden the pain. But Jesus refused it; He wanted nothing to cloud His senses or diminish the suffering.

^e Using Jewish time, that was 9 a.m.

^f See Isaiah 53:12. Around 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 28 entire, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.

^g This was precisely true, but not in the sense they intended. To save us, He could not save Himself.

^h They were lying; they would not have submitted to Him even then.

ⁱ But one of them changed his mind later.

^j The darkness could not have been a solar eclipse, as some have ignorantly argued. The Passover always occurs at full moon, and a solar eclipse only occurs at new moon. Further, even a total eclipse only lasts for a few minutes, not three hours.

^k See Psalm 22:1.

^l To understand Mark’s turn of phrase, we need Matthew’s account (27:47-49). “Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, ‘This man is calling for Elijah!’ Immediately one of them ran and

³⁷Then Jesus gave a loud shout and breathed out His spirit;^a ³⁸and the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.^b ³⁹Well when the centurion, who was standing opposite Him, saw that He breathed out His spirit after giving such a loud shout,^c he said, “This man really was God’s Son!”^d

⁴⁰There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome ⁴¹—they used to follow Him and minister to Him when He was in Galilee—and many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem.

The burial

⁴²Now when evening had come, because it was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member who also himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God, came and boldly went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴Well Pilate was surprised that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion he asked him when He had died.^e ⁴⁵Upon the centurion’s confirmation he granted the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶Having bought linen, he took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen and laid Him in a tomb that had been cut out of rock; then he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.^f ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was placed.^a

took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, ‘Let him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save him.’” The ‘let him’ is 2nd person singular. But in Mark’s account, the ‘let him’ is 2nd person plural! How do we reconcile the two accounts? I suggest the following: First, the man was quite possibly Mark himself; next, anyone who really understood the language would know that Jesus had not called Elijah; so, he responds sarcastically to their erroneous interpretation and therefore unreasonable demand that he stop; he retorts, “You stop!” and repeats their interpretation in disgust.

^a Both Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30 plainly state that Jesus dismissed His spirit. It was not the cross that killed Him [see the third note down]. As He Himself said in John 10:18, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” He chose to die so that we might live. Thank you, Lord!

^b That veil represented the barrier between sinful man and a Holy God. For it to be ripped in two **from top to bottom** was obviously a supernatural event, and it followed immediately upon Jesus’ death—which means that the Father considered that Jesus had solved the problem. Hebrews 10:20 makes the connection. Because of Jesus’ death we can now have access to the Father.

^c A mere handful (0.4%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘after giving a loud shout’, to be followed by NASB and LB.

^d Any centurion would be a hardened soldier, who had seen no end of crucifixions. He knew that a cross killed by asphyxiation. Hanging from the hands, with the arms stretched out, pushes the diaphragm against the lungs so you can’t breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure to prolong the agony—even though painful, the victim would push up so he could get a breath, until finally too worn out to do so. Breaking the legs would put an end to that expedient, and the person died within a few minutes, asphyxiated. Someone who is dying asphyxiated does not shout. Since Jesus gave a loud shout, but then immediately died, the centurion knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the cross had not killed Jesus (later, when Joseph asks for the body, Pilate is surprised that Jesus could already be dead). But who can just tell his spirit to leave? Putting two and two together, the centurion concluded that Jesus was a supernatural being. Just so!

^e As soon as Jesus died, the centurion most probably had left the scene, going back to headquarters. He probably felt he should inform Pilate about the unusual events, but somehow Joseph got ahead of him. Well, Joseph was evidently primed for action; watching from a distance, as soon as Jesus dismissed His spirit Joseph headed for Pilate.

^f If he rolled it, it was in the form of a wheel; there would be a track in which it rolled, with a bit of incline, so that he and Nicodemus could roll it down into place, where it would stop; but it would take several men to roll it back up and away (16:3-4). Obviously all of this had been planned and prepared

16 ¹Now when the Sabbath was past,^b Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, in order to go and anoint Jesus.^c

Resurrection Day—Sunday, 04/07/30 AD^d

Women go to sepulcher

²Very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they were saying among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” ⁴(because it was very large), but when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away! ⁵Upon entering the tomb they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them: “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Natsarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He isn’t here! See, the place where they laid Him. ⁷But go, tell His disciples, also Peter: ‘He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.’” ⁸Trembling and bewildered they went out and fled from the tomb; and they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.^e

Jesus appears to the Magdalene, first

⁹Having risen early on the first day of the week, Jesus^f appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. ¹⁰She went and reported to those who had been with Him, as they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

Emmaus^g

¹²After these things He appeared in a different form to two of them as they were walking, going into the country. ¹³So they returned and reported to the rest; neither did they believe them.^h

Jesus appears to the ‘Eleven’, fifth

¹⁴Later He appeared to the eleven as they were reclining at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵Then He said to them: “Go to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. ¹⁶He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons;

in advance—the donkey owner, the upper room owner, the sepulcher owner all knew in advance just what part they were to play.

^a They had seen where Jesus was placed, but obviously had not looked in the tomb—there were 100 pounds of spices in there, with enough linen to tie it all in.

^b After 6 p.m. that Saturday, shops could do business.

^c I follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the manuscripts in reading ‘Jesus’, instead of ‘Him’.

^d For a harmonization of the four Gospel accounts of events on Resurrection Day, please go to the Appendix: The Resurrection Accounts: a Harmonization.

^e That is, they said nothing to the guards or anyone else on the way, until Jesus appeared to them (Matthew 28:9-10). After that they weren’t afraid any more. [See the final footnote, at 16:20.]

^f I follow the best line of transmission and 30% of the manuscripts in reading ‘Jesus’, instead of ‘He’.

^g We have no objective way to know if this was before or after the appearance to Peter—the second was to the women (Matthew 28:9-10).

^h Mark is writing for a Roman audience, so he emphasizes that the disciples did not gullibly believe, just because they wanted to. Just the opposite.

they will speak with new languages; ¹⁸they will remove ‘snakes’;^a and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them at all;^b they will lay hands on sick people, and they will get well.”^c

The Ascension

¹⁹So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at God’s right. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the message by the accompanying signs. Amen.^d

^a The NIV renders ‘they will pick up snakes with their hands’, the ‘with their hands’ being based on just over 2% of the Greek manuscripts. I would say that this particular statement of the Lord’s has been generally misunderstood. The verb in question covers a wide semantic area, one of the uses being to pick up the way a garbage man picks up a bag of trash—he does so to get rid of it (hence ‘remove’). I believe Luke 10:19 sheds light on this question. In Luke 10:19 the Lord Jesus said: “Behold, I give [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts] you **the** authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” The Lord is addressing the Seventy, not the Twelve, and others were doubtless present; further, this was said perhaps four months before His death and resurrection. It follows that this authority is not limited to the apostles, and there is no indication of a time limit. The Lord Jesus affirms that He gives us **the** authority over all the power of the enemy. In Matthew 28:18 He declares that He holds “all authority... in heaven and earth”, and so He has the right and the competence to delegate a portion of that authority to us. We may have any number of enemies, but the enemy is Satan. The phrase, “all the power”, presumably includes his works, followed by their consequences.

Returning to Luke 10:19, the Lord gives us the authority to “trample snakes and scorpions”. Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you don’t need power from on High, just a slipper (if you’re fast you can do it barefoot). To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove ‘snakes’, they will place hands on the sick. (“If they drink...” is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by ‘snakes’?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the ‘snakes’ must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a ‘brood of vipers’, and in 23:33, ‘snakes, brood of vipers’. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil”. And 1 John 3:10 makes clear that Satan has many other ‘sons’. In Revelation 20:2 we read: “He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years.” If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our ‘snakes’ are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the ‘snakes’ in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the ‘scorpions’? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well include their offspring, the humanoids [see my paper, “In the Days of Noah”]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is done.

^b All the other ‘signs’ involve volitional participation on the part of a believer, but this one presumably refers to an enemy taking advantage of one’s trust or good faith and putting poison in one’s drink. I suggest that the Lord was enunciating a principle here that we can claim. Whenever we feel that someone has tried / is trying to harm us, taking advantage of our confidence, we can claim the nullifying of the attempt, based on this promise.

^c Jesus did not say that each believer will do all these things, but any Christian community should be able to do them all.

^d For well over a hundred years, there has been an ongoing campaign to discredit the last twelve verses of Mark (16:9-20). I wonder where people get the motivation to expend so much time and energy on such an enterprise. Only three known Greek manuscripts omit the verses, and one of them is a falsification at this point [there would be no point in a falsification unless the first hand in fact contained the verses]. For a full discussion of this variant, please see *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*, Appendix E.

The Gospel according to

LUKE

Dedicatory

1 ¹Given that many have undertaken to set in order a narrative concerning those things that really did take place among us,^a ²just as those who became eyewitnesses, from the beginning, and ministers of the Word delivered them to us,^b ³it seemed good to me also, most excellent Theophilus,^c having taken careful note of everything from Above,^d to write to you with precision and in sequence,^e ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things in which you were instructed.^f

The birth of John the Baptizer foretold

⁵In the days of Herod, the king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the *priestly* division of Abijah.^g His wife was of the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. ⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren; and they both were well advanced in years.

The setting

⁸Now it happened, as he was officiating as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, that his lot was to burn incense, upon entering the sanctuary of the Lord; ¹⁰and the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense; ¹²and upon seeing him Zacharias was shaken, and a fear fell upon him.

Gabriel delivers

¹³But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, because your prayer was heard,^h and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴And you will have joy and exultation, and many will rejoice over

^a Upon reflection it seems obvious that anyone who knew how to write would likely jot down salient points about Jesus, but Luke affirms that there were ‘many’ who attempted a serious account. Such records may well have furnished material, presumably factual, for spurious ‘improvements’ added to the four inspired accounts in the early decades of copying.

^b Luke insists that his information comes from responsible eyewitnesses, who were there all the time.

^c ‘Theophilus’ means ‘God-lover’; although Luke is evidently addressing a specific person, I would like to think that the account is also addressed to all lovers of God.

^d The normal meaning of the Greek word here, *avθev*, is precisely ‘from above’, and I see no reason to reject that meaning (although the secondary meaning ‘from the beginning’ is possible). The more so since in the prior verse he already used the normal phrase, *ap archj*, that means ‘from the beginning’. I take it that Luke is claiming divine inspiration, up front.

^e In fact, with a few exceptions Luke’s narrative is in chronological sequence, and as a physician he doubtless valued precision.

^f Given Luke’s stated purpose in writing, his account needs to be historically accurate. Note that Theophilus had already received some instruction.

^g See 1 Chronicles 24:10. There were 24 divisions, so each division could only serve for two weeks in a year. The members of a division would take turns.

^h Given his expression of doubt this evidently was not a recent prayer. Zacharias had given up hope (since having a child was now a physical impossibility), and may well have been unhappy with God for not having answered. He was not even impressed with the tremendous things the angel said, but continued to doubt.

LUKE 1

his birth. ¹⁵For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; he must not drink either wine or strong drink;^a indeed, he will be filled with Holy Spirit^b already from his mother's womb. ¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God; ¹⁷in fact he himself will go before Him^c in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of fathers to children'^d and the disobedient to the mind-set of the righteous,^e to prepare a people made ready for the Lord."

Zacharias doubts

¹⁸But Zacharias said to the angel: "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."^f ¹⁹So in answer the angel said to him: "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God;^g I was sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. ²⁰Now look, you will be silent and not able to speak until the day in which these things happen, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

Zacharias punished

²¹Now the people were waiting for Zacharias and wondering at his delay in the sanctuary. ²²But when he came out he was unable to speak to them, and they understood that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary—he kept gesturing to them while remaining mute. ²³And so, when the days of his service were fulfilled, he took off for home.^h

²⁴Well after those daysⁱ his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and stayed in seclusion five months.^j She kept saying, ²⁵"So that's what the Lord has done for me in the days^k when He concerned Himself to take away my reproach among the people!"^l

^a This sounds like a Nazirite—Numbers 6:3.

^b Since 'Holy Spirit' occurs without a definite article, I take the phrase as a proper name.

^c The antecedent of "Him" is "the Lord their God"; in effect Gabriel is affirming that the Messiah, Jesus, is God—since he was speaking Hebrew, he may well have said 'Jehovah their God'.

^d See Malachi 4:5-6.

^e The righteous have one mind-set; the disobedient have a different one. To change someone's conduct you need to change his mind-set.

^f Does it occur to you to wonder why God would choose such an old couple for a job like this? Perhaps because they would no longer be sidetracked by personal ambitions and would dedicate their energies to preparing John.

^g Gabriel is no ordinary angel, possibly one of the cherubim; he is probably not far below Michael in rank. He imposes his authority on the priest.

^h We know the time frame when it was the division of Abijah's turn to serve (for only two weeks). Assuming that Elizabeth became pregnant as soon as Zacharias got home, we may deduce that Jesus was born in September/October (six months after John).

ⁱ Which ones? Presumably "the days of his service" in verse 23.

^j Her menopause was ancient history, so what was happening was 'impossible'; besides, even if she was pregnant the likelihood of a miscarriage would be high; so she kept quiet. But after five months she would begin to 'show', and the prospect of success was good.

^k A pregnancy involves a fair number of days, and divine intervention was necessary all the time to enable her to carry the baby to term.

^l At that time people looked down on a married woman who had no children.

The birth of Jesus foretold—5 BC

²⁶Now in the sixth month^a the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee named Natsareth,^b ²⁷to a virgin betrothed^c to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house^d of David; the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸So upon entering where she was the angel said, "Rejoice, recipient of grace, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"^e ²⁹But upon seeing him she was perplexed at his word and was trying to figure out what sort of greeting it might be.^f

Gabriel delivers

³⁰The angel said to her: "Do not be afraid,^g Mary, because you have found favor with God. ³¹Now then, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS.^h ³²He will be great, and will be called 'Son of the Most High'; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David,ⁱ ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob^j into the ages; indeed, of His kingdom there will be no end!"^k

Mary agrees

³⁴So Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I do not know a man?"^l ³⁵In answer the angel said to her: "Holy Spirit^m will come upon you and the power of the Most High will hover over you; precisely for this reason the holy One who is to be born will be called 'Son of God'!"ⁿ ³⁶Furthermore, your relative Elizabeth, she has actually conceived a son in her old age and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren; ³⁷because any word spoken by God

^a Of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

^b For an explanation of this spelling, and its importance, please see the note at Matthew 2:23.

^c This involved a signed legal document, so much so that the couple were then called husband and wife, so 'engaged' (at least in contemporary society) is not an adequate rendering.

^d See Luke 2:4.

^e To be the mother of the Messiah was a blessing granted to only one woman in the whole history of this world (see Genesis 3:15). Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'blessed are you among women' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f In Zacharias the angel inspired fear, but Mary sensed immediately that the angel did not represent a menace or threat and concentrated on his astounding words. In typical female fashion, she was trying to figure out the hidden agenda.

^g He is not telling her not to be afraid of himself, because she wasn't; I take it that he is telling her not to fear the future and the implications of his message.

^h Although the angel presumably addressed Mary in Hebrew, when it came to pronouncing the name, he may well have used the Greek name as we know it. The precise sequence of sounds can be written and pronounced in Hebrew.

ⁱ Through Mary, Jesus received some of David's genes; David was literally His ancestor (see Mary's genealogy in Luke 3:23-38).

^j The 'house of Jacob' is not the Church, but the unending Kingdom will include much more than just that 'house'.

^k This world will come to an end, but not Christ's Kingdom. What the angel said to Mary was even more tremendous than what he said to Zacharias.

^l Zacharias expressed doubt, but Mary simply requests some necessary information. She has understood that God wants her to be the Messiah's mother—she was doubtless highly intelligent and perceptive. (In the Bible the verb 'to know' is used to refer to sexual intercourse.).

^m The Text does not have a definite article with 'Holy Spirit'.

ⁿ Literally so—the Holy Spirit supplied the genes that normally are supplied by a human father.

will be possible.” ³⁸So Mary said: “Yes, I am the Lord’s slave! Let it happen to me according to your word.”^a And the angel departed from her.

Mary visits Elizabeth

³⁹Then Mary quickly got ready and went into the hill country in those days, to a town of Judah, ⁴⁰and entered the house of Zacharias and saluted Elizabeth.^b ⁴¹Well it happened that as Elizabeth heard Mary’s salutation the babe bounced up and down in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth prophesies

⁴²And she cried out with a great voice^c and said: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb! ⁴³Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord^d should come to me? ⁴⁴Yes indeed, because as the sound of your salutation came into my ears the babe bounced up and down in my womb for joy.^e ⁴⁵Blessed is she who believed, because there will be a fulfillment of the things that have been spoken to her from the Lord.”^f

Mary worships

⁴⁶So Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷and my spirit has exulted over God my Savior,^g

⁴⁸in that He paid attention

to the humble station of His slave (f).

Yes indeed, because from now on

all generations will declare me to be highly favored,^h

⁴⁹in that the Mighty One did sublime things for me,

and Holy is His name.

⁵⁰His mercy is for generations of generations

to those fearing Him.

⁵¹He has done mighty deeds with His arm;

He has dispersed the arrogant in the reasoning of their hearts.

⁵²He has dethroned rulers and exalted the lowly.

⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things

and sent the rich away empty.ⁱ

^a Mary had to understand the proposal and be in full agreement, or she would not have been a good mother.

^b I take it that Mary understood that the angel’s reference to Elizabeth was relevant to her.

^c To cry or call out suggests unusual volume by itself, so why add ‘with a great/loud voice’? Since she spoke under the Holy Spirit’s control, there was probably an unusual quality to the voice, and the neighbors heard it.

^d What Elizabeth is saying, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is that the Messiah is already in Mary’s womb, as witnessed by baby John’s reaction. There was no human way that Elizabeth could know of the angel’s conversation with Mary. Her prophecy served as a tremendous confirmation and encouragement to Mary—I imagine that the Holy Spirit had fertilized her as soon as she said, “Yes”.

^e The clear implication is that baby John was aware, was already a person in the womb.

^f She is stating that Mary had heard from God through the angel, although she had no human way of knowing anything about it.

^g Mary declares her own need of a Savior.

^h So it has been for 2000 years; in every generation there have been those who called her ‘blessed’.

ⁱ This sounds like social justice.

⁵⁴He has taken the part of His servant Israel,
in remembrance of mercy,
⁵⁵just as He spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his seed while *there is* an age.”^a
⁵⁶So Mary stayed with her about three months,^b and returned to her house.

The birth of John

⁵⁷Now the time for Elizabeth to give birth was completed and she bore a son.
⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had used His great mercy with her, and they rejoiced with her.

John is named

⁵⁹So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child,^c and they started calling him by the name of his father, Zacharias. ⁶⁰His mother reacted and said, “Absolutely not;^d he shall be called John!” ⁶¹So they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” ⁶²So they started motioning to his father, as to what he would have him called. ⁶³Asking for a writing tablet he wrote this: “His name is to be John!” They all marveled. ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue *freed* and he started to speak, blessing God. ⁶⁵(Well a fear came on all who lived around them; and all these sayings kept being talked about throughout all the hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶All who heard kept them in their hearts saying, “What then will this child be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.)^e

Zacharias prophesies

⁶⁷Now his father Zacharias was filled with Holy Spirit and prophesied saying:

⁶⁸“Blessed be the LORD,^f the God of Israel,
because He has visited and provided redemption for His people;
⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of deliverance for us
in the house of His servant David
⁷⁰—just as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from
antiquity—
⁷¹deliverance from our enemies and out of the hand of all who hate us;^a

^a I follow the best line of transmission, as I believe, albeit representing only 35% of the Greek manuscripts, in this case. I take the point to be that the things mentioned are pertinent to this world, not the next.

^b Those three months in the home of a priest were doubtless filled with relevant instruction from the Scriptures (of course Zacharias was mute, so he would have to write everything), part of Mary’s preparation for her role. Note that Mary evidently took off before John was born [I wonder why]. On the other hand, being three months pregnant it was high time that she go home and face the situation that awaited her. Although Joseph evidently took her to his house immediately, at God’s direction, after only six months a full size baby would be born.

^c ‘The eighth day’—two different blood clotting agents, vitamin K and prothrombin, are at their highest level (110% of normal) on the eighth day of a person’s life, so it is the best of all days for minor surgery. Who but the Creator knew that 4000 years ago, when He told Abraham to do it?

^d She was emphatic!

^e The material within parentheses is an historical aside, after the fact. Presumably Zacharias started right in with his prophecy.

^f They spoke Hebrew in Judea, and Zacharias probably said “Jehovah”.

⁷²to use mercy with our fathers,
 even to remember His Holy covenant,
⁷³the oath that He swore to our father Abraham;
⁷⁴to grant to us (having been rescued from the hand of our enemies) to
 serve Him without fear,
⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness^b before Him
 all the days of our life.
⁷⁶“And you, child, will be called Prophet of the Most High,
 because you will go before the face of the Lord^c
 to prepare His ways,
⁷⁷to give a knowledge of salvation to His people
 by the forgiveness of their sins,^d
⁷⁸through the merciful compassions of our God,
 with which the divine Dawn has contemplated us,^e
⁷⁹to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of
 death,
 to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

⁸⁰So the child kept growing and being strengthened in spirit,^f and he stayed
 in uninhabited areas until the day of his manifestation to Israel.^g

The birth of Jesus—4 BC

2 ¹Now it happened in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
 that the whole inhabited world should be enrolled.^h ²This first census took
 place while Quirinius was governing Syria.ⁱ ³So everyone was traveling, each to
 his own town, to enroll himself.

At night, in Bethlehem, the Savior is born

⁴So Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of Natsareth town, into Judea to
 the city of David, that is called Bethlehem, because he was of David’s ‘house’, that
 is, line of descent, ⁵to enroll himself with Mary, the woman who had been be-

^a Zacharias knew that the Messiah would soon be born, but was evidently expecting a physical, political kingdom that would deliver them from Roman domination. For that matter, Jesus’ own disciples evidently shared the same expectation.

^b “To serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness”—that is what life is supposed to be about, but is only possible because the Messiah came.

^c Zacharias is affirming that Jesus is ‘the Lord’ and ‘the Most High’!

^d In this paragraph Zacharias emphasizes the spiritual benefits of Messiah’s coming.

^e Without doubt, the coming of the Messiah, with all that involved, represented the dawning of a new Day for this world. Instead of “has contemplated us”, less than 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “will contemplate us” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The difference may appear to be small, but I take the point to be that the Messiah was already in the virgin Mary’s womb—the incarnation was irreversibly underway.

^f The verb ‘strengthen’ is in the passive voice, so John had outside help—just like Gabriel said.

^g Because of their advanced age, his parents may well have died by the time he was a teenager. Although as Zacharias’ son he was in line to become a priest, he could not begin to serve until he was thirty, which was when he began his public ministry. He evidently spent the interval as a recluse.

^h Of course the Roman Empire did not control the whole world, but the decree was doubtless worded in grandiose terms.

ⁱ Quirinius served two terms: the best known was in A.D. 6-10, but there is good evidence for a prior term in 4-1 B.C.

trothed to him,^a who was pregnant. ⁶So it happened that when they got there the days for her to give birth were completed: ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn^b Son, wrapped Him in pieces of cloth and laid Him in the manger,^c because there was no room for them in the lodging place.

Angels and shepherds

⁸Now there were shepherds in that same area, staying out in the field and keeping the nightly watches^d over their flock. ⁹When wow, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰The angel said to them: “Do not be afraid because listen, I am announcing the most joyful news to you, which will be to all the people! ¹¹You see, today,^e in David’s city, a Savior was born to you, who is Lord Christ! ¹²And this is the sign to you: you will find a Baby wrapped in pieces of cloth, lying in a manger.”^f ¹³Suddenly a multitude of the heavenly army was with the angel praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace, good will toward mankind!”^g

Shepherds go and report

¹⁵So when the angels went away from them into the sky the men, the shepherds, said to one another, “Hey, let’s go to Bethlehem and see this event that has taken place, that the Lord made known to us!” ¹⁶So they went in a hurry and located both Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in the manger. ¹⁷And having seen they spread an exact account of the saying that had been spoken to them concerning this Child. ¹⁸All who heard marveled at the things told them by the shepherds.^h ¹⁹As for Mary, she treasured all these sayings, pondering them in her

^a That is what the Text says. We know from Matthew 1:24-25 that Joseph had already received her as his wife, but still had not had sexual relations with her—obviously an atypical situation. He had taken responsibility for her as his wife, but as far as sex was concerned she was still ‘pledged’—thus Luke’s unusual turn of phrase.

^b Luke’s use of the term ‘firstborn’, writing after Mary had passed the age that she could bear children, clearly implies that she had other children after the first; otherwise Luke would have used ‘only’ rather than ‘first’.

^c Some 95% of the Greek manuscripts have the definite article with ‘manger’, so there was only one in the place, which implies that it was a stable. Since Bethlehem stands on a limestone ridge, there were probably natural caves that would make excellent stables. Actually, mother and baby were probably better off there than in the crowded lodging.

^d They would take turns standing watch.

^e The shepherds were Jews, and their ‘day’ began at 6 p.m. The angel’s use of ‘today’ indicates that Jesus was born at night, since the angel delivered his message at night.

^f This may not seem like much of a ‘sign’ to us, but doubtless there was only one newborn baby in the whole area who met those conditions.

^g “Good will toward mankind”—what greater proof of God’s good will could there be than the whole plan of salvation, the center piece of which was the incarnation! “Good will toward mankind” reflects some 1700 Greek manuscripts; only six known Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “among those with whom He is pleased” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.; the New Living Translation favors us with a footnote: “Some manuscripts read... *goodwill among people*”—by ‘some’ they mean ± 1700 against six! [how could the editors be so perverse?]).

^h Since the shepherds lived in that town, presumably, they would certainly tell their families and friends; in short order the whole town had heard the news. In all probability, the very next day someone offered Joseph a house to use.

LUKE 2

heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God over all that they had heard and seen, just as it was told them.

Jesus is named

²¹When eight days were completed so as to circumcise Him, His name was indeed called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Jesus is presented to God

²²And when the days of their^a purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³(just as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens a womb shall be called holy to the LORD”^b), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice according to what was specified in the Lord’s Law, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons”.^c

Simeon

²⁵Well now, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, expectantly waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶(It had been revealed to him repeatedly by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he saw the Lord’s Messiah.^d) ²⁷So by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought the Child Jesus in, to do concerning Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸Simeon took Him into his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹“Sovereign,^e now You can release your slave in peace,
according to Your word,

³⁰because my eyes have seen Your salvation,

³¹which You have prepared before the face of all peoples:

³²a light for revelation to Gentiles,
and the glory of Your people Israel.”

³³And Joseph^f and His mother were marveling at the things^g being spoken concerning Him.

³⁴Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother: “Listen, this One is appointed to bring about the fall and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign

^a The Text has ‘their’, not ‘her’; since a woman was not to have intercourse for forty days after giving birth to a boy (80 for a girl), Leviticus 12:2-5, her purification obviously affected her husband as well.

^b See Exodus 13:2, 12-15.

^c See Leviticus 12:8. The prescribed sacrifice was a lamb; only if the couple was too poor to bring a lamb could they substitute the birds (since they could be caught in the wild, the poorest of the poor could meet this requirement). Evidently Joseph and Mary could not afford a lamb, which indicates that they had not yet received the gifts from the magi.

^d The Greek Text has ‘Christ’, but the Holy Spirit presumably used Hebrew to communicate with Simeon. The man evidently lived in communion with God, and thus the Holy Spirit could guide him at any time—here He sends him into the temple at just the right moment.

^e Simon actually used the term from which we get ‘despot’, but in English this term has a negative flavor, unless one adds ‘benevolent’; but ‘benevolent despot’ does not work very well in direct address—so I render ‘Sovereign’. [When I myself address God, I habitually follow Simeon’s example—I also am His slave.]

^f Instead of ‘Joseph’, about 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘his father’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^g Simeon may have actually said more than is here recorded; in fact, I rather imagine that he did.

that is spoken against, ³⁵so that the reasonings of many hearts may be revealed (furthermore, a sword will pass through your own soul also).”^a

Anna

³⁶Also there was a prophetess Anna, a daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher—she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity ³⁷and having been a widow for about eighty-four years^b—who did not depart from the temple, serving *God* with fastings and petitions night and day. ³⁸Well she, having come up at that very moment, started praising the Lord,^c and kept on speaking of Him to all those in Jerusalem who were looking for redemption.^d

Back to Natsareth

³⁹When they had completed everything, according to the law of the Lord, they went back to Galilee, to their own town, Natsareth.^e ⁴⁰And the Child kept growing and being strengthened in spirit,^f being filled^g with wisdom; yes, the grace of God was upon Him.

A twelve-year-old Boy

⁴¹Now every year His parents would go to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover; ⁴²so when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³When they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but Joseph and His mother^h did not know it. ⁴⁴Supposing Him to be in the caravan, they went a day’s journey and *then* started looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵Not finding Him, they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. ⁴⁶So it happened that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷(All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.ⁱ)

⁴⁸So upon seeing Him they were amazed, and His mother said to Him: “Son, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in distress.”^j ⁴⁹So He said to them: “Why were you seeking me? Didn’t you

^a Watching her Son suffer, Mary would also suffer. Jesus obliged the people, especially the leaders, to take sides, and so the reasonings of their hearts were exposed.

^b If she married at 15 she would have been about 105 at the time. Instead of “for about eighty-four”, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read ‘until eighty-four’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^c Instead of ‘the Lord’, less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘God’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d She must have known who they were.

^e We know from Matthew that there was a detour through Egypt, that began from Bethlehem, so from Jerusalem they went back to Bethlehem.

^f Less than half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘in spirit’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Both ‘strengthened’ and ‘filled’ are in the passive voice; like John, only more so, Jesus had outside help.

^h Instead of ‘Joseph and His mother’, perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, have ‘his parents’ (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ Really and truly—how many of us could discuss theology intelligently for one hour, let alone three days!

^j They evidently thought that Jesus had met with foul play; they were afraid for His life. In contrast, Jesus never worried about suffering harm (see next note).

know that I must be about my Father’s *concerns?*”^a **50**But they did not understand the statement that He made to them.^b

51Then He went down with them and came to Natsareth, and continued subordinating Himself to them; His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.^c

52And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Enter John the Baptizer—26 AD

3 ¹Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, while his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas (also Caiaphas),^d the word of God came upon^e John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³So he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins;^f ⁴as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:

“A voice calling out:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness,
make His paths straight.’^g

⁵Every ravine will be filled up,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled;^h
the crooked parts of the roads will be straightened out,
and the rough parts will be smoothed out;

⁶and all fleshⁱ will see the salvation of God.”

^a At twelve Jesus knew precisely who He was—“my father” cannot refer to Joseph because Jesus was not discussing carpentry with the doctors of the Law—He was consciously about God’s business. Notice that Jesus does not even come close to apologizing; in fact He rebukes them for worrying—after all, they also knew just who He was. (Jesus was no doubt unusually mature for His age, and may have just had His *bar mitzvah*.) The only time Jesus feared for His life was in Gethsemane—Matthew 26:38, Mark 14:34, Luke 22:44, Hebrews 5:7-8 (compare by contrast Luke 4:28-30, Mark 4:35-41, John 8:59, 10:39, 18:6).

^b Perhaps they should have, knowing who He really was, but by now they probably had at least four children and each day was filled with very ordinary concerns—do the concerns of life not cause us also to forget spiritual realities?

^c This is the second time Luke records this. No doubt Mary was one of the eyewitnesses that Luke interviewed; I imagine it was a long and detailed interview, and maybe several.

^d Annas was the real high priest, which office was for life. But in an effort to diminish the political influence of the high priest (presumably) the Roman government obliged the Jews to name a different high priest each year, and the governor dealt with him—so that particular year it was Caiaphas. Notice how Luke emphasizes historicity.

^e That’s what the Text says, ‘upon’ not ‘to’; I take it that that Word compelled him to action.

^f There are those who squirm at the plain meaning of the Text—John was offering forgiveness of sins. Well, throughout the Old Testament, if you brought an animal offering you were confessing to being a sinner, and expecting to be forgiven. As forerunner to the Lamb of God, who would provide the ultimate payment for sin, John represented a transition, from the old to the new.

^g The Hebrew text of Isa. 40:3 has “in the desert” here, making it overtly parallel to “in the wilderness”, so both are part of what the ‘voice’ is saying.

^h That is, where the highway passes, not all over the place; just like modern super-highways.

ⁱ That’s what the Text says. I resist the temptation to limit the reference to people, because the animals will also see it (Isaiah 11:6-9). In Genesis 6:17 “all flesh” clearly includes the animals.

“Brood of vipers!”

⁷Then he said to the crowds that were coming out to be baptized by him: “You sons of poisonous snakes!^a Who tipped you off to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Well then, produce fruits befitting repentance, and don’t *even* begin to say among yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as father,’ because I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones!^b ⁹But even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees;^c so then, every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

“What shall we do?”

¹⁰So the people^d started asking him, “What then must we do?” ¹¹In answer he said to them, “He who has two coats,^e let him share with him who has none; and he who has food should do likewise.”^f ¹²Well even tax collectors came to be baptized by him and said to him, “Teacher, what must we do?” ¹³So He said to them, “Don’t charge more than what was determined to you.”^g ¹⁴So the soldiers started asking him too: “What about us? What must we do?” He said to them, “Don’t extort or harass anyone, and be content with your wages.”^h

“A greater One is coming”

¹⁵Now as the people were expectant and all were reasoning in their hearts concerning John, whether he just might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John anticipated them all saying: “I indeed am baptizing you with water, but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal straps I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire;ⁱ ¹⁷whose winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”^j

John is imprisoned—an historical aside

¹⁸(Indeed, with many other exhortations as well he kept on preaching to the people; ¹⁹but Herod the tetrarch—being reproved by him concerning Herodias, his

^a We don’t know the precise type of snake, except that it was presumably poisonous. The Text has ‘off-springs’, plural, which doesn’t make very good English, so I put ‘sons’. From Matthew 3:7 we may conclude that he was mainly referring to Pharisees and Sadducees (who had come to evaluate what was happening, but did not themselves submit to the baptism; they would not want to admit that they had sin to confess).

^b To be born into a Christian family is certainly an advantage, but does not guarantee your eternal destiny. God has no ‘grandchildren’; you must believe into the Lord Jesus Christ to become God’s child.

^c The Messiah was about to be introduced and to begin His public ministry; among other things He would condemn the Pharisees and other ‘snakes’—‘thrown into the fire’ refers to their eternal destiny.

^d The Text has ‘crowds’.

^e Literally, ‘tunics’.

^f The verb ‘share’ is an aorist imperative, implying a one time event—you give the extra coat, but get to keep one. The verb ‘do’ is a present imperative, implying a continuing action—food is to be shared all the time.

^g Right on. The tax collectors were hated, among other things, because they usually added a percentage for themselves.

^h Right on again. Soldiers would frequently try to ‘supplement’ their wages.

ⁱ I suppose that this was fulfilled at Pentecost, although it is also true that all our works will be tested by fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

^j “Unquenchable fire” is a clear reference to the Lake; recall that there is always more chaff than grain, but the chaff is also part of the wheat plant. I suspect that most churches have more chaff than grain.

brother's wife, as also about all the wicked things that Herod perpetrated^a—²⁰added this also to them all: he actually locked John up in his prison.)

Jesus is baptized

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus, having been baptized also, was praying, when the heaven was opened ²²and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove *and rested* upon Him, and a **Voice** came out of heaven saying, “You are my beloved Son; in you I am always well pleased.”^b

Mary's genealogy^c

²³(Beginning *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph,

Jesus Himself^d was of Eli,^a

²⁴of Matthan,^b of Levi, of Melchi, of Janna, of Joseph,

^a A coward John was not!

^b The Trinity is manifested here, which would be an important confirmation for Jesus.

^c The genealogy interrupts the chronological sequence of the narrative, which resumes at 4:1.

^d There are several unusual grammatical features in the Greek text of this verse, which has been badly translated by every version I have seen: resulting in contradictions and errors of fact. Here is the Greek, for those who can read it: *Και αυτος η̅ν̅ ο̅ Ιη̅σους, ω̅σει̅ ε̅των̅ τριακον̅τα̅ αρχο̅μενος, ω̅ς̅ ε̅νομι̅ζε̅το υιο̅ς̅ Ιω̅σηφ, του̅ Η̅λει, του̅ Μα̅θθα, του̅ Λευι, του̅ Με̅λχι...* There are four words here that invite special attention: *και*, *αυτος*, *η̅ν̅* and *ω̅ς̅*. Since verse 22 ends with a statement from the Father at Jesus' baptism, it is clear that verse 23 begins another section. But the conjunction that signals the transition is *και* and not *δε*, as one would expect—this means that 'Jesus' continues as the topic. But in that event, how does one explain the personal pronoun *αυτος*, the more so in such an emphatic position? If the author's purpose was simply to register Jesus as a son of Joseph, as many suppose, why did he not just write *και ο̅ Ιη̅σους̅ η̅ν̅ υιο̅ς̅ Ιω̅σηφ*, etc.?

But then, why write *ω̅ς̅ ε̅νομι̅ζε̅το*? It seems to me that the normal meaning of “as was supposed” is to affirm that Jesus was in fact Joseph's son; but that is precisely what Jesus **was not**. Luke has already made clear that Jesus' real Father was the Holy Spirit—1:34-35, 43, 45; 2:49. So what Luke is really saying is that although the people supposed Jesus to be Joseph's son, He actually had a different lineage—we should translate “so it was supposed”. (Recall that a faithful and loyal translation seeks to transmit correctly the meaning intended by the author.)

The verb *η̅ν̅* is the only independent one in the whole paragraph, verses 23-38. Is it working with the participle *αρχο̅μενος* in a periphrastic construction? That appears to be the tendency of the eclectic text that places the participle right after 'Jesus' (following about 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality), which makes Jesus out to be in fact Joseph's son. It seems to me to be far more natural to take the participial clauses as being circumstantial: “beginning at about thirty years of age” and “being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph”. Setting those two clauses aside, the independent clause that remains is *η̅ν̅ ο̅ Ιη̅σους̅ του̅ Η̅λει*, “Jesus was of Eli”.

The participle 'beginning' requires an object, that the Text leaves implicit: from the context it seems clear that we may supply 'His ministry', or some such thing, which is why most versions do so. I suggest the following rendering: “Beginning *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph, Jesus was actually of Eli, of Mathan, of Levi...” I take it that the emphatic pronoun *αυτος* heightens the contrast between what the people imagined and the reality. Jesus was a grandson of Eli, Mary's father—Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, while Matthew gives it through His stepfather.

The eclectic text gives our verse a different wording: *και αυτος η̅ν̅ Ιη̅σους̅ αρχο̅μενος̅ ω̅σει̅ ε̅των̅ τριακον̅τα̅, ω̅ν̅ υιο̅ς̅, ω̅ς̅̅ ε̅νομι̅ζε̅το, Ιω̅σηφ̅ του̅ Η̅λι̅ του̅ Μα̅θθα̅ του̅ Λευι̅ του̅ Με̅λκι...* The RSV translates it like this: “Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat...” Is not the normal meaning of this rendering that Jesus was in fact the son of Joseph? However, every version that I recall seeing has “Joseph, the son of Heli”, which directly contradicts Matthew, “Jacob begot Joseph”. The word 'son' (without the article) occurs only with Joseph, although most versions supply it on down the genealogy. But Luke is precisely correct in not using it, because it would not hold for the first and last names in the list—Eli did not beget Jesus (nor Joseph) and God did not beget Adam.

- ²⁵of Mattathiah, of Amos, of Nahum, of Esli, of Naggai,
²⁶of Maath, of Mattathiah, of Semei, of Joseph, of Judah,
²⁷of Joannan, of Rhesa, of Zerubbabel,^e of Shealtiel,^d of Neri,
²⁸of Melchi, of Addi, of Cosam, of Elmodam, of Er,
²⁹of Jose, of Eliezer, of Jorim, of Matthat, of Levi,
³⁰of Simeon, of Judah, of Joseph, of Jonam, of Eliakim,
³¹of Melea, of Menan, of Mattatha, of Nathan, of David,
³²of Jesse, of Obed, of Boaz, of Salmon, of Nahshon,
³³of Amminadab, of Aram,^e of Joram,^f of Hezron, of Perez, of Judah,
³⁴of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, of Terah,^a of Nahor,

So then, properly understood Luke does not contradict Matthew (with reference to Joseph's father), nor does he affirm an error of fact (with reference to Jesus' father).

- ^a All published Bibles that I have seen add 'son' or 'the son' to each prepositional phrase in the genealogy, but Luke did not write that—from 'Eli' to 'God' there is no 'son'. Why not? I do not know, I was not there, but with both Eli and God the word would have a different meaning than with the rest of the names in the list. Adam could be called a 'son' of God by creation, but not procreation. I take it that Eli was Mary's father, and thus the maternal grandfather of Jesus, so here also 'son' would have a different meaning. For all that, through Mary and Eli Jesus received some of David's genes, so He was literally a descendent of David, through his son Nathan.
- ^b There is considerable confusion among the Greek manuscripts as to the spelling of all these names. I have generally just followed the spelling we are used to (since the meaning is not affected), but not always.
- ^c For more on this man see the whole book of Haggai and Zech. 4:6.
- ^d The Greek form is actually '*Salathiel*'.
- ^e Rather than "of Aram", a variety of modern versions have 'the son of Admin, the son of Arni', and they do so following the eclectic text that has been in vogue for several generations (UBS/N-A). As is their habit, the editors of that text follow the so-called 'Alexandrian' witnesses, but at this point those witnesses are scattered all over the back side of the desert—almost no two agree. One would have thought that this would give the UBS editors pause, but not at all. They were so intent on doing despite to Christ's genealogy that they actually concocted a 'patchwork quilt' and intruded the fictitious Admin and Arni into that genealogy. UBS has presented the evidence in their apparatus in such a way as to obscure the fact that no Greek MS has the precise text they have printed (the same holds for N-A). In Bruce Metzger's presentation of the UBS Committee's reasoning in this case he wrote, "the Committee adopted what seems to be the least unsatisfactory form of text". Is this not a good candidate for 'chut-zpah' of the year? The UBS editors concoct their own reading and proclaim it "the least unsatisfactory"! And just what might be "unsatisfactory" about the reading of 95% of the Greek manuscripts except that it does not introduce any difficulties?
- There is complete confusion in the Egyptian camp. That confusion may have commenced in the second century, resulting from several easy transcriptional errors, simple copying mistakes. The total confusion in Egypt does not surprise us, but how shall we account for the text and apparatus of UBS³/N-A²⁶ in this instance? And whatever possessed the editors of NASB, NRSV, TEV, LB, Berkeley, etc. to embrace such an egregious error? 'Admin' and 'Arni' have no more place in Christ's genealogy than does Idi Amin, although he at least is not a fiction.
- ^f 'Joram'—Luke 3:33 X Matthew 1:3, Ruth 4:19, 1 Chronicles 2:9. I follow 80% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in placing Joram between Aram and Hezron. However, since both the Textus Receptus and the eclectic text currently in vogue follow the 20%, mine is the first version that I have seen that includes Joram. The obvious difficulty with this proceeding is that it goes against Matthew 1:3, Ruth 4:19 and 1 Chronicles 2:9, that have no 'Joram'. The apparent disagreement with Matthew, Ruth and Chronicles would be an obvious inducement to omit 'Joram'. But what possible motivation would there be to invent and insert an unknown name? And if someone did, how could it come to dominate the stream of transmission, to the tune of 80%? But wherever could Luke have come up with 'Joram'? I understand that Luke obtained the information about Joram from records existing in his day, and being correct information was led by the Holy Spirit to include it in his Gospel. Just like Jude, who quoted Enoch—Enoch's prophecy must have been in existence in Jude's day, but we have no copy in Hebrew today (though Jews are reported to have used one so recently as the 13th century A.D.); similarly we have no copy of Luke's source. Recall Luke's stated purpose in writing: "It seemed good to me also, most excellent Theophilus, having taken careful note of everything from Above, to write to you

- ³⁵of Serug, of Reu,^b of Peleg, of Eber, of Shela,
³⁶of Cainan,^c of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech,
³⁷of Methuselah, of Enoch, of Jared, of Mahalaleel, of Cainan,
³⁸of Enosh, of Seth, of Adam, of God.)

with precision and in sequence, so that you may **know** the certainty of the things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:3-4). Given his stated purpose in writing, Luke’s account needs to be historically accurate (cf. 2:2 and 3:1). So then, I take it that the Holy Spirit guided Luke to include Joram. So then, Aram (Ram) was actually a grandson of Hezron: Hezron fathered Joram, who fathered Aram. While I am on this tack, my solution to the ‘Jeremiah’ problem in Matthew 27:9-10 is similar. Daniel (9:2) refers to “the books” (plural) in connection with Jeremiah the prophet. So I assume that Matthew had access to other writings of Jeremiah, of which no copy survives.

^a The Greek form is actually ‘Tharra’.

^b The Greek form is actually ‘Ragav’.

^c Cainan²—Luke 3:36 X Genesis 11:12. There are several spelling variations that together are attested by almost 1% of the Greek manuscripts; 99% have *Kainav*. Apparently only two omit, P^{75v} and D, but no printed text follows their lead. So there is no reasonable doubt that Luke in fact wrote that Shelah was fathered by Cainan, not Arphaxad. This Cainan has been widely used to justify treating the genealogies in Genesis like accordions—if one name was demonstrably left out in the Genesis account, then who knows how many others were also left out. This Cainan is also used to deny the validity of constructing a strict chronology based on the time spans given in the genealogies.

But where did Luke get this information? The LXX contains Cainan in Genesis 11:12, but is so different from the Massoretic text here that it looks like fiction. Recall that the LXX we know is based on codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, produced centuries after Luke. It is more likely that our LXX is based on Luke than vice versa. Where then did Luke get it? I understand that Luke obtained the information about this Cainan from records existing in his day, and being correct information was led by the Holy Spirit to include it in his Gospel (see my discussion of ‘Joram’ above).

This brief note was inspired by the discussion of the subject given by Dr. Floyd N. Jones in *Chronology of the Old Testament* (which book comes close to solving all the alleged numerical discrepancies in the OT, at least as I see it). However, the explanation that follows is original with me (if anyone else has proposed it, I am unaware). Consider the exact wording of Genesis 11:12-13. “Arphaxad lived thirty-five years and begot Salah; after he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters.” The verb ‘begot’ requires that Salah be a blood descendent of Arphaxad, not adopted. He could be a grandson, the son of a son of Arphaxad, or even a great-grandson, etc., except that in this case the time frame only has room for one intervening generation. The plain meaning of the formula in the Text, ‘W lived X years and begot Y; after W begot Y he lived Z years,’ is that W was X years old when Y was born, is it not (and Y was Z years old when W died)? It follows that this formula destroys the ‘accordion’ gambit. There were precisely 130 years between Adam and Seth, 105 between Seth and Enosh, 90 between Enosh and Cainan¹, etc., etc. (To argue that the years were based on lunar months will not save the gambit.) I take the clear meaning of the Hebrew Text to be that Arphaxad was 35 years old when Salah was born, whatever we may decide to do about ‘Cainan’.

Let us try to imagine the situation in the years immediately following the Flood. After the Flood the ‘name of the game’ was to replenish the earth. Indeed, the divine command was: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 9:1). So, whom could Noah’s grandsons marry? Obviously their cousins, Noah’s granddaughters. There would be an urgency to reproduce—thus, the girls would be married off at puberty, and the boys would not be wasting around either. The women would be giving birth as often as they possibly could. Really, the absolute top priority would be to increase the number of people. Arphaxad was born two years after the flood, but his wife could have been born a year or two earlier. (The Sacred Text is clear to the effect that only eight souls entered the ark, but some of the women could have conceived during the Flood, since they were in the ark for a full year.) Thus, Arphaxad could have fathered “Cainan” when he was 17/18. Similarly, Cainan could have fathered Salah when he was 17/18. In this way Arphaxad could be said to have “begotten” Salah when he was 35. Cainan could have died early or been passed over in Genesis because the time span did not constitute a ‘generation’, or both. Or, as things got back to normal, culturally speaking, the haste with which Arphaxad and Cainan procreated might have been viewed as unseemly. The expedient of omitting Cainan would make the account more ‘normal’ while preserving precision as to the elapsed time. But Luke would be correct in saying that Salah was “of” Cainan who was “of” Arphaxad. Salah was Arphaxad’s grandson. In any case, the Messianic line was passed on by Salah. Without Luke’s record I, for one, would never have stopped to consider what must have happened immediately following the Flood—the absolute priority must have been to increase the number of people.

Jesus tested by Satan

4 ¹Then Jesus, full of Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where He was tested for forty days by the devil.^a He ate nothing at all during those days, so after they were completed He was hungry.^b ³So the devil said to Him, “Since you are Son of God,^c tell this stone to become bread!”^d ⁴Jesus answered him saying, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.’”^e

⁵And taking Him up on a high mountain,^f the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.^g ⁶The devil said to Him: “To **you** I will give all this authority, and their glory, because it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I want to. ⁷So you, if you would worship before me, all will be yours.”^h ⁸In answer Jesus said to him: “Get behind me, Satan!ⁱ It is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve!’”^j

⁹He also took Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple,^k and said to Him: “Since you are Son of God, throw yourself down from here: ¹⁰because it is written, ‘He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you,’ ¹¹and, ‘They will carry you along on their hands, so you do not stub your foot on a stone.’”^l ¹²In answer Jesus said to him: “The statement stands, ‘You shall not test the LORD your God!’”^m

^a We are not told just how Satan did this.

^b This episode was ordained by the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to confront Satan when He was physically the weakest He would ever be (40 days without food!). When Satan failed to defeat this weakened Jesus, he was probably filled with despair—he now knew that he could never defeat Him (but he would still try to kill Him). Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15-16 give at least part of the reason why Jesus had to undergo this experience.

^c There are several kinds of conditional clause in Greek, among them ‘of doubt’, ‘of fact’ and ‘contrary to fact’—Satan was not so crude as to express doubt about Christ’s identity, ‘if’, he was more subtle; he granted the fact, ‘since’, and appealed to His pride.

^d Matthew 4:3 has “these stones”, instead of “this stone”. I gather that Satan said both: he started with ‘these stones’ and then picked out a specific one.

^e See Deuteronomy 8:3. Less than half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “but by every word of God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). If we are to live by ‘every’ word, then every word must be kept available.

^f Just three known Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (against over 1,700), omit “up on a high mountain the devil” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc., except that some keep ‘the devil’, but not the rest).

^g This is obviously supernatural. Even from a satellite you cannot see the whole world at once, because it is a sphere.

^h This was a master-stroke. Jehovah the Son entered this world as the second/last Adam precisely to recover what the first Adam had lost, and Satan was evidently well aware of what was going on. So he offers it to Jesus on a ‘silver platter’, with just one small condition... Note that Jesus does not deny Satan’s right to make the offer.

ⁱ Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “Get behind me, Satan” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j See Deuteronomy 6:13.

^k Matthew’s report has the temple before the mountain: since he employs adverbs of time (sequence) while Luke does not, I take it that Matthew gives the correct sequence (which is also the logical progression). Luke handles the temple event almost as an afterthought.

^l See Psalm 91:11-12.

^m See Deuteronomy 6:16. To do something irresponsible to try to oblige God to perform a miracle to save you from the consequences is forbidden. It would be a kind of ‘blackmail’.

¹³Having finished every test,^a the devil departed from Him until an opportune time.^b

Jesus begins His public ministry, in Galilee^c

¹⁴Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and news about Him spread throughout the whole surrounding area; ¹⁵yes, He started teaching in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

His hometown rejects Him

¹⁶So He came to Natsareth, where He had been brought up; as was His custom He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him, so unrolling the scroll He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
because He has anointed me to evangelize poor people.
He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted,^d
to proclaim release to captives
and recovery of sight to blind people,
to send those who are oppressed out in freedom,
¹⁹to proclaim the Lord’s favorable year.”^e

“Today this Scripture is fulfilled”

²⁰Then, having rolled up the scroll and returned it to the attendant, He sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him, ²¹and He began by saying to them, “Today, this Scripture in your ears has been fulfilled.” ²²(All were bearing witness to Him and were marveling at the gracious words that were coming out of His mouth;^f and they started saying, “Isn’t this the son of Joseph?”) ²³He said to them: “Doubtless you will quote this parable to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’—do here in your hometown the things we have heard were done in Capernaum.”

Jesus treads on their toes

²⁴Then He said: “Assuredly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵Further, I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut for three years and six months and a severe famine came over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow woman in Sarepta, near Sidon. ²⁷And there were many lepers in Israel in

^a Jesus was tested in the three areas: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). Hebrews 2:18 and 4:15-16 give at least part of the reason why Jesus had to go through this experience.

^b “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7), but he is in the business of returning and renewing the attack—constant vigilance is required.

^c A number of months elapsed between verses 13 and 14; John 1:15-4:42 records some of what transpired during that interval.

^d Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “to heal the brokenhearted” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Jesus interrupted the reading of Isaiah 61:2 at a comma—the great parenthesis’. The part that He read pertained to His first coming, but “the day of vengeance of our God” pertains to His second coming—the ‘parenthesis’ is closing in on 2,000 years.

^f He doubtless spoke for a reasonable length of time and was producing a favorable impression, but at the end He got offensive; verses 23-27 presumably contain the conclusion of His discourse.

the time of the prophet Elisha, yet not one of them was cleansed—just Naaman the Syrian.”^a

²⁸Well, upon hearing these things everyone in the synagogue was filled with fury,^b ²⁹and rising up they drove Him out of the town and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him off the cliff. ³⁰But He, passing through the middle of them, went on His way.^c

Capernaum becomes His base of operations—27 AD

³¹Then He went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee; He started teaching them on the Sabbaths. ³²They kept on being amazed at His teaching, because His word was with authority.

A demonized man

³³Now in the synagogue was a man having a spirit of an unclean demon; he cried out with a loud voice ³⁴saying: “Ugh! What do you want with us, Jesus of Natsareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!”^d ³⁵So Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be muzzled, and get out of him!” When the demon had thrown him down in the midst, it came out of him without harming him. ³⁶Everyone was taken with amazement and they started conversing together, saying: “What is this word! For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!” ³⁷And the news about Him started going out to every place of the surrounding region.

Peter’s mother-in-law

³⁸Then He left the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering with a high fever, and they requested Him on her behalf. ³⁹So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.^e

Healings at sunset

⁴⁰Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on each one of them and healed them.^f ⁴¹Moreover, demons came out of many, crying out and saying,

^a It appears that Jesus antagonized them on purpose. Why? I see two possible answers: to remove any claim to special privilege that they might harbor because of being His home town; to be personally free from possible pressure arising from such a claim. In fact He moved out, choosing Capernaum as His base of operations.

^b The violent reaction was out of all proportion to the ‘provocation’. Presumably Satan took this opportunity to try to kill Him.

^c “Passing through the middle of them, He went on His way”—now how did that happen? To throw Him down, someone would have to be holding Him, probably a man on each arm, and they had gotten Him there by force, and He was surrounded. Obviously the Lord made use of supernatural power to free Himself from that situation—He had come to this world to die, all right, but not then and not in that way.

^d Evidently the Lord’s mere presence was enough to make the demons feel threatened. Based on John 14:12, I wonder if the same thing should not be true of us.

^e Normally a high fever leaves one weak, so the Lord reversed the consequences of the fever as well. I take it that Matthew 8:14-15 records a different occasion. Just because God heals you once does not mean you will not get sick again.

^f On this occasion Jesus placed a hand on each one, but that would not always be the case. It would appear that He deliberately used a variety of procedures to heal.

“You are the Christ,^a the Son of God!” But rebuking them He would not allow them to continue speaking, because they knew that He was the Messiah.^b

⁴²Now at daybreak He departed and went to a deserted place; so the crowds started looking for Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them. ⁴³But He said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” ⁴⁴So He went preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.^c

By the sea

5 ¹Now it happened, as He had come along the Lake of Genesaret, that the multitude crowded Him to hear the Word of God; ²He saw two boats standing by the lake (the fishermen were out of them, washing their nets). ³So He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little from the land.^d Sitting down He began to teach the crowds from the boat.

A miraculous catch

⁴When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” ⁵And in answer Simon said to Him, “Master, we have worked hard the whole night and caught nothing, but based on your word I will let down the net.”^e ⁶When they had done this, they caught such a large number of fish that their net began to tear. ⁷So they signaled to their partners who were in the other boat to come help them; they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸Upon experiencing this Simon Peter fell at Jesus’ knees,^f saying, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”^g ⁹Because astonishment gripped him and all who were with him at the haul of fish which they had caught; ¹⁰yes, this included James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you

^a Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “the Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b I find this to be curious: the demons kept telling the truth about Jesus, but He evidently did not want testimony from that quarter. But it seems that the demons felt compelled to identify Him—I wonder why.

^c Around 4% of the Greek manuscripts read Judea rather than Galilee, possibly influenced by Lectionaries. There is confusion among the 4% such that the prepositional phrase as given in UBS is read by less than 1%. However, Jesus was in Galilee (and continued there), not in Judea, as the context makes clear. In the parallel passage, Mark 1:35-39, all texts agree that Jesus was in Galilee. Thus UBS³ contradicts itself by reading Judea in Luke 4:44. Bruce Metzger makes clear that the UBS editors did this on purpose when he explains that their reading “is obviously the more difficult, and copyists have corrected it...in accord with the parallels in Mt 4.23 and Mk 1.39.” Thus the UBS editors introduce a contradiction into their text which is also an error of fact. This error in the eclectic text is reproduced by LB, NIV, NASB, NEB, RSV, etc. NRSV adds insult to injury: “So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.”

^d Peter had already spent time with Jesus, so this was natural.

^e Peter was the professional here, and figured he knew better than Jesus, but he does obey. However, Jesus had said to let down ‘nets’ (pl), but Peter let down only one. 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read ‘nets’, to be followed by most modern versions. (Actually, Jesus put ‘let down’ in the plural, so there was at least one other in the boat, unless it was really His intention that both boats should go out.)

^f Jesus was still sitting in the boat, only now surrounded by fish, probably up to His knees.

^g Do you find Peter’s reaction to be curious? No doubt he felt pretty ‘small’ at that point.

will be catching people.”¹¹ Pulling the boats up on the shore, they left it all^a and followed Him.

The hinge: proof, evaluation, rejection

A leper—the proof

¹²Now it happened, while He was in one of the towns—a man full of leprosy! Upon seeing Jesus he fell on his face and begged Him, saying, “Lord, if you want to, you can cleanse me!”¹³ So He extended His hand and touched him, saying, “I want to; be cleansed!”^b Immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴Then He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing just as Moses prescribed, as a testimony to them.”^c

¹⁵However the news about Him spread all the more, and large crowds kept gathering to hear and to be healed by Him of their sicknesses. ¹⁶So He Himself would withdraw into deserted places and pray.^d

An examining council—the evaluation

¹⁷Now it happened on a certain day that He was teaching, and there were Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee, and from Judea and Jerusalem, sitting there—and the power of the Lord was there to heal them.^e

“Your sins are forgiven”

¹⁸And then, some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a cot, and tried to take him in and place him before Him. ¹⁹When they could not find how to do it, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him with the cot through the tiling into the center, in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith He said to him, “Man, your sins are forgiven you!”^f

A ‘discussion’ ensues

²¹So the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying: “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”^g ²²But Jesus perceived their reasonings and reacted by saying to them: “Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you’, or to say, ‘Get up and walk!’?^h ²⁴But that you may know that the Son of the Man^a has authority on

^a The hired men took care of the fish, etc. No doubt most of the crowd had stayed to watch, so getting rid of the fish probably was not a problem.

^b “I want to”—beautiful! To actually touch a leper was unheard of, but of course Jesus had no fear of contamination.

^c As a testimony about what? This would be the first time in the life of the priest that anyone had done this, because lepers did not get better. Who but the Messiah could heal leprosy? That they got the point is indicated by the examining council that is described in verse 17 below.

^d He made sure that He kept in touch with the Father.

^e The eclectic text currently in vogue makes a mess of this statement by changing ‘them’ to ‘him’, following about 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality. ‘Him’ is in the accusative case, as is ‘them’, and is thus the direct object of the verb ‘to heal’. The modern versions that follow the 1% render ‘present with Him to heal’, or some such thing, which the text does not say.

^f Those men were really determined, but they wanted healing, not forgiveness of sins; however, Jesus had His own agenda.

^g Their theology was not all that bad; they just did not recognize Jesus as God.

^h “Your sins are forgiven” is easier to say, because no one can see if it happened or not. If you say, “Get up and walk!” and he does not, it makes you look stupid.

earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralyzed man: “I say to you, get up! Take your cot and go to your house.”

God is glorified

²⁵Immediately he stood up in front of them, took up what he had been lying on, and set out to his own house glorifying God. ²⁶Amazement gripped them all and they kept glorifying God; they were also filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!”^b

Enter Levi (Matthew)

²⁷After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow me!” ²⁸So leaving everything he got up and followed Him.^c ²⁹Then Levi made a great banquet for Him at his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining with them.

The Pharisees have a problem

³⁰Well the scribes and Pharisees complained about them to His disciples, saying, “How can you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?!” ³¹So Jesus reacted and said to them: “Those who are healthy have no need of a physician, just those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call righteous people to repentance, just sinners.”

³³Then they said to Him, “Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but yours keep eating and drinking?” ³⁴So He said to them: “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? ³⁵But days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast.”

New wine X old wineskins

³⁶Then He also told them a parable: “No one puts a patch from a new garment on an old one; otherwise, both the new makes a tear and that from the new does not match the old. ³⁷And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst those skins and will itself be spilled and the skins wasted. ³⁸Rather, new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved.^d ³⁹Further, no one having drunk old *wine* immediately desires new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’”

^a That is what the Text says, “the Son of the Man”, which appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself; the phrase does not make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if “the man” refers to pristine Adam and “the son” to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

^b Their initial reaction was favorable, but then Jesus went and ate with tax collectors, and that was too much for them.

^c Wow! Evidently he really did, turning his responsibilities over to his colleagues. Because tax collectors were ostracized by the people, they probably wanted to join the crowds following Jesus, but felt excluded. So a direct invitation to Matthew was all he wanted.

^d I take it that the Lord is saying that a church that has become an ‘old wineskin’ cannot be renewed—any attempt to introduce ‘new wine’ will only result in division and bitterness. Bearers of ‘new wine’ should just start a new congregation. The truth stated in verse 39 is one of the factors. Less than 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and both are preserved” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

6 ¹Now it happened on a second-first^a Sabbath that He was passing through the grain fields, and His disciples began to pick and eat the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. ²But some of the Pharisees said to them,^b “Why are you doing that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” ³So in answer to them Jesus said: “Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and even gave it to those with him—that which only the priests are allowed to eat?” ⁵Then He said to them, “The Son of the Man is Lord even of the Sabbath!”^c

He heals on the Sabbath

⁶Now it happened on a different Sabbath that He entered the synagogue and began to teach. Well there was a man there whose right hand was shriveled: ⁷so the scribes and the Pharisees started watching, to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against Him. ⁸But He knew their thoughts and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in the center.” So he got up and stood. ⁹Then Jesus said to them: “I will ask you something: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”^d ¹⁰And when He had looked around at them all, He said to him, “Stretch out your hand!” So he did that, and his hand was restored, as sound as the other.^e

The rejection

¹¹But they were filled with rage,^f and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Choosing the Twelve

¹²Now it happened in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and He continued all night in prayer to God.^g ¹³When it was day He called His disciples, and from them He chose twelve, whom He also named apostles:^h ¹⁴Simon (whom He also named Peter) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Phillip and Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew and Thomas, James (the son of Alphaeus)

^a That is what the Text says. No doubt everyone at that time knew just what was intended, but in the meantime we have lost the necessary cultural information. Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “second-first”, to be followed by most modern versions.

^b By now the Pharisees had ‘spies’ following Jesus wherever He went.

^c Now that was something that they were not prepared to assimilate. They used the Sabbath as an instrument to dominate the people, and Jesus was threatening to deprive them of that instrument. Mark 2:27 preserves an added comment: “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”. Man needs one day of rest in seven, but it is not intended as a ‘straitjacket’.

^d Instead of “to kill”, perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘to destroy’, as in almost all versions, since both the TR and the eclectic text follow the 10%.

^e Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “as sound as the other” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Filled by whom, or what? Only someone controlled by Satan could become furious over a good deed like that.

^g Presumably He was making sure that He made the correct selection of twelve, taken from a larger group of followers. He certainly knew why He was including the Iscariot.

^h The basic meaning of the term was ‘messenger’, or ‘envoy’.

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and Simon (the one called 'Zealot'), ¹⁶Judas of James and Judas Iscariot (who also became 'traitor').^a

A sermon on a level place^b

¹⁷Then He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, also from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases, ¹⁸as well as those who were being harassed by unclean spirits—and they were being healed! ¹⁹So the whole crowd kept trying to touch Him, because power was going out from Him and was healing all.^c

Blessings

²⁰Then He raised His eyes toward His disciples and said:

"Blessed are you poor,
because the Kingdom of God is yours.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now,
because you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now,
because you will laugh.

²²Blessed are you whenever men hate you,
and whenever they exclude you and heap insults on you
and trash your name as 'malignant',^d for the Son of the Man's sake.

²³Rejoice in that day and skip about!^e Because your reward really is great in Heaven; for that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

Woes

²⁴"But woe to you who are rich!
because you have already received your comfort.

²⁵Woe to you who are full!
because you will go hungry.

Woe to you who are presently laughing!
because you will mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe, when all men speak well of you;
for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets!

Instructions

²⁷"Further, to you who are listening^f I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you; ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.^a

^a Note the 'became'—Judas was doubtless just as sincere as the others when he joined up, and won everyone's confidence to the extent that he was made treasurer. It was only toward the end that he 'became' a traitor.

^b Although similar to the 'sermon on the mount' recorded by Matthew, this is clearly a different time and place. During His ministry the Lord doubtless repeated His basic concepts over and over.

^c The crowd would be constantly shifting, because those who were healed would back off to make room for others.

^d As someone has said, 'A man is known by his enemies'.

^e Well, you know, I can almost manage to 'rejoice' in theory, but to 'skip about' is physical—that is harder to pretend.

^f Are you 'listening'? Really?

²⁹To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer also the other;^b and from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold the tunic as well. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks of you;^c and from him who takes away your things, do not demand them back. ³¹Yes, like you want people to treat you, that is just how you must treat them.^d ³²Also, if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those doing good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do the same. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect to get it back, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners’, to receive an equal value back.

Be compassionate

³⁵“So, love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High;^e because He is kind toward the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶So be compassionate, even as your Father is compassionate.^f

We get what we give

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give and it will be given to you: a good measure—pressed down and shaken together and running over—will they deposit in your lap.^g Because with the same measure that you use it will be measured back to you.”

³⁹Then He told them a parable: “Can a blind man guide a blind man? Will they not both fall into a ditch? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.^h ⁴¹Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank that is in your own eye?ⁱ ⁴²Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

^a People who do these things are being used by Satan; they need to be delivered, and this is done in the spiritual realm.

^b Do not use physical violence to respond to physical violence—but we can use our spiritual authority. Animals must resort to force, but Adam was given dominion over the animals, which presumably was not exercised with physical force—we should not lower ourselves to the animal level; but Satan tries to trick us into doing so. If someone lashes out in anger, turning the other cheek should shame him.

^c Presumably this does not refer to professional beggars (2 Thessalonians 3:10), but to someone overtaken by adversity who needs temporary help, someone you know who is part of the community.

^d This is the so-called ‘golden rule’—if everyone did this the world would be a better place.

^e I take the point to be that the behavior described indicates that the person already is a ‘son’ of the Most High. As it says in Ephesians 2:8-10, we do good works because we are saved, not in order to become so.

^f Only if you have the Holy Spirit can you even come close to following the Father’s example.

^g ‘They’ refers to human beings, not to God.

^h This is an important point: it takes time to become ‘fully trained’. No one becomes like Jesus in a hurry.

ⁱ Even a speck in the eye is very uncomfortable, making it hard to use that eye. An eye with a ‘plank’ would be useless, totally blind, so in effect Jesus is repeating the question, “Can a blind man guide?” On the other hand, a ‘plank’ is so large that one can grab it and remove it without sight. Unfortunately there are a lot of ‘blind’ teachers who don’t think they are, and they do untold damage to their students.

A tree is known by its fruit

⁴³“Now no good tree produces rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree produce good fruit ⁴⁴—each tree is known by its own fruit: people do not gather figs from thorn bushes, nor do they pick a bunch of grapes from a bramble. ⁴⁵The good man produces the good out of the good treasure in his heart, and the malignant man produces the malignant out of the malignant treasure in his heart: because his mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart.^a

Two foundations

⁴⁶“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’, and not do what I say?^b ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them—I will show you who he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on the bedrock. When a flood occurred, the torrent burst upon that house but could not shake it, because it was founded on the bedrock.^c ⁴⁹But he who heard and did nothing^d is like a man who built his house on the ground without a foundation, against which the torrent burst, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

The faith of a centurion

7 ¹Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. ²Well a certain centurion’s slave, who was valuable to him, was sick and about to die. ³So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him to come and rescue his slave. ⁴And when they came to Jesus they started pleading earnestly with Him, saying that the one for whom He would do this was worthy, ⁵“Because he loves our nation, and he himself built our synagogue.” ⁶So Jesus went with them.

But when He was no longer far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him: “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. ⁷In fact I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.^e Just say a word and my servant will be healed; ⁸because I also am a man placed under authority,^f having soldiers under me. I say to one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does.”

⁹Well upon hearing these things Jesus marveled at him, and turning to the crowd following Him, He said, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith!”^g ¹⁰When those who were sent returned to the house they found that the slave who had been sick was well.

^a This whole paragraph is really about people, not plants, thus the term ‘rotten’.

^b This is presumably one of the questions that will be on the Final Test.

^c Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “because it was built well”, instead of “because it was founded on the bedrock” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). If the bedrock refers to the Lord Jesus and His teaching, then this alteration is bad.

^d Notice the change in tense: ‘hears and does’ changes to ‘heard and did nothing’. The second person heard the Truth, but rejected it, and so is without excuse.

^e This event is not the same as that recorded in Matthew 8:5-13. For a discussion please see the Appendix: “Did the centurion leave his house?”.

^f He was part of a chain of command, with people both above and beneath him. Whereas he had military authority, he understood that Jesus had spiritual authority—all He had to do was speak. So how about us?

^g If Jesus were here today, He could say the same thing about almost all churches.

A widow's son raised

¹¹Now it happened on the next day that He went to a town called Nain, and many of His disciples went with Him, also a large crowd. ¹²But as He approached the town gate, mercy, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her^a and said to her, “Don’t cry!” ¹⁴And advancing He took hold of the bier and the bearers stood still. Then He said, “Young man, to you I say, get up!”^b ¹⁵So the dead man sat up and began to talk! Yes, He gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶Fear took hold of all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!” ¹⁷And this report about Him went throughout Judea, as well as all the surrounding region.^c

Messengers from John

¹⁸Then the disciples of John informed him about all these things. ¹⁹And summoning a certain two of his disciples, John sent them to Jesus, saying, “Are you the Coming One, or should we look for another?”^d ²⁰When the men had come to Him, they said: “John the Baptizer has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the Coming One, or should we look for another?’” ²¹Well in that very hour He healed many from diseases and torments and malignant spirits, and to many blind He granted sight. ²²So in answer Jesus said to them: “Go and report to John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind regain sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, dead are raised, the poor are evangelized.^e ²³And, blessed is he who does not take offense at me!”^f

Jesus praises John

²⁴Now when John’s messengers had departed, He began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to observe, a reed being shaken by the wind? ²⁵But what did you go out to see, a man clothed in soft garments? Really, those with gorgeous apparel and living in luxury are in palaces. ²⁶But what did you go out to see, a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and much more than a prophet. ²⁷This is he about whom it is written:

“Take note, I am sending my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.”^g

²⁸Further, I tell you that among those born of women there is no greater prophet^a than John the Baptizer; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.”^b

^a She needed compassion: her situation was desperate, with no means of support.

^b Jesus was always specific when He brought someone back from the dead, so as not to empty the graveyard.

^c Nain is in Galilee, but besides the surrounding region the report of this particular miracle made it to Judea as well.

^d John was puzzled and disillusioned. If Jesus was the Messiah, why was he, John, in prison? Why didn’t Jesus set up His Kingdom and deliver John? Everyone was looking for the Messianic Kingdom to be set up forthwith (see 19:11).

^e “The poor are evangelized”—what the poor (and everyone else) need most is salvation and a new life, not a free distribution of wealth.

^f Jesus was not meeting John’s expectations, and the same thing happens to us, from time to time, but we had better keep the proper perspective.

^g See Malachi 3:1.

²⁹(When all the people, including the tax collectors, heard this, they declared God to be just, having been baptized with John's baptism. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)^c

Inconsistency of the Pharisees

³¹“To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and to what are they similar? ³²They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying,

‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we mourned to you, and you did not cry.’

³³Because John the Baptizer came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ ³⁴The Son of the Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Just look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ ³⁵Still, by all her children wisdom is justified.”^d

A lesson in forgiveness

³⁶Then one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with Him,^e so He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined. ³⁷But then, a woman in the town who was a sinner, when she found out that He was reclining in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster flask of perfume, ³⁸and as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping,^f she began to wet His feet with her tears and kept wiping them with the hair of her head; and she kept kissing His feet^g and anointing them with the perfume.^h

³⁹Now as the Pharisee who had invited Him observed this, he was saying to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him, including what sort of woman she is—because she is a sinner!”ⁱ ⁴⁰So Jesus reacted by saying to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he said, “Teacher, say on.” ⁴¹“A certain creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²And when they had no way to repay, he freely forgave them both. Now tell me, which of them will love him more?” ⁴³So Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one to whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”

⁴⁴Then He turned toward the woman and said to Simon: “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵You gave me no

^a Perhaps 14% of the Greek manuscripts omit “prophet”, to be followed by most modern versions, but the difference in meaning is significant. Jesus did not say, ‘no greater person’.

^b I find this statement to be puzzling; is John not part of the Kingdom? If John is not, then none of the O.T. saints is either.

^c John's baptism was based on repentance, but self-righteous people would consider that they did not need it.

^d In other words, the Pharisees were not children of ‘wisdom’.

^e This was not a friendly invitation.

^f He was reclining on a ‘couch’ with His head in toward the table, so His feet were ‘available’.

^g To do all of this she would have to be kneeling. She started by standing, and probably waited a minute to see if anyone would object.

^h This is a moving picture. She was ashamed and distressed, because of what she was, but she desperately wanted to change, and she saw in Jesus the way out.

ⁱ Evidently the woman was well known to the locals.

kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfume. ⁴⁷For this reason, I say to you, her many sins have been forgiven, because she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

⁴⁸Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” ⁴⁹The other recliners began to say within themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” ⁵⁰Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go into peace.”^a

Jesus takes the offensive

Women provide for Jesus

8 ¹Now it happened after this that He started going around town by town, village by village, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, and the twelve were with Him; ²also certain women who had been healed of malignant spirits and infirmities: Mary (the one called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had gone out; ³and Joanna the wife of Chuza, an official of Herod; and Susanna, and many others—these were providing for Him^b from their substance.

Parable of the soils

⁴Now when a large crowd had gathered, with people coming to Him from town after town, He spoke by a parable: ⁵“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed some fell along the road, and it got trampled, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶And some fell on the rock ledge, and upon sprouting it withered, because it had no moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and springing up together the thorns choked it. ⁸The rest fell into the good ground, and growing up it produced fruit a hundredfold.” Upon saying these things He called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

The purpose of parables

⁹Then His disciples asked Him saying, “What does this parable mean?” ¹⁰So He said: “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest *only* in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’^c

The parable of the soils explained

¹¹“Now here is the parable: The seed is the Word of God. ¹²Those along the road are those who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, in order that they not be saved, having believed.^d ¹³Those on the rock ledge are the ones who, whenever they hear, receive the word with joy; yet these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of testing fall away.^e ¹⁴Now that

^a That is what the Text says, ‘into’ not ‘in’—from then on her life would be different, one characterized by peace. She got what she so desperately wanted.

^b The Greek manuscripts are divided between ‘him’ and ‘them’ (I follow the best line of transmission), which in practice would amount to the same thing—since He would not eat alone, any providing would have to include the twelve.

^c See Isaiah 6:9. The Lord plainly states that He used parables so that people would not understand. It follows that doctrine should never be based on a parable—however, if the parable is explained, the explanation may be used.

^d The Lord here states a terrible truth: Satan has access to the human mind. See also 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.

^e Note that with the exception of those along the road all the seeds germinate—there is life.

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which fell into the thorns: these are the ones who heard, yet as they go they are choked by cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵But that on the good ground: these are the ones who having heard the word with a noble and good heart, hold on to it and produce fruit with perseverance.”

All will be exposed

¹⁶Upon saying these things He called out: “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!^a No one, when he has lit a lamp, covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but he sets it on a lamp stand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷Further, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed, nor anything concealed that will not be made known and come into the open. ¹⁸So be careful **how** you hear:^b Because whoever has, to him *more* will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken away from him.”

Relationships redefined

¹⁹Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and they could not get near Him because of the crowd. ²⁰And it was told Him by some saying, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” ²¹But in answer He said to them, “My mother and my brothers are these, the ones who hear the word of God and do it!”^c

Jesus stills a storm

²²Now it happened on one of those days that He got into a boat with His disciples; and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they launched out. ²³But as they sailed He fell asleep. A windstorm descended on the lake, and they were being swamped and were in jeopardy. ²⁴So they came and awakened Him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” Then He got up and rebuked the wind and the waves of water—and they stopped, and there was a calm!^d ²⁵So He said to them, “Where is your faith?”^e But being terrified they marveled, saying to each other: “Who can this be?^f Because He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him!”

^a Most (if not all) versions omit “Upon saying these things He called out: He who has ears to hear let him hear!” following 45% of the Greek manuscripts. I follow the best line of transmission, which is part of the 55% here. Jesus was calling attention to what He was about to say.

^b Spiritual growth is like going up an incline on a bicycle with no brakes: if you stop pedaling, you start going backwards. Either we grow, or we start losing what we have. There is no standing still. So be careful **how** you hear!

^c Our primary commitment should be to Christ and His Kingdom, not to our physical family. There are times when the Kingdom ‘trumps’ family.

^d Agitated water does not calm down immediately, even if the cause stops, so there was a double miracle here—Jesus undid the consequences of the wind.

^e In other words, He is telling them that they could, and should, have done something about it themselves. Had we been there, would we have done any better?

^f This puzzles me: after all the miracles they had seen, they still wonder who Jesus is! Well, maybe controlling nature is in a ‘higher league’ than controlling sickness and demons. Still, what were the options: human, angel (good or bad), or God.

Jesus handles demon infestation

²⁶Then they sailed to the district of the Gadarenes,^a which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷Well when He stepped out on the land, a certain man of that town met Him, who had had demons for a long time—he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house, but among the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus he gave a yell, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice he said: “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?^b I beg you, don’t torment me!” ²⁹because He had commanded the unclean spirit to get out of the man (it had seized him many times—he would be bound with chains and shackles, being kept under guard; then bursting the bonds he would be driven by the demon into deserted places). ³⁰Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”^c And he said, “Legion” (because many demons had gone into him). ³¹And he^d kept imploring Him that He would not order them to go away into the Abyss.^e

³²Now a herd of many pigs was feeding there on the hillside; and they started begging Him that He would allow them to go into those; so He gave them permission. ³³Then the demons exited the man and entered the pigs—and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned!^f

³⁴Well when the herders saw what had happened they ran away and reported it in the town and in the countryside. ³⁵So they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus; they found the man from whom the demons had gone out sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.^g ³⁶Also, the eyewitnesses reported to them how the demonized man was healed. ³⁷Then the whole multitude from the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, because they were overcome by fear.^h So He got into the boat and returned.ⁱ

³⁸Now the man from whom the demons had gone out had started begging Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return to your house and recount how much God has done for you.” So he went his way and proclaimed all over town how much Jesus had done for him.^j

^a The eclectic text currently in vogue, following just 4 Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, against 1,700, reads ‘Gerasenes’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.). For a full discussion of this question please see the Appendix: “The ‘Legion’ and the pigs; where was it?”

^b The disciples may not have known who Jesus was, but the demons did!

^c I assume that Jesus knew the demon’s name without asking, so why did He ask? I would say that He wanted it to be part of the Record, to teach us that demon infestation can and does occur.

^d The boss demon does most of the talking, representing his cohort.

^e The Text has ‘the Abyss’, presumably the same one mentioned in Revelation 20:3. The demons knew something that most of us do not.

^f I very much doubt that the demons engineered that reaction; it would have been counterproductive, leaving them without a ‘home’. Animals often show more good sense than do humans, and they may have preferred death to demons. (And I suppose it is possible that Jesus Himself commanded the action, since pork was proscribed for God’s people.)

^g With good reason; a supernatural power was at work, obviously.

^h The loss of all those pigs was a severe economic blow.

ⁱ And apparently He never went back; they had had their chance.

^j ‘How much God’ becomes ‘how much Jesus’, which amounts to the same thing. The man witnessed to such good effect that many in that area believed.

A desperate father

⁴⁰Now it happened, when Jesus returned, that the crowd welcomed Him, because they were all waiting for Him.^a ⁴¹And then, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue; he fell down at Jesus' feet and started begging Him to come to his house, ⁴²because he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying.

A desperate woman

Now as He was going, the crowds were pressing against Him. ⁴³And a woman—suffering with a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent her whole livelihood on physicians, but could not be healed by any—⁴⁴approaching from behind touched the border of His garment; and immediately the flow of her blood stopped! ⁴⁵So Jesus said, “Who touched me?”^b When all denied it, Peter and those with him said: “Master, the people are pressing against you and crowding in, and you say, ‘Who touched me?’”^c ⁴⁶But Jesus said, “Someone did touch me, because I noticed power going out from me.” ⁴⁷Now when the woman saw that she could not hide, she came trembling, and falling down before Him she told Him in the presence of all the people^d the reason why she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. ⁴⁸So He said: “Courage, daughter, your faith has healed you. Go into peace.”^e

Jesus raises a dead girl

⁴⁹While He was still speaking, here came someone from the synagogue ruler's house, saying to him: “Your daughter has died. Don't bother the teacher.” ⁵⁰But upon hearing it Jesus reacted by saying to him, “Don't be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.” ⁵¹When He arrived at the house, He allowed no one to go in except Peter, John, James, the father of the child, and her mother. ⁵²Now all were weeping and mourning for her; but He said, “Do not weep; she is not dead, but sleeping.” ⁵³They started ridiculing Him, knowing that she had died. ⁵⁴So He put them all outside, and^f grasping her hand He called, saying, “Child, arise!” ⁵⁵Then her spirit returned, and she got right up! And He directed that she be given something to eat.^g ⁵⁶Her parents were astonished, but He charged them to tell no one what had happened.^h

^a If you go around doing what Jesus did, you become public property.

^b He was referring to a purposeful touch.

^c Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and you say, ‘Who touched me?’” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d That was not easy, but she was desperate.

^e Again, ‘into’ not ‘in’. Her life was now going to be different. Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “courage” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “put them all outside, and” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Nothing like being practical!

^h Of course that would be difficult, because all the people who knew the girl had died would see her going about normally, and would want an explanation.

Jesus sends out the Twelve

9 ¹Then He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all the demons,^a and to cure diseases; ²and He sent them to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³And He said to them: “Take nothing for the journey—neither staffs^b nor knapsack nor bread nor money, neither have two tunics apiece. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there, and depart from there. ⁵But as many as do not receive you, when you depart from that town, shake off even the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” ⁶So they set out and went around, village by village, evangelizing and healing everywhere.

Herod is troubled

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all the things being done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, ⁸and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. ⁹But Herod said, “John I beheaded; so who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he started trying to see Him.^c

Jesus feeds about 5,000 men

¹⁰When the Apostles returned they reported to Him all that they had done. Then He took them and withdrew privately to a deserted place belonging to a town called Bethsaida.^d ¹¹But the crowds, being aware, followed Him. So He re-

^a “Over all the demons”—evidently, during their tour no demon resisted them, which contrasts with Luke 9:40.

^b Perhaps 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘staffs’ as singular, to be followed by most modern versions. In Matthew 10:10 it is 5%. But to put the singular here and in Matthew contradicts Mark 6:8, where all texts have “only a staff”. In Luke and Matthew the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts read “neither staffs”, which does not contradict Mark—the case of the staffs is analogous to that of the tunics: they were to take only one, not several.

^c But apparently he never succeeded until the very end, and even then only thanks to Pilate (Luke 23:6-12).

^d Instead of “a deserted place belonging to a town called Bethsaida”, 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “a town called Bethsaida” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Problem: the eclectic text currently in vogue, along with the modern versions that follow it, has Jesus and company going into the town of Bethsaida, but in verse 12 the disciples say they are in a deserted area; thus a contradiction is introduced. The eclectic text here is also at variance with itself in the parallel passages. In Matthew 14:13 all texts have Jesus going to a deserted place, and in verse 15 the disciples say, “the place is deserted... send the crowd away to the towns.” In Mark 6:31-32 all texts have Him going to a deserted place, and in verse 35 the disciples say it is a deserted place, etc. So the eclectic text not only makes Luke contradict himself, but sets him against Matthew and Mark—and this on the basis of only half a percent of the manuscripts!

But there is more to the story. From the parallel accounts it appears that He embarked at Capernaum. From John 6:23 we learn that the destination was near Tiberias. Capernaum and Tiberias are both on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, but there is a large bay between them; so they went over several miles of water. The crowd was not about to let Jesus get away. Mark makes clear that they ran along the shore—the faster runners stayed even with the boat and were waiting on the shore when the boat put in. The others were spread out behind for several miles (like in a marathon) and kept arriving. Any late starters would see the stragglers and could easily follow the action. Apparently He immediately started to heal the sick and went on to teach (Matthew 14:14, Mark 6:34). But just where was it? John says it was near Tiberias, but Luke 9:10 says it was “a deserted place belonging to a town called Bethsaida”. I assume that the place was indeed near Tiberias but did indeed belong to Bethsaida—either it had been deeded to the town somehow or the family that owned it was based in Bethsaida. Any near neighbors could not use it, so it was basically untouched—a great place for a picnic. After the feeding, Mark 6:45 says that “He made His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida”. So why did Jesus send the disciples to Bethsaida? Perhaps it was to give an accounting to the owner of the place where the multitude was fed—15,000 people can make quite a mess. (I suspect that Jesus had permission to use the place when He wanted to get away, but no one had foreseen such

ceived them and started speaking to them about the Kingdom of God, and He cured those who needed healing.

¹²Now when the day began to decline, the Twelve approached and said to Him, “Dismiss the crowd, so that they may go to the surrounding villages and their farms, lodge and find food; because we are in a deserted place here.” ¹³But He said to them, “You feed them!”^a So they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd” ¹⁴(there were about five thousand men). But He said to His disciples, “Make them recline in groups of fifty!” ¹⁵They did so, making them all recline. ¹⁶Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. ¹⁷So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the pieces they left were taken up.^b

Jesus ministers on the basis of His impending death

“You are the Christ!”

¹⁸Now it happened, as He was alone praying, that the disciples joined Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the crowds say I am?” ¹⁹In answer they said, “John the Baptizer, but others say ‘Elijah,’ while others that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.” ²⁰Then He said to them, “But you, who do you say that I am?” In answer Peter said, “The Christ^c of God!” ²¹But He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, ²²saying, “The Son of the Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up.”

To gain is to lose, to lose is to gain

²³Then He said to everyone: “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross,^d and follow me. ²⁴Because whoever desires to ‘save’ his life will waste it, but whoever ‘wastes’ his life for my sake, he will save it.^e ²⁵Further, what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, yet wastes or forfeits his very self? ²⁶Yes, whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, the Son of the Man will be ashamed of Him, whenever He comes in the glory—His, and the Father’s, and of the holy angels.^f ²⁷However, I tell you truly: there are some standing here who will certainly not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God!”

Peter, John and James see the ‘Kingdom’

²⁸Now about eight days after these words, it happened that He took along Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And as He

a crowd as that.) From Matthew and Mark I gather that from Bethsaida Jesus went directly to Genesareth, spending the minimum time necessary in Bethsaida.

^a Please, with what?! The only way the disciples could have obeyed this command would be by a miracle similar to what Jesus proceeded to perform. But they were not up to it. Are we?

^b The collecting was probably done by others, and in any case that leftover bread was used by others.

^c Since they were speaking Hebrew, he said ‘Messiah’.

^d Some 13% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘daily’, as in most versions.

^e What the Lord is talking about is the potential one’s life represents. The only way not to throw away or waste your life is to live for the Kingdom.

^f Revelation 21:8 says that a coward does not enter the Kingdom. In Matthew 10:33 Jesus said that He will deny before the Father whoever denies Him before men. To cave in under pressure is definitely not to be recommended.

prayed, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing dazzling white. ³⁰And then, two men started talking with Him, who were Moses and Elijah; ³¹they appeared in glory and were explaining His ‘departure’, that He was about to bring to fruition in Jerusalem.^a

³²Now Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; but becoming fully awake, they saw His glory, and the two men who stood with Him. ³³Then it happened: as they were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus: “Master, it is good for us to be here” and “Should we make three shelters: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah?”^b—not knowing what he was saying. ³⁴But as he was saying this a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they became afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵And a **Voice**^c came out of the cloud, saying: “This is my beloved^d Son. Listen to Him!” ³⁶When the Voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. (They kept quiet and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.)^e

A violent demon

³⁷Now it happened on the next day, when they came down from the mountain,^f that a large crowd met Him. ³⁸And then, a man from the crowd called out, saying: “Teacher, I beg you, look upon my son, for he is my only begotten. ³⁹And oh, a spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams, and it convulses him with foaming, and it hardly departs from him, destroying him! ⁴⁰And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹Then in answer Jesus said: “O unbelieving and perverse^g generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you (pl)? Bring your (sg) son here!” ⁴²But while he was still coming the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³Everyone was amazed at the majesty^h of God.

Jesus foretells His death, again

But while all were marveling at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, ⁴⁴“Let these words sink into your ears, because the Son of the Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.”ⁱ ⁴⁵But they did not understand this saying; indeed it was concealed from them,^j in order that they should not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about it.

^a Evidently they communicated the details of the game plan.

^b So how did Peter know who they were?

^c Peter never forgot that VOICE (2 Peter 1:16). In effect, the Father was rebuking Peter for speaking out of turn. The **Voice** was not happy!

^d Instead of ‘beloved’, perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘chosen’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Jesus commanded them not to mention anything until after the resurrection (Mark 9:9).

^f They spent a night up there.

^g Why “perverse”? To reject the truth and the evidence is to be perverse. This word was presumably directed to the disciples, who should have known better by now. So how about us—are we living on the basis of the truth and the evidence? Really?

^h Why ‘the majesty’? I don’t know.

ⁱ Moses and Elijah had delivered the game plan, and Jesus immediately starts warning the disciples.

^j Concealed by whom? Presumably not by God, as attested by the immediately following argument.

He who is least will be great

⁴⁶Then an argument started among them as to which of them would be the greatest. ⁴⁷So Jesus, perceiving the reasoning of their heart, took a little child and had him stand beside Him, ⁴⁸and said to them: “Whoever receives this little child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me receives Him who sent me. Further, he who is least among all of you, he will be great.”

John changes the subject

⁴⁹Then John reacted by saying, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.” ⁵⁰So Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid, because he who is not against us is for us.”^a

A Samaritan village

⁵¹Now it happened, as the days for His Ascension approached,^b that He set His face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵²and He sent messengers ahead of Him. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, so as to prepare for Him. ⁵³But they did not receive Him, because He was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴Well, when His disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven and consume them, just like Elijah did?”^c ⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them saying: “You do not know of what sort of spirit you are. ⁵⁶Further, the Son of the Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save.”^d And they went to another village.

The cost of discipleship

⁵⁷Now as they journeyed on the road, it happened that someone said to Him, “Lord,^e I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸So Jesus said to him, “The foxes have dens and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of the Man has no place to lay His head.”^f

⁵⁹Then He said to another, “Follow me!” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.”^g

⁶¹And another also said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first allow me to bid farewell to those who are at my house.”^a ⁶²But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to ‘the plow’ and looks back is suitable for the Kingdom of God.”^b

^a Instead of ‘us is for us’, perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘you is for you’.

^b Why did Luke put “ascension” rather than ‘death’ or ‘resurrection’? I don’t know, but I find it interesting. Hebrews 12:2 says that He endured the cross because of the joy that was set before Him.

^c About 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “just like Elijah did” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). No wonder Jesus called them ‘sons of thunder’ (Mark 3:17).

^d Some 27% of the Greek manuscripts omit “saying: ‘You do not know of what sort of spirit you are. Further, the Son of the Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save’”, to be followed by most modern versions. The 73% includes the best line of transmission, which I follow.

^e Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Jesus does not offer comfort and a ‘good time’.

^g Dear me, how unfeeling! Those who are not committed to Christ and His Kingdom are as good as dead, and a true disciple of Jesus must not allow himself to be held back by such. Of course such an attitude will not be understood by the ‘dead’, but the disciple needs to side with the Kingdom. What if that father had lived for another ten years? If you put off doing God’s will for things like that, you may wind up never doing it.

Jesus sends out the Seventy^c

10 ¹Now after these things, the Lord appointed seventy^d others also, and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He Himself was about to go. ²Then He said to them: “The harvest is indeed great, but the workers are few; therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest that He may send out workers into His harvest.

³“Go! Yes, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not carry a purse, nor a knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road.^e ⁵Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷Remain in that same house, eating and drinking what they offer, because the worker is worthy of his wages. Do not move around from house to house.^f

⁸“And into whatever town you enter, and they receive you, eat the things that are set before you. ⁹Heal the sick therein and say to them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But into whatever town you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say: ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town that clings to us we wipe off against you. Nonetheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹²I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that town.

Jesus gives the example

¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! Because if the mighty works that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴Nevertheless it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, who are ‘exalted to heaven’, will be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶“He who listens to you listens to me, and he who rejects you rejects me;^g but he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me!”

The Seventy return and report

¹⁷Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” ¹⁸So He said to them: “I watched Satan fall like lightning out of heaven.^h ¹⁹Take note, I am givingⁱ you the authority to trample on

^a If you go back to say goodbye, they will cry and carry on and do all they can to make you change your mind.

^b Again, the Lord is calling for total commitment.

^c Whereas the Twelve had been sent two by two to Galilee, the Seventy were sent to Judea.

^d Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, add “two” (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.), (also in verse 17).

^e I assume that the Lord assigned a specific town to each pair, and they were instructed to get there as fast as they could.

^f Now why would anyone think of moving around? Presumably they would be thinking of better food or more comfort. Such an attitude would certainly detract from the Message.

^g To represent Christ is a great privilege, but also a great responsibility.

^h A most interesting comment! Clearly Jesus is referring to a time before His incarnation—He knew He was Jehovah the Son.

ⁱ Instead of ‘am giving’, perhaps 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘have given’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)—a serious error. Jesus said this perhaps five months before His death and resurrection, addressing the seventy (not just the twelve). The Lord is talking about the future, not the past; a future that includes us!

snakes and scorpions,^a and over all the power of the enemy,^b and nothing at all may harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”^c

Jesus worships His Father

²¹In that same hour Jesus exulted in His spirit^d and said: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to ‘infants’. Yes, Father, because it pleased you to do so.”

²²And turning to the disciples He said:^e “All things have been entrusted to me by my Father; also, no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and to whomever the Son may choose to reveal

^a The Lord gives us the authority to “trample snakes and scorpions”. Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you don’t need power from on High, just a slipper (if you’re fast you can do it barefoot). To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove ‘snakes’, they will place hands on the sick. (“If they drink...” is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by ‘snakes’?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the ‘snakes’ must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a ‘brood of vipers’, and in 23:33, ‘snakes, brood of vipers’. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil”. And 1 John 3:10 makes clear that Satan has many other ‘sons’. In Revelation 20:2 we read: “He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years.” If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our ‘snakes’ are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the ‘snakes’ in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the ‘scorpions’? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well include their offspring, the humanoids [see my paper, “In the Days of Noah”, available from prunch.org]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is done.

^b In Matthew 28:18 Sovereign Jesus affirms that He holds “all authority in heaven and on earth”, so He is clearly competent to delegate some of that authority to us. Now then, just how does “authority over all the power of the enemy” work, in practice? Authority controls power, but since we have access to God’s limitless power (Ephesians 3:20), we should not give Satan the satisfaction of our using his (and he could easily deceive us into doing things we shouldn’t). We should use our authority to forbid the use of Satan’s power, with reference to specific situations—in my experience, we must be specific. (I have tried binding Satan once for all until the end of the world, but it does not work; presumably because God’s plan calls for the enemy’s continued activity in this world. We can limit what the enemy does, but not put him completely out of business, or so I deem.) But just how should we go about it?

In the armor described in Ephesians 6 we find “the sword of the Spirit” (verse 17). A sword is a weapon for offense, although it is also used for defense. The Text tells us that this sword is “the rhma of God”—rhma, not logoj. It is God’s Word spoken, or applied. Really, what good is a sword left in its sheath? However marvelous our Sword may be (Hebrews 4:12), to produce effect it must come out of the scabbard. The Word needs to be spoken, or written—applied in a specific way.

In the Bible we have many examples where people brought the power of God into action by speaking. Our world began with a creative word from God—spoken (Genesis, 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; and see Hebrews 11:3). Moses did a lot of speaking. Elijah spoke (1 Kings 17:1, 18:36, 2 Kings 1:10). Elisha spoke (2 Kings 2:14, 21, 24; 4:16, 43; 6:19). Jesus did a great deal of speaking. Ananias spoke (Acts 9:17). Peter spoke (Acts 9:34, 40). Paul spoke (Acts 13:11; 14:3, 10; 16:18; 20:10; 28:8). In short, we need to speak!

^c Yes indeed, nothing compares to having your name written in heaven!

^d Most versions capitalize ‘Spirit’ and just over 3% of the Greek manuscripts state overtly, ‘the Holy Spirit’, but I take it that Jesus exulted in His own spirit.

^e Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit “And turning to the disciples He said” (as in most versions), which confuses the quote. Jesus changes from addressing His Father to addressing the disciples. The clause is repeated at the beginning of verse 23, but ‘privately’ is added.

Him.” ²³Then turning to His disciples^a privately He said: “Blessed are the eyes that are seeing the things that you see; ²⁴for I say to you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you are seeing but did not, and to hear what you are hearing but did not.”^b

How to inherit eternal life

²⁵And then, a certain lawyer stood up to test Him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶So He said to him: “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷In answer he said: “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and, your neighbor as yourself.”^c ²⁸So He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live!” ²⁹But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”^d

The good Samaritan

³⁰By way of reply Jesus said: “A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and as it chanced he ran into robbers, who after having stripped and wounded him, departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by coincidence a certain priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked,^e and passed by on the other side. ³³But a certain Samaritan,^f as he traveled, came by there, and upon seeing him was moved with compassion; ³⁴and going to him he bound up his wounds, applying oil and wine. Then he placed him on his own mount, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and should you spend more, I will repay you when I return.’ ³⁶So which of these three, would you say, was ‘neighbor’ to him who ran into the robbers?” ³⁷He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” So Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise!”^g

Martha and Mary

³⁸Now it happened as they traveled that He entered a certain village;^h and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.ⁱ ³⁹And she had a sister called Mary, who actually sat at Jesus’ feet listening to His words. ⁴⁰Well Martha was distracted with much serving; so coming up she said: “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Do please tell her to help me!”

^a Should we understand this as referring to the Twelve, or does it include the Seventy? I don’t know, but there were probably others as well who were following along.

^b Yes indeed, the Twelve had a privilege not shared by anyone before or since, although ‘disciples’ may include more than the twelve.

^c See Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18—to include the ‘neighbor’ he had to quote from a different book. Notice that Jesus agreed with him.

^d Notice that the man skipped the most important part of his answer, about loving the Lord.

^e The priest maintained his distance, but the Levite at least went close to the man for a better look, but then did nothing about it.

^f The Lord’s choice of a ‘Samaritan’ was doubtless deliberate, since the Jews looked down on them.

^g Anyone who has been hit with a calamity is a candidate for needing a ‘neighbor’. What with floods, tornados, earthquakes, etc. there are plenty of candidates.

^h Bethany.

ⁱ Martha was presumably older than Mary.

⁴¹But in answer Jesus said to her: “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and agitated about many things, ⁴²but only one is needed.^a However, Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

A model prayer

11 ¹Then it happened, when He finished praying in a certain place, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.” ²So He said to them: “Whenever you pray, say:

Our Father who is in the heavens,
 your name must be revered.^b
 Your Kingdom must come.
 Your will must be done on earth as it is in heaven.^c
³Give us day by day our daily bread.
⁴Also, forgive us our sins,
 because we also forgive everyone indebted to us.
And, do not lead us into testing,
 but deliver us from the malignant one.”^d

A request at midnight

⁵Then He said to them: “Who among you will have a friend and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶because a friend has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷and he will answer from within and say, ‘Don’t bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give to you?’ ⁸I say to you, even if he will not get up and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as many as he needs.

⁹“So I say to you: ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰Because everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.^e ¹¹And which father among you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if a fish, will he give him a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”^g

^a Apparently Martha was preparing a major meal, and the Lord told her that something simple would be fine. Although we may sympathize with Martha, Jesus defended Mary.

^b The verbs are Imperative, not Subjunctive, which is why I render ‘must’ rather than ‘may’.

^c Why ‘must’? I take the point to be that we are not trying to overcome any reluctance on God’s part; we are declaring our personal commitment to these things. When I declare that God’s Kingdom must come, I am agreeing to whatever part I am supposed to have in bringing it about.

^d Most modern versions, following a mere 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, seriously truncate this prayer by omitting: “Our ... who is in the heavens ... Your will must be done on earth as it is in heaven ... but deliver us from the malignant one.” Some versions, like NIV and NASB, have a footnote saying that “some manuscripts” add this material. How can any honest person use ‘some’ to refer to 99% (1,600 X 16)? ‘The malignant one’ refers to Satan.

^e I take it that the Lord is speaking generically here; He is not promising a 100% success rate.

^f Just four known Greek manuscripts (0.2%), of objectively inferior quality, demonstrably so, omit “bread will give him a stone? Or if” (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Does this apply to true believers who have the indwelling Holy Spirit? Did this ‘rule’ change at Pentecost? If not, how does it apply to us today? Since ‘ask’ is in the present tense, perhaps it was occasion by occasion.

A divided house

14Then He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. As a result, when the demon had gone out the mute spoke! And the crowds marveled. **15**But some of them said, “It’s by Beelzebul,^a the ruler of the demons, that he casts out demons.” **16**While others kept asking Him for a sign from heaven, testing.

17But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself falls. **18**So if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?—since you say I cast out demons by Beelzebul! **19**Further, if I am casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out?^b Therefore they will be your judges. **20**But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

21“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own dwelling, his possessions are safe. **22**But when someone stronger than he attacks, he overcomes him, takes away all his armor in which he trusted, and distributes his spoils.

23“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.^c

An empty house

24“Whenever an unclean spirit goes out from a man,^d it passes through waterless places seeking rest; and not finding any it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came out.’ **25**And coming it finds it swept and put in order. **26**Then it goes and picks up seven other spirits, more malignant than itself, and they go in and live there; so the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”^e

True blessedness

27And then, as He was saying these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” **28**But He said, “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it!”^f

Jonah is a sign

29Now as the crowds were increasing, He began to say: “This is a malignant generation. It keeps wanting a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. **30**Just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also will

^a The familiar spelling ‘Beelzebub’ was presumably brought over from the Latin, since all the Greek manuscripts have ‘Beelzebul’ (with variations).

^b I find this question to be intriguing. Jesus is evidently saying that their sons do indeed cast out demons, so why don’t they also censure their sons? Or is the implication that Satan’s servants can appear to be casting out demons?

^c Notice that the Lord does not allow for neutrality; either you are for Him, or against Him. Even what we do is not neutral; if we are not gathering, we are scattering.

^d The Lord does not say why the spirit left. If it had been expelled by someone who knew how to send it to the Abyss, it could not come back.

^e Although we certainly have the authority to expel demons from people, if the person we help does not then commit himself to Jesus, he remains an empty house, vulnerable to something worse. We need to deal fairly with people, explaining what is involved.

^f Since the Text declares the Virgin Mary to be blessed, Jesus was not denying that blessedness. To hear and obey God’s Word is even more blessed. The basic meaning of the verb I translated ‘obey’ is to guard or protect. I wonder if there is a special blessing for those who defend God’s Word.

the Son of the Man be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the South will be raised up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. ³²The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation, and they will condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.^a

Light inside the body

³³“No one, having lit a lamp, puts it in hiding or under a basket, but on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴The lamp of the body is the eye.^b Therefore, whenever your ‘eye’ is good, your whole body is illuminated. But when it is malignant, your body also is darkened. ³⁵So see to it that the ‘light’ in you not be darkness. ³⁶If then your whole body is full of light, not having any part dark, the whole will be illuminated, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.”

Jesus derides scribes and Pharisees

³⁷Now as He spoke, a certain Pharisee invited Him to eat with him. So He went in and reclined. ³⁸But the Pharisee, noticing that He did not first wash before the meal, was critical.^c ³⁹So the Lord said to him: “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but your inside is full of greed and malignancy. ⁴⁰Fools! Did not He who made the outside also make the inside? ⁴¹Nevertheless, give what is possible as alms; then indeed all things are clean to you.^d

⁴²“But woe to you Pharisees! You tithe mint and rue and every herb, but you ignore justice and the love of God. These it was necessary to do, without leaving those undone. ⁴³Woe to you Pharisees! You love the best seat in the synagogues, and greetings in the marketplaces. ⁴⁴Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!^e You are like unperceived graves, that people walk on without knowing it.”

Jesus derides lawyers

⁴⁵Then one of the lawyers reacted and said to him, “Teacher, by saying these things you insult us also!” ⁴⁶So He said: “Woe to you lawyers also!^f You load men down with burdens hard to carry, but you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. ⁴⁷Woe to you! You restore the tombs of the prophets, it being your fathers who killed them. ⁴⁸Thereby you witness to and approve of the deeds of your fathers; because they indeed killed them, while you restore their

^a Notice that Jesus declares Himself to be greater than Solomon and Jonah (a king and a prophet). Notice also that He declares the historicity of the book of Jonah.

^b Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has “eye” in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real ‘eye’)—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. ‘Malignant’ means aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to everything he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. See Titus 1:15.

^c The leaders had already rejected Jesus and were planning to kill Him, so He knew this was not a friendly invitation. He accepted the invitation with the clear purpose to provoke a confrontation.

^d At first glance this statement seems difficult, but because they were filled with greed, for them to give away as much as possible would represent a major change in their values. Zacchaeus offers a case in point: the Lord Himself declared that he was saved (Luke 19:8-9).

^e Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)

^f Notice that Jesus makes no effort to conciliate them.

tombs.^a ⁴⁹Also, because of this ‘the wisdom of God’^b said: ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’ ⁵⁰so that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, ⁵¹from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah,^c who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation!^d ⁵²Woe to you lawyers! You have taken away the key of knowledge;^e you yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering!^f

⁵³Well when He had said these things to them,^g the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him on vehemently and to cross-examine Him about many things, ⁵⁴lying in wait for Him, trying to catch Him in something He might say, so that they might accuse Him.^h

Beware of hypocrisy

12 ¹Meanwhile, when a crowd of thousandsⁱ had converged, so that they were stepping on each other, He began to speak first to His disciples: “Guard yourselves from the ‘yeast’ of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ²There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ³Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the ear behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.^j

Don't fear assassins

⁴“Further, I say to you, my friends: do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵Rather, I will advise you whom you should fear—fear Him who after He kills has authority to cast into Gehenna;^k yes indeed, fear Him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?^l Yet not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷Even the hairs of your head are all numbered! So do not be afraid; you are far more valuable than sparrows!^m

^a The context suggests ‘restore’ rather than ‘build’, since those prophets had been dead for centuries: if a grave had not been adequately marked, there would be no way of knowing where to build.

^b In 1 Corinthians 1:24 Paul refers to Christ as ‘the wisdom of God’. In Matthew 23:34 Jesus said, “I send you prophets,” so here Jesus may be referring to Himself as ‘the wisdom of God’.

^c If the reference is to Zechariah the prophet, his death is not recorded in Scripture, but the temple was rebuilt in his day, so he could have died there.

^d Guilt accumulates. Often a subsequent generation pays.

^e Hosea 4:6 reads, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ... Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” Notice the awful price paid by the children! Are today’s ‘doctors of the law’ not guilty of the same thing?

^f They were really perverse. If they did not want to go in themselves, that was their choice; but to try to stop others was really perverse!

^g Instead of “Well when He had said these things to them”, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “and when He left there” (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.)

^h Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “so that they might accuse Him” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)

ⁱ That is what the Text says, ‘thousands’.

^j When you think about that does it make you feel uncomfortable?

^k ‘Gehenna’ was a euphemism for Hell, or the Lake of Fire. One’s eternal destiny is far more important than a ‘premature’ physical death.

^l The Greek term here is *assaria*.

^m Maybe that is why “the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1). [How many ‘lions’ do you know?]

You confess Christ, He'll confess you

8“Also I say to you, whoever claims me before men, the Son of the Man will also claim him before the angels of God. **9**But whoever disclaims me before men will be disclaimed before the angels of God.^a **10**Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of the Man, it can be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit it will not be forgiven. **11**Now whenever they bring you before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how or what you will answer, or what you should say. **12**Because the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you need to say.”^b

Beware of materialism

13Then someone from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” **14**But He said to him, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter over you?” **15**Then He said to them, “Keep alert and guard against covetousness, because one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”^c

Parable of a rich fool

16Then He told them a parable, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man produced well. **17**And he reasoned within himself saying, ‘What shall I do, because I have no place to store my crops?’ **18**Then he said: ‘This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my produce and my goods. **19**And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and enjoy yourself!’ **20**But God said to him: ‘Stupid! This very night your life is being taken back from you;^d then who will get the things you have prepared?’ **21**Just like that^e is he who accumulates treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

The mentality of the Kingdom

22Then He said to His disciples: “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will wear. **23**Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. **24**Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storeroom nor barn, and God feeds them. You are far more valuable than the birds! **25**And who among you can add one cubit to his height by worrying? **26**So if you cannot do even such a little thing, why worry about the rest?

27“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; I say to you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of these. **28**So if God so clothes the grass that today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, how much more you, O little-faiths! **29**Do not concentrate on what you may eat or what you may drink; do not be anxious. **30**All these things really occupy the na-

^a Revelation 21:8 includes the ‘cowardly’ among those destined for the Lake of Fire. When persecution comes for being a Christian, the cowardly will cave in and disclaim the Lord.

^b This advice is presumably for martyrs, not preachers, but don’t you wish that more preachers would listen to the Holy Spirit?

^c Christians who live in materialistic societies tend to forget this important truth.

^d ‘Taken back’—we have our life on loan, like a trust, and an accounting will be required.

^e “Just like that” = “Stupid!” To be rich toward God is to invest in His Kingdom.

tions of the world, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹Rather, concentrate on the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be provided for you.^a

³²“Do not fear, little flock, because it pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to charity. Make for yourselves ‘purses’ that will not wear out, an unfailing treasure in the heavens, where a thief cannot approach, nor a moth destroy. ³⁴Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.^b

Watchfulness enjoined

³⁵“Let your waists be belted and your lamps burning, ³⁶and you yourselves like men waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding celebration, so that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find watching when he comes. Assuredly I say to you that he will gird himself and have them recline, and will come and serve them.^c ³⁸And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰Therefore you also be ready, because the Son of the Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”^d

⁴¹Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, are you directing this parable to us, or to everyone?”^e ⁴²So the Lord said: “Who then is the faithful and prudent steward whom his master will place over his household to give them the food allowance at the right time? ⁴³Blessed is that slave whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴I tell you truly that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.^f ⁴⁵But if that servant should say in his heart, ‘My master won’t come for a while,’ and should begin to hit the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in two and appoint his portion with the unbelievers.^g

⁴⁷“That servant who knew his master’s will, but neither got ready nor did according to that will, will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But he who did not know, yet did things worthy of blows, will be beaten with few.^h Everyone to whom much has been given, from him much will be required; and to whom much was entrusted, of him much more will be asked.

^a Note that what is promised is just the basics—food, drink, covering. Everything we invest in the Kingdom will be on deposit in heaven.

^b There is the crucial question: Where is your treasure?

^c He is doubtless in a very good mood, and for his servants to have stayed awake for hours when they wanted to be in bed, just so they could receive him when he came—he probably figures they need some refreshment.

^d Everyone who has predicted a date so far has had to eat humble pie. But being ready all the time is a different matter. The trouble is, it’s hard to stay ‘ready’ all the time.

^e The Lord’s answer is indirect, but it includes everyone.

^f He was director of food services; if he proved faithful and competent there, he would be made general director.

^g What is involved here is two deaths: physical (cut in two) and spiritual—the ‘portion’ of unbelievers is the Lake of Fire.

^h Note that even sins done in ignorance are punished. However, the more one knows, the more severe the punishment.

Christ causes division

⁴⁹“I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!
⁵⁰But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!
⁵¹Do you imagine that I came to provide peace on the earth? Not at all, I tell you,
 but rather division.^a ⁵²Because from now on there will be five in one house divid-
 ed: three against two and two against three. ⁵³Father will be divided against son
 and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother,
 mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her
 mother-in-law.”^b

Discern the time

⁵⁴Then He also said to the crowds: “Whenever you see a cloud rising from the
 west, immediately you say, ‘A rainstorm is coming,’ and so it does. ⁵⁵And whenever
 a south wind blows, you say, ‘It will be hot,’ and it happens. ⁵⁶Hypocrites! You
 know how to interpret the appearance of the sky and of the earth, so how can you
 not discern this time?^c ⁵⁷Also why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is
 right?^d

Pay your debts on time

⁵⁸“When you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, make every
 effort along the way to settle with him,^e lest he drag you to the judge, the judge
 deliver you to the bailiff, and the bailiff throw you into prison. ⁵⁹I tell you, you will
 by no means get out of there until you have paid the last penny.”

Repent or perish

13 ¹Now at that time there were some present who told Him about the
 Galileans whose blood Herod had mixed with their sacrifices. ²So in ans-
 wer Jesus said to them: “Do you suppose that those Galileans were worse sinners
 than all the other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³Not at all, I tell
 you, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish! ⁴Or those eighteen on
 whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them; do you suppose they were worse
 offenders than all others living in Jerusalem? ⁵Not at all, I tell you, but unless
 you repent you will all likewise perish!”^f

Parable of a barren fig tree

⁶Then He told this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his
 vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the
 gardener: ‘Look, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and
 have not found any. Cut it down; just why must it waste the soil?’ ⁸But in answer

^a So why is He called the ‘Prince of Peace’? On several occasions, after healing someone, He said, “Go into peace” (**not** ‘in peace’). Jesus offers peace with God, but you must believe into Him in order to receive it.

^b This is precisely true.

^c To be able to discern what God is doing requires intimate relationship with Him.

^d Good question!

^e The point seems to be that the ‘adversary’ has exhausted all other means of getting his money back; which would indicate a serious flaw in the character of the ‘debtor’.

^f We never know when a tornado or earthquake may come our way; the best thing is to walk with God, and thus not have to fear a sudden exit.

he said to him, ‘Sir, let it be this year also, until I dig around it and apply fertilizer, ^ain case it produces fruit—but if not, then cut it down.’^a

Jesus heals a woman bound by Satan

¹⁰Now as Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, ¹¹He saw a woman there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years—she was bent over and could not straighten up. ¹²So He called her over^b and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity!” ¹³He placed His hands on her and immediately she was made straight and started glorifying God.

¹⁴But the ruler of the synagogue reacted with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and he said to the crowd, “There are six days in which one should work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath.”^c ¹⁵So the Lord answered him and said: “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it away to water? ¹⁶So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan^d kept bound during eighteen long years, be freed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” ¹⁷When He said these things all His adversaries were put to shame, while all the crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things that were being done by Him.

Two parables

¹⁸Then He said: “What is the Kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden; and it grew and became a sizable tree, and the birds of the air perched on its branches.”

²⁰Again He said: “To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? ²¹It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into three measures of flour, until it was all leavened.”

The narrow gate

²²He was traveling through various towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³Then someone said to Him, “Lord, are the ones being saved few?” So He said to them: ²⁴“Exert yourselves to enter through the narrow gate, because many, I say to you, will try to enter and not manage it. ²⁵When once the master of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ and in answer he will say to you, ‘I do not know you; where are you from?’ ²⁶then you will begin by saying, ‘We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.’ ²⁷But he will say: ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from. Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity.’^e

²⁸“There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you

^a The Lord’s use of ‘three years’ is doubtless deliberate; He may well have been referring to His own ministry in Israel. In that event the owner would be the Father, and He Himself would be the gardener. The three years of public ministry He had already spent had not produced the desired fruit.

^b In a synagogue the women were separated from the men, so He called her over to the men’s side.

^c Of course the woman had not come to be healed; she came to worship God. It was the Lord’s initiative, so the ruler’s complaint was really directed at Him.

^d By using the enemy’s proper name, Jesus is declaring that it was actually Satan who was behind the problem.

^e The Lord is stating plainly that there are many who think they are in the Kingdom, but actually are not.

yourselves being thrown out. ²⁹They will even come from the east, the west, the north and the south, and recline in the Kingdom of God. ³⁰Yes indeed, there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

A word for Herod

³¹On that same day some Pharisees approached saying to Him, “Get out of here and go away, because Herod wants to kill you.”^a ³²He said to them: “Go tell that ‘fox’, ‘Take note, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third I will be perfected.’ ³³Nevertheless I must keep going today and tomorrow and the day following, because it is not credible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem!

Jesus laments over Jerusalem

³⁴“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, she who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, like a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵So then, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you that you will definitely not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”^b

Jesus heals a man with dropsy

14 ¹Then it happened, when He entered the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they were watching Him closely. ²And then, there in front of Him was a man who had dropsy!^c ³And Jesus reacted by saying to the lawyers and Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” ⁴But they kept silent. So He took hold of him, healed him, and let him go. ⁵Then He addressed them saying, “Which of you, if a son^d or an ox falls into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” ⁶And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

A lesson about humility

⁷Then He told a parable to those who were invited, having observed how they kept trying for the best places, saying to them: ⁸“Whenever you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not recline in the place of honor, in case someone more honorable than you has been invited by him; ⁹then he who invited you both will come and say, ‘You, give this man place!’ and then, with shame, you start to take the lowest place.^e ¹⁰Rather, whenever you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will have honor in the presence of your fellow guests.

^a Those Pharisees may just have been trying to scare Jesus. The metaphor ‘fox’ was doubtless understood by His hearers, but we have since lost the relevant cultural information.

^b See Psalm 118:26. John 10:22-39 probably happened between verses 33 and 34 here. That ‘Feast of Dedication’ would have fallen on a Monday, December 17, 29. Here Jesus leaves Jerusalem, to return only at the ‘triumphal entry’.

^c It seems scarcely credible that such a person could have gotten in there by accident. The Pharisees were desperately looking for some way to accuse Him.

^d Instead of ‘son’, some 26% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘donkey’ (as in TR, AV, NKJV). The 74% includes the best line of transmission, which I follow.

^e Of course; everyone else has been trying for the best place he can get, so by that time the only one left is the lowest!

¹¹Because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”^a

¹²Then He said directly to His host: “Whenever you give a dinner or a supper, do not invite your friends, nor your brothers, nor your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. ¹³But whenever you make a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you—you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”^b

An unusual banquet

¹⁵Well when one of the fellow-recliners heard these things, he said to Him, “Blessed is he who will eat dinner^c in the Kingdom of God!”^d ¹⁶So He said to him: “A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many. ¹⁷And at meal time he sent his slave to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, because everything is now ready.’ ¹⁸But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him: ‘I bought a field, and I need to go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ ¹⁹Another said: ‘I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ ²⁰Yet another said, ‘I have married a wife, and so I cannot come.’ ²¹So that slave came and reported these things to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’ ²²And the slave said, ‘Master, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.’ ²³Then the master said to the slave: ‘Go out to the roads and hedges^e and make people come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴For I tell you that none of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet!”^f

Jesus ministers (mainly) in Perea

Jesus defines discipleship

²⁵Now large crowds were traveling with Him, and turning He said to them: ²⁶“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whoever does not carry his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

²⁸“Further, which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and calculate the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹This so he does not lay a foundation without being able to finish, and all who see it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish!’

³¹“Or what king, going to engage another king in battle, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is still far away he sends a delegation and asks for terms for peace.

^a This truth is repeated several times in Scripture.

^b You cannot take it with you, but you can send it on ahead.

^c Instead of ‘dinner’, perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘bread’ (as in most versions).

^d Now there you have a nice, safe, pious-sounding statement! I suppose he was trying to change the subject.

^e Hedges were used to delimit fields, and there would often be a path along the outside of the hedge. First the slave was sent into the city, then out to the countryside.

^f Perhaps 45% of the Greek manuscripts add, “for many are called, but few chosen”.

³³“So likewise, any of you who does not renounce all his own possessions cannot be my disciple.^a ³⁴Salt is good; but should the salt become insipid, with what can it be seasoned? ³⁵It is fit for neither soil nor fertilizer; it is thrown out.^b He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Parable of a lost sheep

15 ¹Then all the tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were getting close to Him to hear Him. ²Well the Pharisees and the scribes started complaining, saying, “This man welcomes ‘sinners’ and eats with them.” ³So He told them this parable, saying: ⁴“What man among you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not abandon the ninety-nine in the wild^c and go after the lost one until he finds it? ⁵And upon finding it he joyfully puts it on his shoulders. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost!’ ⁷I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance.^d

Parable of a lost coin

⁸“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I lost!’ ¹⁰Just so, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”^e

Parable of a lost son

¹¹Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹²And the younger one said to the father, ‘Father, give me the appropriate share of the estate.’ So he divided the property between them. ¹³Not many days later the younger son, having converted it all, journeyed to a distant country; and there he squandered his wealth living dissolutely. ¹⁴But when he had spent it all, there was a severe famine throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵Then he went and attached himself to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.^f ¹⁶He would gladly have filled his stomach with the carob pods^g that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.^h ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said: ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have an abundance of bread, while I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned

^a Notice that three times Sovereign Jesus says, “cannot be my disciple”, and the ‘cannot’ is a strong negative. Jesus demands first place in our lives and hearts—above family, material things, our very selves.

^b We followers of Christ are supposed to be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ in this world. To abdicate these functions is to become useless, and to be thrown out. ‘Neutrality’ is not a valid option.

^c Notice that the 99 are left in the wild, not a sheepfold. So what happens if a wolf comes upon the 99 while the shepherd is off looking for the stray? I confess that I never liked this parable, for that reason.

^d If God prefers sinners, what is the point of being righteous? I suppose the point to be that no one is so righteous that they need no repentance. Since we are all sinners, we all need to repent—and when we do so, God is happy.

^e God rejoices in the presence of the angels.

^f For a Jew, that would be about as low as one could get.

^g I suppose those pods were not edible for a human being, or he could doubtless have managed a few.

^h Besides the economic crisis, he was a foreigner, and a stupid one at that. Why throw good money after bad?

against heaven and before you, ¹⁹and I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants.’

²⁰“So he got up and went to his own father. But while he was still a good ways off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion—he ran and fell on his neck and kissed him! ²¹Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to his slaves: ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³And bring in and kill the fatted calf, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴because this son of mine was dead and came to life; he was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Now his older son was in the field; and as he came approaching the house he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷He said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸So he became angry and refused to go in. Then his father came out and began to plead with him.^a ²⁹But in answer he said to the father: ‘Just look at how many years I have been serving you without ever transgressing your commandment; yet you never gave me even a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’^b ³¹So he said to him: ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³²But it was right that we celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and came to life; he was lost and is found.’”

Parable of a stupid steward

16 ¹Then He said further to His disciples: “There was a certain rich man who had a manager, who was accused to him of wasting his goods. ²So he called him in and said to him: ‘What is this I hear about you? Render an account of your stewardship, because you can no longer be manager.’ ³Then the manager said within himself: ‘What shall I do? My master is taking the management away from me. I do not have strength to dig; I am ashamed to beg ⁴—I know what I will do, so that whenever I am removed from the management they may receive me into their houses.’^c ⁵Summoning each one of his master’s debtors, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶And he said, ‘A hundred baths of olive oil.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill and sit down quickly and write fifty.’ ⁷Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ So he said to him, ‘Take your bill and write eighty.’ ⁸The master even ‘commended’ the dishonest manager, because he had acted shrewdly. The sons of this age are shrewder in their own generation than the sons of the Light.^d

^a Doubtless the servant had informed the father.

^b The older brother’s attitude really wasn’t all that unreasonable. Why should the younger son be rewarded for his irresponsible conduct? The father was celebrating the recovery, not the irresponsibility. The fatted calf was for a special occasion, and the older son’s faithful service was routine. However, he probably did get a young goat, after that.

^c Is this not stupid reasoning? Once he has lost his position, the others will have no reason to pay attention to him.

^d According to the value system of the world it is ‘smart’ to take advantage of other people, but those who follow the Light must be different. Of course the master’s ‘commendation’ was sarcastic, since the dishonest manager still lost his job.

A bit of irony

⁹“I even say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that whenever you fail, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings!^a ¹⁰He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If therefore you have not been faithful with the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the genuine?^b ¹²And if you have not been faithful in what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters: either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon!”^c

The Law will not fail

¹⁴Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were also listening to all these things, and they were ridiculing Him. ¹⁵So He said to them: “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. That which is exalted among men is an abomination before God.^d ¹⁶The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the Kingdom of God is being proclaimed, and every one is trying to force his way into it.^e ¹⁷But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law to fail.

¹⁸“Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.^f

A rich man and beggar Lazarus^g

¹⁹“Now there was a certain rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen, living in luxury every day. ²⁰And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores, who had been placed at his gate, ²¹just wanting to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table—why even the dogs would come and lick his sores!^h ²²In due time the beggar died and was carried away to Abraham’s bosom by the angels.

“The rich man also died and was buried.ⁱ ²³And in Hades he looked up and saw Abraham at a distance, and Lazarus very close to him. And being in torment, ²⁴he called out, saying, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; because I am tormented by this flame!’ ²⁵But Abraham said: ‘Child, remember that in your

^a The use of sarcasm is not rare in the Bible, and here the Lord is clearly being sarcastic: getting into the eternal dwellings does not depend on ‘buying’ friends down here; it depends on pleasing the Owner up there. And of course, the dishonest friends will not even be there! Notice the reaction of the Pharisees in verse 14—I take it that verses 1-13 were mainly directed at them.

^b Monetary value is the ‘very little’, and spiritual value is the ‘much’, the ‘genuine’.

^c Verse 13 declares a terribly important truth. To embrace the world’s value system (humanism, relativism, materialism) is to reject God. Materialistic ‘Christians’ are really serving mammon (‘mammon’ includes more than just money).

^d There will not be any abomination in heaven—‘abomination’ is a strong term; do pause and ponder!

^e No one gets into the Kingdom on his own terms.

^f Now there you have a plain statement!

^g The Text does not state that this is a parable, so most probably it is not.

^h In fact the dogs were doing him a favor, since canine saliva is good for sores.

ⁱ Note the contrast. Of course the beggar’s body had been buried, but the person was taken to Paradise. Here we have an explicit statement of angelic activity, which, however, is absent from the rich man.

lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus had bad things; but now he^a is being comforted, and you tormented. ²⁶And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can anyone from there cross over to us.^b ²⁷Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, ²⁸because I have five brothers, so that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’^c ²⁹Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ ³⁰So he said to him, ‘Oh no, father Abraham—if someone from the dead should go to them, they will repent!’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone should rise from the dead.’^d

Don’t offend, forgive

17 ¹Then He said to the disciples: “Things that cause people to fall are bound to come, but woe to him through whom they do come! ²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to fall.^e ³Watch out for yourselves: if your brother sins against you,^f rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴Even if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in that day returns, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”^g

Faith like a mustard seed has

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” ⁶So the Lord said: “If you had^h faith like a mustard seed *has*,ⁱ you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted, and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

^a The best line of transmission (30% of the Greek manuscripts here) has the emphatic pronoun ‘he’, rather than ‘here’.

^b Several things in this account invite comment. *Hades* (Greek), or *Sheol* (Hebrew), is the ‘halfway house’ where departed spirits await the final judgment, but the results of that judgment are already known, since the saved are already separated from the lost. There is a chasm separating the two sides that cannot be crossed, but evidently one side can see and hear the other (the ‘dead’ are conscious and have feeling). People in prison who are waiting for their trial are already suffering. Strangely, the rich man still thinks he is more important than the beggar, since he wants the beggar to serve him—he still holds to the values that condemned him.

^c I find it interesting that he was concerned for his brothers; we can’t say, “Better late than never”, since it made no difference.

^d Abraham states a disquieting reality: people who reject God’s written revelation are self-condemned. Note also that Abraham did not say it would be impossible to send Lazarus, only that it would do no good. But it is clear that the lost cannot return, or the rich man could have gone himself.

^e What is worse than a horrible, premature physical death? Spiritual death. Whoever destroys the faith of a ‘little one’ is self-condemned. What about all the professors who make it their business to destroy the faith of their students?

^f Perhaps 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “against you” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which changes the meaning of the verse.

^g Dear me, that could get ‘old’! But the Lord is emphatic; we must forgive!

^h The manuscripts are evenly divided between ‘had’ and ‘have’; I follow the best line of transmission.

ⁱ What kind of ‘faith’ might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, our spiritual ‘climactic circumstances’, we should indeed move mountains, literally.

The thanks a slave gets

⁷“And which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he comes in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline to eat?’ ⁸Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and gird yourself and serve me until I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink?’ ⁹Does he thank that slave because he did the things commanded? I guess not!^a ¹⁰So likewise you, whenever you have done everything you were told to do, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves, because we have only done what we were supposed to.’”^b

Jesus cleanses ten lepers

¹¹Now as He was traveling toward Jerusalem, He went along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹²And as He entered a certain village, ten men met Him—being lepers they stood at a distance. ¹³They called out, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” ¹⁴And paying attention He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” It happened that as they went they were cleansed! ¹⁵Well one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, glorifying God with a loud voice; ¹⁶then he fell on his face at His feet, thanking Him—and he was a Samaritan! ¹⁷So Jesus reacted by saying: “Were not all ten cleansed? So where are the nine? ¹⁸None were found to return and give glory to God except this foreigner!” ¹⁹Then He said to him, “Get up and go; your faith has made you well.”^c

The coming of the Kingdom

²⁰Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said: “The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; ²¹nor will they say, ‘Look, here!’ or ‘Look, there!’ because indeed the Kingdom of God is within you.”^d

²²Then He said to the disciples: “Days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of the Man, and you will not see it.^e ²³And they will say to you, ‘Look, here!’ or ‘Look, there!’ Do not go along or follow. ²⁴Because just like the lightning that lights the whole sky when it flashes, so also will the Son of the Man be in His day. ²⁵But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. ²⁶Also, just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it also be in the days of the Son of the Man. ²⁷They were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. ²⁸Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building—²⁹but on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. ³⁰Even so will it be in the day when the Son of the Man is revealed.

³¹“In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods in the house, let him not go down to get them; and likewise he who is in the field, let him not turn

^a About 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “I guess not!” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b If we were really committed to the master’s project, we would do more.

^c In all probability the priests would not have wanted to deal with a Samaritan, in any case, so the Lord just sends him on his way, relieving him of that duty.

^d They were probably thinking of the Messianic Kingdom, that will indeed have a concrete starting point, but the Lord does not give them that information. He does go on to say to the disciples that the onset will be sudden. In the meantime, the King’s true subjects have the Kingdom in their hearts, which presumably did not include those Pharisees, so ‘within you’ would be a generic statement.

^e I suppose He is referring to His physical presence among them.

back. ³²Remember Lot's wife!^a ³³Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever 'wastes' it will preserve it. ³⁴I tell you: on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. ³⁵Two women will be grinding together; one will be taken and the other left."^b

³⁷They reacted by saying to Him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where there is a carcass, there will the vultures also be gathered."^c

Parable of a persistent widow

18 ¹And then He told them a parable, the point being that one needs to always pray and not lose heart, ²saying: "There was a judge in a certain town who did not fear God nor regard man. ³But there was a widow in that town, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' ⁴And for a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God nor regard man, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will defend her, so that her endless coming doesn't wear me out!'"

⁶Then the Lord said: "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷And will not God get justice for His elect who are crying out to Him day and night, indeed being patient with them? ⁸I tell you that He will get justice for them quickly.^d However, when the Son of the Man comes, will He actually find the faith on the earth?"^e

Parable of a Pharisee and a publican

⁹Then He told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised the rest: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and started praying to himself like this: 'God, I thank you that I am not like all the rest—robbers, unjust, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I tithe all that I get.'^f ¹³The tax collector, staying a good ways off, did not even venture to look up to heaven, but started beating on his chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I say to you that this one went back home justified rather than that one; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

You enter the Kingdom like a child does

¹⁵Then they even started bringing their babies to Him, that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But Jesus summoned them and said: "Allow the little children to come to me, and do not hinder them;

^a The Lord affirms the historicity of the pillar of salt.

^b Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have verse 36: "Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left". I would say that this paragraph deals with the Rapture. In that event, Jesus is addressing those who are left behind, but who had expected to go. I believe that immediately after the Rapture the forces of evil will be unleashed to take complete control. Anyone who is going to refuse the 'mark' had better head for the hills.

^c A spiral of vultures in the air can be seen at quite a distance, and indicates a carcass on the ground.

^d God's 'quickly' doesn't always seem that 'quick' to us.

^e The Text clearly has 'the faith', referring to the sum of Truth that makes up the biblical Faith. The Lord's question is precisely to the point. Aside from the generalized apostasy that characterizes 'Christian' churches today, how many 'conservative' pastors are genuinely committed to the objective authority of the biblical Text?

^f This is the sort of 'prayer' that does not get past the ceiling, so he was just talking to himself.

because the Kingdom of God is of such. ¹⁷I tell you assuredly, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God the way a little child does^a will by no means enter it.”

An upright, rich ruler

¹⁸A certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁹So Jesus said to him: “Why do you call me good? No one is good except one—God.^b ²⁰You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and your mother.’” ²¹And he said, “All these I have kept from my youth.” ²²Well upon hearing these things^c Jesus said to him, “You still lack one thing: sell all you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²³But when he heard this he became very sad, because he was extremely rich.^d

Riches tend to keep people out of the Kingdom

²⁴When Jesus saw that he became sad, He said: “How difficult it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!^e ²⁵It is actually easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle^f than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God!” ²⁶So the hearers said, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷And He said, “The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.”

²⁸Then Peter said, “Notice that we have left all and followed you!” ²⁹So He said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, ³⁰who will not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Jesus declares His coming death and resurrection—third time

³¹Then He took the Twelve aside and said to them: “Take note, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of the Man will be fulfilled: ³²He will be betrayed to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon, ³³and they will scourge and kill Him. And on the third day^g He will rise again.” ³⁴But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them,^a and they did not know what was being said.

^a To render ‘as a little child’ misses the point; obviously an adult can be saved. A little child believes literally and completely.

^b Jesus is not denying that He is good, but the man is not addressing Him as God. Had the man done so, there would have been no objection.

^c From the parallel account in Matthew 19:16-22 we learn that the man actually said more than is recorded here.

^d The Lord had put His finger on the one he was not keeping; he was not loving his neighbor as himself.

^e The parallel passage in Mark (10:24) clarifies that it is those who trust in riches. How many rich people do you know who do not trust in their riches? (That clarification is omitted by less than half a percent of the extant Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, as in the eclectic text currently in vogue.)

^f Jesus refers to a literal camel and a literal needle, which of course is “impossible with men”, as He goes on to say in verse 27.

^g Referring to the time between Jesus’ death and resurrection, Luke (and Matthew and Mark) has ‘(on) the third day’; but Mark also has ‘after three days’, while Matthew also has ‘three days and three nights’; John has ‘in three days’. Due to these seeming differences, there are those who insist that Jesus died on Thursday, not Friday, or even on Wednesday. There is general agreement that the resurrection happened on Sunday. Both ‘(on) the third day’ and ‘in three days’ allow for a Friday crucifixion, as the Church has generally understood. In John 20:26 we read, “after eight days” Jesus appeared to

A blind man near Jericho

³⁵Then it happened, as He approached Jericho,^b that a certain blind man was sitting alongside the road begging. ³⁶Hearing a crowd going by, he asked what it was. ³⁷So they told him that Jesus the Natsorean^c was passing by. ³⁸Well he shouted, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹Those who led the way started reproving him, to shut him up; but he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰So Jesus stopped and ordered that he be brought to Him. When he got close He asked him, saying, ⁴¹“What do you want me to do for you?” So he said, “Lord, that I may see again!”^d ⁴²Then Jesus said to him: “See again! Your faith has made you well.” ⁴³And immediately he did! and he followed Him, glorifying God. And all who witnessed it gave praise to God.

Zacchaeus

19 ¹He entered and started passing through Jericho.^e ²A man named Zacchaeus was there—he was a chief tax collector, and he was wealthy! ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, because he was short. ⁴And running on ahead he climbed up into a sycamore tree, in order to see Him, since He was about to pass by there. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, because today I must stay at your house.”^f ⁶So he came down quickly, and received Him joyfully. ⁷But when they saw it, they all started complaining, saying, “He has entered to lodge with a sinful man!”

⁸Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Indeed, Lord, I herewith give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I restore fourfold.”^g ⁹So Jesus said about him, “Today salvation has happened in this house,^h in that he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰because the Son of the Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Parable of a despised king

¹¹Now as they heard these things, He continued with a parable, because He was near Jerusalem and they were supposing that the Kingdom of God was on

the disciples again, with Thomas present; this was the next Sunday, so only seven days had elapsed—Jews (and Brazilians) include the day at both ends. So ‘after three days’ also allows for a Friday crucifixion. I take it that ‘three days and three nights’ was an idiomatic expression synonymous with ‘after three days’. So Jesus died on a Friday.

^a ‘Hidden’ by whom?

^b Luke has Jesus approaching Jericho, while Matthew and Mark have Him leaving it. In Jesus’ day there were two Jerichos, the old one that had been rebuilt, and a new one, about a kilometer away. What better place to beg than between the two towns? Jesus had left the old Jericho and was going toward the new one. For further discussion, please see the Appendix: “Entering or leaving Jericho?”.

^c That is correct, ‘Natsorean’, not Nazarene. The reference is to Isaiah 11:1—Jesus was the ‘Branch-man’, the Messiah, as the blind man clearly understood, since he addressed Him as ‘Son of David’. For further discussion, please see the Appendix: “Prophets’ in Matthew 2:23”.

^d The man had not been born blind. Do you find it to be curious that Jesus asked him what he wanted? Was it not obvious? God knows what we need before we ask, but we must ask!

^e This would be the new Jericho.

^f Jesus called him by name. How did He know that? Might that have contributed to the man’s conversion?

^g The man knew his Bible; see Exodus 22:1.

^h Yes indeed, that was a complete change of direction!

the verge of being revealed.^a ¹²So He said: “A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and return. ¹³He called ten of his slaves, gave them ten ‘minas’, and said to them, ‘Conduct business until I come.’ ¹⁴But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’ ¹⁵It happened that he did receive the kingdom, and upon returning he ordered that those slaves to whom he had given the money be called to him, to know who had gained what by trading. ¹⁶So the first one came and said, ‘Master, your mina earned ten minas!’^b ¹⁷He said to him: ‘Super, you good slave! Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities!’ ¹⁸And the second one came and said, ‘Master, your mina made five minas.’ ¹⁹Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities.’ ²⁰Then a different one came, saying: ‘Master, here is your mina, that I kept laid away in a piece of cloth ²¹—I feared you because you are a hard man, removing what you did not place, and reaping what you did not sow.’ ²²So he said to him: ‘I will judge you out of your own mouth, you wicked slave! You knew that I am a hard man, removing what I did not place, and reaping what I did not sow. ²³Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, and upon coming I would have collected it with interest?’ ²⁴And to those standing by he said, ‘Take the mina from him and give it to him who has the ten minas.’ ²⁵(They even said to him, ‘Master, he *already* has ten minas!’) ²⁶Indeed I tell you, to everyone who has, more will be given;^c but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ²⁷But as for those enemies of mine who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them in front of me!’^d

The last week

The ‘Triumphal Entry’

²⁸Having said these things, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹When He drew near to Bethsphage^e and Bethany, at the mountain called ‘of Olives’, it happened like this: He sent two of His disciples, ³⁰saying: “Go to the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no man ever yet sat. Untie and bring it. ³¹And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this to him: ‘The Lord needs it.’”

A steed for the King

³²So those who were sent went and found it just like He told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

^a This seems to have been a fixation in their minds that kept them from understanding the Lord’s repeated warnings that He was about to be killed.

^b How long would it take to multiply an investment ten times? Probably quite a while! That the man had to go to a distant country strikes me as unusual, and after he got there he may not have received the kingdom right away. The parable clearly relates to our Lord’s absence and Return. We need to do the best we can with what He has given us.

^c There is a sense in which blessing is earned: the more you do, the more you get. In John 12:26 Sovereign Jesus said, “If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him.”

^d The man had accepted the description given by the third slave, and here he demonstrates that he really is a ‘hard’ man, but don’t forget that he rewarded the faithful slaves. And don’t forget Revelation 19:15!

^e Some 44% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Bethphage’ (as in most versions), but the 56% includes the best line of transmission, which I follow. In any case, it is a mere matter of spelling.

³⁴So they said, “The Lord needs it.”^a ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and throwing their own clothes on the colt, they placed Jesus on it. ³⁶And as He went along people were spreading their clothes on the road.

Rejoicing and praising

³⁷Then, as He was approaching the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, ³⁸saying:

“Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!^b
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

A sour note

³⁹Some of the Pharisees said to Him from the crowd, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” ⁴⁰In answer He said to them, “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the very stones would cry out!”

Jesus weeps over Jerusalem

⁴¹Now as He approached, observing the city He wept over it, ⁴²saying: “If you, yes you, especially in this your day, had known the things pertaining to your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³Yes, the days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you; indeed they will surround you and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴And they will raze you, and your children within you, to the ground—they will not leave in you one stone upon another—all because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”^c

Jesus cleanses the temple—second time

⁴⁵And upon entering the temple He began to drive out those who were selling and buying in it,^d ⁴⁶saying to them, “It is written: ‘My house is a house of prayer,’^e but you have made it a ‘den of robbers!’”^f

⁴⁷And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes, as also the leaders of the people, were trying to destroy Him, ⁴⁸but could not figure out how to do it, because all the people were hanging on His words.

Jesus’ authority questioned

20 ¹Now it happened on one of those days, as He was teaching and evangelizing the people in the temple, that the priests^g and scribes came to Him with the elders ²and addressed Him, saying, “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things; or who is he who gave you this authority?” ³But in answer He said to them: “I also will ask you one thing; yes, tell me: ⁴the baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?” ⁵So they reasoned among themselves, saying: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’ ⁶But

^a It seems to me obvious that this had been pre-arranged.

^b See Psalm 118:26.

^c The implication would appear to be that if they had recognized it, their history would have been different.

^d Comparing the parallel accounts, this happened the next day. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and buying in it” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e See Isaiah 56:7.

^f See Jeremiah 7:11.

^g Some 16% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘high priests’ (as in most versions).

if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John was a prophet.” ⁷So they answered that they did not know where it was from. ⁸And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”^a

Parable of some perverse tenants

⁹Then He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, leased it to farmers, and went away on a long journey. ¹⁰At the proper time he sent a slave to the farmers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the farmers flogged him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹Again he sent a different slave; so they flogged him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹²And again he sent a third; but they wounded him also and threw him out. ¹³Then the owner of the vineyard said: ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; hopefully they will respect him when they see him.’^b ¹⁴But when the farmers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying: ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, so that the inheritance may become ours.’ ¹⁵So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy those farmers and give the vineyard to others.” Having heard it they said, “May it never be!”

¹⁷Then He looked directly at them and said: “What then is this that is written:

‘A stone that the builders rejected,
the same became the cornerstone’?^c

¹⁸Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it should fall—it will crush him!”^d

¹⁹The chief priests and the scribes wanted to lay hands on Him right then, but they were afraid^e —they knew He had spoken this parable against them.

To Caesar, Caesar’s; to God, God’s

²⁰Keeping a close watch on Him, they sent spies, who pretended to be innocent, so that they might latch on to something He said, so as to hand Him over to the power and the authority of the governor. ²¹So they questioned Him, saying: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and you do not show favoritism but teach the way of God in truth.^f ²²Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”

²³But He perceived their craftiness and said to them: “Why are you testing me?^g ²⁴Show me a denarius—whose image and inscription does it have?” In answer they said, “Caesar’s.” ²⁵So He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things

^a Well, of course, they knew that both John and Jesus were of God—they just did not want to repent and change their way of life.

^b Presumably this would never occur in real life, but the Lord was aiming this directly at them, knowing what they would do to Him and what the Owner would do to them.

^c See Psalm 118:22.

^d Those are our two options: fall on Jesus and be broken, or be crushed in judgment.

^e For ‘they were afraid’, some 35% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘they feared the people’ (as in most versions).

^f They were really almost too obvious.

^g Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Why are you testing me?” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²⁶They were unable to latch on to His word in front of the people; and marveling at His answer they kept silent.

Sadducees deny resurrection

²⁷Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, approached and questioned Him, ²⁸saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's married brother dies childless, then his brother should take the widow and produce offspring for his brother. ²⁹Now there were seven brothers: the first took a wife and died childless; ³⁰then the second took the widow and he died childless;^a ³¹then the third took her, in fact all seven in sequence—they all died childless. ³²Finally, last of all, the woman died also. ³³Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since all seven had her?"^b

³⁴So in answer Jesus said to them: "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage; ³⁵but those who are considered worthy^c to attain to that age, to the resurrection from among the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage. ³⁶Because they cannot die anymore,^d being like angels—they are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. ³⁷But that the dead are raised, Moses indeed revealed about the Bush when he recorded: 'The LORD, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.'^e ³⁸So He is not the God of the dead, but of the living—to Him all are alive." ³⁹Then some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, you spoke well." ⁴⁰And they no longer dared to question Him further.

Is the Christ David's Son?

⁴¹Then He said to them: "How is it that they say that the Messiah^f is David's Son? ⁴²Why David himself affirms in the book of Psalms,

'The LORD said to my Lord: sit at my right hand

⁴³until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'^g

⁴⁴Since David calls Him 'Lord', how then is He his Son?"

Jesus denounces the scribes

⁴⁵Then, in the hearing of the people, He said to His disciples: ⁴⁶"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces, and the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts; ⁴⁷who 'devour' widows' houses,^h and for a show make long prayers. These will receive more severe judgment."

^a Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "the widow and he died childless" (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^b Whenever someone comes up with a hypothetical situation, be careful: there is probably a hidden agenda.

^c "Those who are considered worthy"—an interesting concept!

^d If no one dies, there is no need to produce new generations.

^e See Exodus 3:6.

^f The Greek Text has 'Christ', but since they were speaking Hebrew, the Lord certainly said 'Messiah'.

^g See Psalm 110:1.

^h Presumably, when the man died the widow no longer had the means to clear any debt; so they would just take over the house and put the widow out in the street.

A lesson in giving

21 ¹Looking up He saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasure chest. ²But He also saw a certain poor widow putting in two mites. ³So He said: “I tell you truly that this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴because all these others put in gifts for God out of their abundance, but she, out of her destitution, put in all she had to live on.”^a

Jerusalem will be destroyed

⁵Then, as some were admiring the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, ⁶“These things that you see—the days will come in which not one stone will be left upon another that will not be thrown down.”^b

The Olivet Discourse

⁷So they asked Him, saying: “Teacher, so when will these things be?” and “What will be the sign when these things are about to happen?”^c ⁸So He said: “Be careful, so as not to be deceived, because many will come in my name saying: ‘I am’ and ‘The time is at hand.’ Therefore do not go after them. ⁹But whenever you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; because these things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

Things will get bad, really bad

¹⁰Then He said to them: “Nation will be raised up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹And there will be severe earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful events and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors on account of my name. ¹³But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony. ¹⁴So settle it in your hearts not to practice giving a defense beforehand; ¹⁵because I will give you^d a mouth and wisdom such that all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or withstand.^e ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and relatives, friends and ‘brothers’; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷And you will be hated by all because of my name.^f ¹⁸(Not even one hair of your head will be wasted^g ¹⁹—you must secure your souls by your endurance.)

Jerusalem will be destroyed

²⁰“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. ²¹Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let those who are in the city get out, and let those who are in the country not enter her. ²²Because these are days of vengeance, that all the written things may be ful-

^a It is a fact of life; people who are poor are often more generous, more willing to share, than those who are rich. But in this case the widow was probably calling out to God for help. Perhaps 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “for God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b This was fulfilled in 70 A.D.

^c There are two questions: “When these things?” and “What the sign?” The answer to the first is given in Luke 21:20-24. The answer to the second begins here in verse 8.

^d To do this He has to be alive!

^e This was true of Stephen; they couldn’t answer him, so they killed him.

^f This is already happening around the world. Those who defend biblical values are hated.

^g I have to take this by faith. We have to work and war by faith, since we are often not allowed to see the results. I take it that the Lord is assuring us that nothing we do for Him will be wasted. But we must ‘hang in there’.

filled. ²³But woe to those who are pregnant and to those nursing babies in those days! There will be great distress in the land, and wrath to this people. ²⁴Yes, they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.^a

Christ will return to the earth

²⁵“There will be signs in sun, moon, and stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, at the roaring and tossing of the sea;^b ²⁶men fainting from fear and expectation of the things coming on the inhabited earth—because the powers of the heavens will be shaken.^c ²⁷Then they will see the Son of the Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸Now when these things begin to happen, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Parable of the fig tree

²⁹Then He told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰Whenever they are already budding, you see and know by yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹So you also, whenever you see these things happening, know that the Kingdom of God is near. ³²I tell you assuredly, this generation^d will certainly not pass away until all has happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away.^e

Watch and pray

³⁴“But keep a watch on yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and cares of life, and that Day come upon you suddenly. ³⁵Because it will come like a trap upon all those who dwell on the surface of the whole earth. ³⁶So be watchful all the time, praying that you may be counted worthy^f to escape all these things^g that are about to happen and to stand before the Son of the Man.”

His daily routine

³⁷In the daytime He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called ‘of Olives.’ ³⁸Then early in the morning all the people would come to Him in the temple to hear Him.

Judas joins the plot against Jesus

22 ¹Now the feast of unleavened bread, which is called ‘Passover’, drew near. ²And the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to kill Him,

^a Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. and was ‘trampled by Gentiles’ until 1967, when it returned to the control of Israel. So now the things mentioned in verse 25 and following can happen at any time.

^b ‘The sea’ is sometimes used as a metaphor for the human population.

^c See Revelation 12:7-12.

^d ‘This generation’ has received various interpretations. Personally I suppose it refers to the generation that was alive in 1967 (by now everyone in that ‘generation’ is at least 48 years old).

^e Sovereign Jesus declares that His words have eternal validity, and are therefore on a par with God’s written revelation (see Psalm 119:89).

^f Instead of ‘counted worthy’, less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘be able’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g If ‘to escape all these things’ refers to the Rapture, then only those who are ‘counted worthy’ will go up.

because they feared the people.^a ³Then Satan entered Judas^b (the one surnamed Iscariot), who was numbered among the Twelve. ⁴So he went off and conferred with the chief priests and officers about how he might betray Him to them. ⁵They were glad, and agreed to give him silver coins. ⁶So he promised, and started looking for an opportunity to betray Him to them, without a crowd.

The last night

Preparation for the last Passover

⁷Then came the day of unleavened bread, in which it was necessary to kill the Passover lamb. ⁸And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.” ⁹So they said to Him, “Where do you want us to prepare?” ¹⁰He said to them: “Note, upon entering the city a man carrying a jar of water^c will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters. ¹¹Then you must say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you: Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹²He himself will show you a large upper room,^d all furnished; make preparations there.” ¹³So off they went and found things just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

They eat the Passover

¹⁴When the hour had come, He reclined, and the twelve^e apostles with Him. ¹⁵Then He said to them: “I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶I tell you further that I will not eat of it again until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” ¹⁷And taking a cup He gave thanks and said: “Take this and share it among yourselves.^f ¹⁸I tell you further that I will not drink again^g of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.”

Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper

¹⁹Then, after the meal, He took bread, gave thanks, broke and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰He also took the cup, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.

The betrayer is present

²¹“But alas, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table! ²²To be sure, the Son of the Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”^h ²³(They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who was about to do this.)

^a The trouble was that the people were being so impressed by Jesus that they felt threatened.

^b Note that Judas acted under satanic inspiration.

^c This would presumably be rather unusual, since fetching water was normally done by women.

^d Obviously this had all been arranged ahead of time. The owner was doubtless a believer, and the large upper room was presumably chosen with a view to the use that would be made of it later, as well.

^e A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “twelve” (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^f This ‘cup’ was not part of the ‘Lord’s Supper’; I don’t know what the purpose may have been.

^g To suck a swallow or two from a sponge would not qualify as ‘drinking’.

^h Judas had crossed the line of no return.

Wanting to be 'the greatest' is not a valid option

²⁴Now there had actually been a discussion among them as to which of them seemed to be greater. ²⁵So He said to them: “The kings of the nations lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors’. ²⁶But not so with you—rather let the greater among you become as the younger, and he who leads as he who serves. ²⁷Who is greater, the one reclining or the one serving? Is it not the one reclining? Yet I am among you as the one who serves. ²⁸However, you are those who have continued with me in my trials.^a ²⁹And I bestow on you a kingdom, just as my Father bestowed one on me, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom; also you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel!”^b

Peter will deny Him

³¹Then the Lord said:^c “Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you (pl) so as to sift you like wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you (sg) so that your faith not fail completely;^d so you, when you have recovered,^e strengthen your brothers.” ³³But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!” ³⁴So He said, “I say to you, Peter, no rooster can crow today before you deny three times that you know me!”^f

“Buy a sword”

³⁵Then He said to them, “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” And they said, “Nothing.” ³⁶So He said to them: “But now, he who has a money bag should take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword must sell his garment and buy one.^g ³⁷Because I say to you that this which is written must still be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was classed with the lawless’;^h and because the things concerning me have an end.” ³⁸So they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.”

Gethsemane

³⁹Then going out He went to the Mount of Olives, as His custom was, and His disciples followed Him. ⁴⁰When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray, so as not to enter into temptation.” ⁴¹Then He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, “Father, if you would just remove this cup from me—nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done!” ⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in anguish He

^a The gentle reproof is tempered with a word of appreciation.

^b Then the twelve tribes must still exist! God knows who and where they are. I wonder who will take the Iscariot’s place. Note that there will be eating and drinking in the future Kingdom.

^c A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Then the Lord said” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The Lord prayed for Peter, but evidently not for the Iscariot.

^e The KJV reads ‘converted’, which is a misleading translation.

^f This was the second warning; the first is recorded in John 13:37-38. For a complete discussion of Peter’s denials, please see the Appendix: “How many times did Jesus say Peter would deny Him?”.

^g If you are obviously armed, this tends to slow down those who would otherwise attack you or take advantage of you. It is better yet to have spiritual power.

^h See Isaiah 53:12.

prayed with total concentration;^a then His sweat became like clots of blood, falling to the ground.^b **45**When He rose up from prayer and came to the disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. **46**He said to them: “Why do you sleep? Get up and pray, that you may not enter into temptation!”

Betrayal and arrest

47But while He was still speaking—wow, a crowd; and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them! He approached Jesus to kiss Him (he had given them this sign, “Whomever I kiss, it is he”).^c **48**So Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of the Man with a kiss?”

49When those who were around Him saw what was about to happen, they said to Him, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” **50**And a certain one of them struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear!^d **51**But Jesus reacted by saying, “Allow at least this!” and touching his ear He healed him.^e

52Then Jesus said to the chief priests, officers of the temple, and elders who had come against Him: “Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a bandit? **53**When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour; even the authority of the darkness!”^f

Peter denies Jesus

54Then they seized, took and brought Him to the house of the high priest, with Peter following at a distance. **55**Now when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. **56**Then a certain servant girl, seeing him sitting by the fire, looked intently at him and said, “This man also was with him.”^g **57**But he denied Him, saying, “Woman, I do not know him!”

58After a little while another saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” **59**Then after about an hour had passed, another started insisting, “Surely this fellow also was with him, because he is a Galilean.” **60**But Peter said, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” And immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster^h crowed.

^a I believe that Hebrews 5:7 refers to this moment. To transpire blood is normally fatal, so Jesus came close to dying there in the garden. But He had to get to the cross, so the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him. The sleeping disciples did not observe this, so Luke received this information ‘from Above’ (Luke 1:3).

^b The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue places verses 43-44 within double brackets (based on 1.3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality), thereby denying that Luke wrote them. These verses contain important information that should not be questioned on such a feeble basis.

^c Some 45% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission (that I follow), have, “he had given them this sign, ‘Whomever I kiss, it is he’”. Every other version I have seen follows the 55%.

^d “The servant of the high priest”—presumably this man was leading the expedition. We know from John 18:10 that his name was Malchus.

^e We know it was Peter (John 18:10), and if the Lord had not healed that ear, things would probably have been nastier for Peter in the ‘courtyard’.

^f This was Satan’s hour, being part of the Father’s Plan; ‘the darkness’ refers to Satan’s kingdom; ‘your hour’ means that they were part of that kingdom..

^g I wonder how the girl knew that!

^h Instead of ‘a’ rooster, perhaps 3% of the manuscripts have ‘the’ rooster (as in TR, AV, NKJV).

⁶¹And the Lord turned and looked directly at Peter;^a then Peter remembered the Lord's word, how He had said to him, "Before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times." ⁶²And going outside he wept bitterly.

Guards mistreat Jesus

⁶³The men who were guarding Jesus started mocking and beating Him. ⁶⁴And having blindfolded Him they would hit His face and^b ask Him, saying: "Prophecy! Who was it who struck you?"^c ⁶⁵And they kept saying many other insulting things to Him.

Crucifixion day

Jesus judged by the Council

⁶⁶As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both the chief priests and scribes, came together and brought Him before their council, saying, ⁶⁷"If you are the Messiah, tell us." But He said to them: "If I tell you, you simply will not believe. ⁶⁸But if I also question you, you will neither answer nor release me.^d ⁶⁹Hereafter the Son of the Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." ⁷⁰Then they all said, "Are you then the Son of God?" So He said to them, "You say it because I AM!" ⁷¹Then they said: "What further testimony do we need? We ourselves have heard it from his mouth!"^e

Jesus taken to Pontius Pilate

23 ¹Then the whole crowd of them rose up and led Him to Pilate. ²And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar,^f declaring himself to be Christ, a king." ³So Pilate questioned Him, saying, "Are you the king of the Jews?" In reply He said to him, "You said it!" ⁴Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."^g ⁵But they insisted, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee even to here."

Jesus taken to Herod

⁶When Pilate heard 'Galilee',^h he asked if the man was a Galilean. ⁷Upon learning that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem during those days. ⁸Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was really pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see Him, having heard so many things about Him; and he was hoping to see some miracle performed by

^a I take it that here the Lord broke the Satanic spell, and Peter could think normally again.

^b Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "they would hit His face and" (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^c Those men were cowardly and perverse, but probably acted under demonic influence.

^d Jesus tells them that He knows, and they know, that what they are doing is a farce.

^e They were condemning Him for blasphemy, but to do that they had to reject the obvious truth that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

^f This was a plain lie.

^g It is necessary to read the parallel passages to get a fuller picture of what happened. It becomes clear that Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus. For a fuller discussion, please see the Appendix: "Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time".

^h Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Galilee" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

Him. ⁹He questioned Him with many words, but He gave him no answer.^a ¹⁰On their part, the high priests and scribes stood by, vehemently accusing Him. ¹¹Then Herod and his soldiers, after ridiculing and mocking Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. ¹²(That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other—previously having been at odds with each other.)^b

Pilate sentences Jesus

¹³Then Pilate, having called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴said to them: “You have brought this man to me as one who misleads the people, and yet, having examined him in your presence, I have found no guilt in this man as to those things of which you accuse him. ¹⁵Further, neither did Herod (for I sent you on to him);^c indeed, nothing deserving of death has been done by him. ¹⁶I will therefore flog and release him.” ¹⁷(It was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast.)^d

¹⁸But they all cried out together, saying: “Away with this one! Release to us Barabbas!”—¹⁹who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection in the city, and for murder. ²⁰Then Pilate, wanting to release Jesus,^e addressed them again. ²¹But they just kept shouting: “Crucify! Crucify him!” ²²For the third time he said to them: “But what evil has this man done? I have found no reason for death in him. I will therefore flog and release him.” ²³But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified! And their voices, especially of the chief priests,^f prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate decided to grant their demand. ²⁵He released the one who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Jesus is crucified

²⁶Now as they led Him away, they conscripted a certain Simon of Cyrene (coming in from a field), and put the cross on him to carry it behind Jesus.^g ²⁷A considerable crowd of people followed Him, including women who were also mourning and lamenting Him. ²⁸So Jesus turned to them and said: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; rather weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹Because indeed, the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, even the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’^h ³⁰Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills,

^a Herod was irrelevant; it was Pilate who had the authority to crucify.

^b An interesting ‘fringe benefit’.

^c Instead of “for I sent you on to him”, some 12% of the manuscripts have ‘for he sent him back to us’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d About 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit verse 17 entirely (as in NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.).

^e Comparing the accounts it is very clear that Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus, but when they said “you are not Caesar’s friend” he was beaten.

^f A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “especially of the chief priests” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Whether or not Simon was already a disciple at this moment (he may have been prepared), he evidently became one. It appears that Jesus was having trouble carrying His cross.

^h For Jews to say this, things would have to get really bad.

“Cover us!”^a ³¹For if they do these things in the ‘green tree’, what will happen in the ‘dry’?

³²There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death.

³³When they arrived at the place called ‘The Skull’, they crucified Him there; also the criminals, one on His right, the other on His left.

³⁴Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”;^b while they were dividing up His clothes by casting a lot. ³⁵Meanwhile the people stood looking on. And especially the rulers among them were sneering, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if such is the Christ, the chosen of God!” ³⁶Yes, even the soldiers mocked Him, approaching and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!”

³⁸In fact, above Him there was a written notice, in Greek, Latin and Hebrew letters:^c

THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.^d

³⁹Then one of the hanged criminals started berating Him, saying, “If you are the Christ, save yourself and us!”^e ⁴⁰But the other reacted and rebuked him, saying: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are under the same condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward for our deeds; but this man did nothing wrong.” ⁴²Then he said to Jesus, “Please remember me, Lord,^f when you come in your kingdom.”^g ⁴³Jesus said to him, “I tell you assuredly, today you will be with me in Paradise.”^h

Jesus dismisses His spirit

⁴⁴Now it was about the sixth hour,ⁱ and darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵Yes, the sun was darkened; also, the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then, after giving a loud shout, Jesus said, “Father, it is into your

^a See Hosea 10:8.

^b The eclectic text currently in vogue (following less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality) places within double brackets the first half of verse 34: “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’”. In this way they deny that Luke wrote it, surely a perverse proceeding.

^c A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew letters” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The soldiers were just going along with the ‘game’; after all, His stated crime was that He was ‘the king of the Jews’.

^e According to Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32, both of them started out by reviling Him, but later one of them repented—they were on the cross for about three hours before the supernatural darkness, so there was time to observe Jesus, which caused one of them to change his mind.

^f Instead of “to Jesus, ‘Please remember me, Lord’”, perhaps 3% of the manuscripts have ‘Jesus, remember me’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which seriously weakens the man’s statement.

^g I find this statement to be impressive: the man is declaring that Jesus is the Messiah and will indeed inaugurate His Kingdom. Evidently the man knew the Bible; and his request was honored!

^h For Jesus to say ‘today’, He knew the man would die before sundown, so He knew the man’s legs would be broken—otherwise he would most likely have lasted well into the night, which would have been ‘tomorrow’. ‘Paradise’ here refers to that half of Hades (Sheol in the OT) reserved for the righteous dead. Hades is the ‘half-way house’ where departed spirits await the final judgment. In Luke 16:22 it is called “Abraham’s bosom”.

ⁱ Luke uses Jewish time, so it was about noon.

hands that I will commit my spirit.” And having said this, He breathed out His spirit.^a

Various reactions

⁴⁷Well upon seeing what had happened, the centurion glorified God, saying, “Certainly this man was righteous!”^b ⁴⁸And the whole crowd that had gathered for the spectacle, when they saw what actually happened, went away beating their breasts.^c ⁴⁹But all His acquaintances, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Jesus’ body is buried

⁵⁰Now then, there was a man named Joseph, a good and righteous man, a Council member ⁵¹(but he had not agreed with their counsel and action), from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God: ⁵²this man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock, where no one had ever been laid.^d ⁵⁴It was a Preparation day; the Sabbath was drawing near. ⁵⁵The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed along, and they saw the tomb and how His body was placed there.^e ⁵⁶Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Resurrection Day

“He is not here, but is risen!”

24 ¹Then on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb carrying the spices they had prepared, along with some others.^f ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but upon entering they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that wow, two men stood by them in dazzling clothing! ⁵Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the ground, they said to them:^g “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but is risen! Remember how

^a Both Matthew and John state overtly that Jesus dismissed His spirit. In John 10:17-18 He had declared that no one could kill Him, He would lay down His own life. The cross did not kill Jesus, as the centurion recognized (see the next note).

^b Any centurion would be a hardened soldier, who had seen no end of crucifixions. He knew that a cross killed by asphyxiation. Hanging from the hands, with the arms stretched out, pushes the diaphragm against the lungs so you cannot breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure to prolong the agony—even though painful, the victim would push up so he could get a breath, until finally too worn out to do so. Breaking the legs would put an end to that expedient, and the person died within a few minutes, asphyxiated. Someone who is dying asphyxiated does not shout. Since Jesus gave a loud shout, but then immediately died, the centurion knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that the cross had not killed Jesus (later, when Joseph asks for the body, Pilate is surprised that Jesus could already be dead). But who can just tell his spirit to leave? Putting two and two together, the centurion concluded that Jesus was a supernatural being. Just so!

^c This was a cultural expression of sorrow and distress.

^d Obviously the tomb had been prepared beforehand, and was a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9, “He made His grave...with the rich at His deaths [plural]”. Nicodemus had already placed a hundred pounds of spices in the tomb, before helping Joseph remove and carry the body (John 19:39).

^e That is, they saw where the body was taken, but did not see inside, and obviously did not know about the 100 pounds of spices.

^f A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “along with some others” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g “They” is masculine and “them” is feminine.

He told you while still in Galilee, ⁷saying, “The Son of the Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” ⁸And they remembered His words.^a

The women report

⁹Then they returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the Eleven, and to all the rest.^b ¹⁰They were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹But their words seemed to them like nonsense, and they disbelieved them.^c ¹²(But Peter had gotten up and run to the tomb, and stooping down he saw the linen strips lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.)^d

The ‘Emmaus’ incident

¹³And then that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles^e from Jerusalem. ¹⁴And they were conversing with each other about all that had happened. ¹⁵And then, as they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself came up and started going with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were restrained, in order that they not recognize Him. ¹⁷So He said to them, “What words are these that you are exchanging with one another as you walk, and are gloomy?”^f

¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas^g answered and said to Him, “Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹He said to them, “What things?” So they said to Him: “The things concerning Jesus the Natsorean, how the man was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹And we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel!^h Further, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²²Moreover certain women of our group astonished us—arriving early at the tomb, ²³and not finding his body, they came saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴And certain of those who were with us went to the tombⁱ and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see.”

²⁵Then He said to them: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the Prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it really not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷And beginning from Moses, and

^a These were the women who had been providing for Jesus for some time, and they doubtless heard much of His teaching, including this statement.

^b There were more people in the upper room than just the Eleven.

^c They had already been ‘burned’, their hopes dashed, and were not in a hurry to be ‘taken in’ again.

^d According to John’s account, this had already happened earlier, so Luke gives it out of sequence.

^e Literally, ‘sixty stadia’.

^f Instead of “...walk, and are gloomy?” a mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “...walk? And they stood gloomy.” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g The other person is not identified, but presumably it could have been his wife.

^h They were looking for the Messianic Kingdom right then.

ⁱ Although in verse 12 above Luke mentions only Peter, Cleopas makes clear that more than one went, as is recorded in John 20:2-10.

then all the Prophets, He explained to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.^a

²⁸Then they approached the village where they were going, and He made as though He would keep going.^b ²⁹But they constrained Him, saying, “Stay with us, because it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰And then, as He was reclining with them, He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.^c ³¹Then their eyes were opened^d and they recognized Him; and He became invisible to them. ³²They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked to us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”^e

The two report

³³So they got up forthwith and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven gathered together; also those with them, ³⁴who said, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”^f ³⁵Then they described what happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus appears to the Eleven

³⁶As they were saying these things, indeed, Jesus^g Himself stood in their midst, and He said to them, “Peace to you.” ³⁷But they, terrified, supposed they were seeing a ghost, and were becoming fearful. ³⁸And He said to them: “Why are you troubled?” and “Why do doubts arise in your hearts?” ³⁹Look at my hands and feet; it is I myself! Feel me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” ⁴⁰And saying this He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹But as they were still disbelieving and marveling, because of the joy, He said to them, “Do you have any food here?” ⁴²So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb.^h ⁴³And taking it He ate in their presence.ⁱ

⁴⁴Then He said to them, “These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything that is written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me must be fulfilled.”^j ⁴⁵Then He opened their understanding so as to comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶And He said to them: “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary^k for the Christ to suffer and to rise from

^a He declares Himself to be the Messiah. I do wish that explanation had been recorded!

^b And He would have, if they hadn't restrained Him.

^c He was a guest, but He took charge.

^d They had been supernaturally hindered from recognizing Him, up to that point.

^e Don't you know that was so! To this day, if Jesus talks to you, your heart burns.

^f There were others in the room besides the Eleven, some near the door. So when the two burst in, all exited with their news, the others 'prick their balloon'—"Oh, we already know about that". Has human nature changed?

^g A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Jesus” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and some honeycomb” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ It is easy to criticize them for being so slow to believe, but would we have done any better? Note that Christ's glorified body, that could just pass through a wall, was palpable—it had flesh and bones (but perhaps not blood). The food that He ate presumably did not go through a normal process of digestion.

^j The Lord recognizes the three divisions of the Old Testament.

^k A mere handful (0.5%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and thus it was necessary” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations,^a beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹Take note, I am sending the Promise of my Father upon you; but you must stay in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on High.”^b

Jesus ascends to Heaven

⁵⁰He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. ⁵¹And it happened, as He was blessing them, that He left them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²Worshipping Him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple,^c praising and^d blessing God. Amen.^e

^a The Gospel is for all nations, and it must include repentance!

^b “Until you are clothed with power from on High”—what are the implications of this for us today? Without God’s power, what difference can we make in this world?

^c Jesus had declared that God had abandoned that temple, so why did they still go there? It was a logical place to evangelize Jews, if that was their object. It was also the largest meeting place in town, presumably. But subsequent events show clearly that they still regarded it as ‘God’s house’, a special place for worshipping. I would say that this became a snare to them.

^d A mere handful (0.4%) of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “praising and” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Some 50% of the Greek manuscripts have a colophon that says, “published fifteen years after the ascension of Christ”. For 50% of the MSS to have this information probably means that the tradition is ancient. If this information is correct, then Luke was ‘published’ in 45/46 AD. The same sources have Matthew published seven years earlier (38/39) and Mark five years earlier (40/41), while John was ‘published’ thirty-two years after the ascension, or 61/62 AD. Not only were the authors eyewitnesses of the events, but many others were still alive when the Gospels appeared. They could attest to the veracity of the accounts, but could also be the source of textual variants, adding tidbits here and there, or ‘correcting’ something that they remembered differently.

The Gospel According to

JOHN

Prologue

1 ¹In the beginning was the Word,^a and the Word was with God,^b and the Word was **God**.^c ²He Himself existed in the beginning with God. ³All things came to be by Him; that is, apart from Him not even one thing that has come into being came to be.^d ⁴In Him was life, and the Life was the Light of mankind.^e ⁵Now the Light shines in the darkness,^f and the darkness has not overcome it.^g

John—a witness to the Light

⁶There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷This man came as a witness to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the Light but was to testify about the Light—⁹the true Light which illumines everyone who comes into the world.^h ¹⁰He was in the world, the world that came into being by Him, yet the world did not know Him. ¹¹He came to His own things, yet His own people did not receive Him. ¹²But, as many as did re-

^a In the beginning (of this world, or perhaps this universe) He already existed. But why the ‘word’? If we take the word as the basic unit of verbal communication, and even representing that communication, then we have an important figure. Jehovah the Son in human form becomes the ultimate communication of God to the human race.

^b The idea seems to be that He was face to face with God (the Father), in His presence. Actually, the Text has “the God”—since the Greeks had any number of gods, the New Testament writers usually refer to Jehovah as the God. In verse 2 the Text also has “the God”.

^c The New World Translation (of the JWs) renders “a god”. They defend their choice because the noun ‘God’ occurs without the definite article, and the absence of the article in Greek has the effect of the indefinite article in English—hence ‘a god’. However, another frequent use of the absence of the definite article (in Greek) is to emphasize the quality inherent in the noun—in this case ‘**God**’. Grammatically, the construction is ambiguous, so those who wish to deny the deity of Christ will naturally translate ‘a god’. Since John will himself make perfectly clear that Christ is very God, we take it that he is here emphasizing that inherent quality. A faithful translator will attempt to reflect the meaning intended by the author, so I would say that the New World Translation is not faithful here, since John will repeatedly make clear that Jesus is God. But there is a further consideration. If John had used the definite article we would have an equation (in Greek)—the Word = the God—which would do away with the Trinity. So John could not write ‘the God’; he will quote Christ Himself making very clear that the Father and the Son are distinct persons.

^d This passage, along with Hebrews 1:10 and Colossians 1:16, makes clear that although the Trinity was doubtless involved in the creation of this planet it was Jehovah the Son who was the primary agent.

^e In what sense can ‘the life’ be ‘the light’? In John 8:12 the Lord said, “I am the Light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of the Life.” Only as we participate in the Life that Christ offers do we have access to the Light. Without His Life we walk in the darkness.

^f The word here translated ‘darkness’, and another closely related word, are frequently used of both physical and moral/spiritual darkness. The latter is associated with Satan’s kingdom, in fact characterizes it, while the light characterizes Christ’s kingdom. Presumably the “darkness” here is moral/spiritual—Satan’s kingdom.

^g To this day: in Matthew 5:14 Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world”—as long as there are followers of Jesus here, there is moral/spiritual light in the world.

^h In what sense can we say that everyone is “illumined” since we are all born with an inclination to sin, and most people die lost? Perhaps the answer lies in Romans 1:19-20. One of the expressions of the Life is the material creation that surrounds us—everyone has the light of the creation; there must be an incredibly intelligent and powerful Cause, and since we are persons He must be more so. We also believe that each human being is born with a conscience.

ceive Him,^a to them He gave the right to become children of God,^b to those who believe into His name:^c **13**who were begotten, not by blood, nor by the desire of the flesh, nor by the will of a man,^d but by God.^e

Jesus—the Only-begotten

14So the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we observed His glory, glory of an Only-begotten,^f from the Father, full of grace and truth. **15**John testified about Him and called out saying: “This is He of whom I said, “The One coming after me is now ahead of me, because He existed before I did.”” **16**Now we have all received from His fullness, yes, grace upon grace. **17**Because the Law was given through Moses;^g the Grace and the Truth came through Jesus Christ.^h **18**No one has ever seen God. The Only-begotten Son,ⁱ who exists in the bosom of the Father, He has interpreted *Him*.^j

^a ‘Receive’, not ‘accept’—if you ‘accept’ something it is inferior, or is offered by someone who is socially inferior; superior people or things are ‘received’. If you merely ‘accept Jesus’ that Jesus can’t save you; he is less than you are.

^b No one is born a child of God (God has no grandchildren); you may become one by receiving Christ. Presumably ‘receiving’ is a conscious act. Each of my two children did this when four years old.

^c Never does the Text read ‘believe in’ (Greek εἰς) Jesus or His name; always it reads ‘believe into’ (Greek εἰς). People believe in Santa Claus, the Easter bunny, the goodness of man, or whatever, but it makes no difference in their lives. Many millions of people say they ‘believe in Jesus’, but it makes no difference in their lives either. You have to believe into Him—commitment and identification are involved, that go along with the change in location, from being outside to being inside. As Jesus Himself said in John 6:53-56, you have to “eat” His flesh and “drink” His blood. If you eat something your body assimilates it, it becomes part of you.

^d “The will of a man” seems obvious enough—many, perhaps most, people are born because a man decides he wants children. “The desire of the flesh”—many others are born because a man and a woman are carried away by physical attraction, whether or not they are planning to have a child. “By blood”—the best sense I can make out of this is to assume that it refers to levirate marriage; a man fertilizes his brother’s childless widow to produce an heir for that brother, precisely because of the blood relationship between them.

^e For a human being to be begotten physically a man must implant the seed of life, and to be begotten spiritually God must implant the seed of the Life.

^f Jesus was very literally God’s ‘only-begotten’ Son. Since the Holy Spirit fertilized the virgin Mary, Jesus was literally begotten by God, but He is the only one in all human history who was begotten in that way.

^g Why “because”? What does the Law have to do with verse 16? We are not accustomed to associate the Law with grace, but as a revelation from God to men would it not be a manifestation of His grace? Of course the Son of God incarnate was a much greater manifestation of that grace—“grace upon grace”.

^h “The life”, “the light”, “the grace”, “the truth”—these things the Lord Jesus Christ offers us. In contrast Satan offers death, darkness, hate and the lie. Hey, I don’t know about you, but I’m with Jesus!

ⁱ Instead of “the only begotten son” (as in over 99.5% of the Greek manuscripts), some five manuscripts (of inferior quality, objectively so) have “an only begotten god”, while another two (also inferior) have “the only begotten god”. Since the absence of the definite article (in Greek) can have the effect of emphasizing the inherent quality of the noun, the second reading could be rendered “only begotten god”—this alternative has appealed to many evangelicals who see in it a strong affirmation of the deity of Christ. But if the God-part of the Christ was begotten in the womb of the virgin Mary, then He is not eternally pre-existent; and in that event Christ could not be God the Son, one of the three persons of the Trinity. Notice the precision in Isaiah 9:6—“unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given.” Jehovah the Son was given, not born. Notice further that the context is about the Incarnation, not the Son’s eternal pre-existence. But in any case, why follow seven manuscripts of demonstrably inferior quality against 1,700 better ones? The original and therefore true reading is certainly “the only begotten Son”.

^j Instead of “interpret” one could render ‘explain’, ‘describe’, ‘give a report about’... I connect this statement to verse 1—the Word shows us who the Father really is. As Jesus said to Philip, “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

John the Baptizer performs his office

¹⁹Now this is John's testimony, when the Jews^a sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed, he did not deny but confessed, "I am not the Christ."^b ²¹So they asked him, "What then, are you Elijah?" And he says, "I am not."^c "Are you 'the Prophet?'"^d "No," he answered. ²²So they said to him: "Who are you?—so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" ²³He said, "I am 'the voice of one calling out: 'Make the LORD's road straight in the wilderness,'" just as the prophet Isaiah said."^e

²⁴Now those who had been sent were from the Pharisees. ²⁵So they asked him saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor 'the Prophet?'" ²⁶John answered them saying: "I baptize with water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷He is the One coming after me who is now ahead of me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose." ²⁸These things happened in Bithabara,^f across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

²⁹The next day John sees Jesus coming toward him and says: "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!^g ³⁰This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who is now ahead of me, because He existed before I did.'^h ³¹I did not know Him; but so that He should be revealed to Israel, that is why I came baptizing with water."

³²And John testified saying: "I observed the Spirit coming down like a dove out of heaven, and He rested upon Him.ⁱ ³³Now I did not know Him,^a but He who

^a John uses "the Jews" to refer to the religious leaders, the hierarchy.

^b "Christ" in Greek is a translation of the Hebrew "Messiah". The people were looking for the Messiah.

^c Note that John declares that he is not Elijah. The point of their question relates to Malachi 4:5, where Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah. But the context in Malachi is the second coming, not the first. John performed the function at the first coming that Elijah, literally, will perform at the second. John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17—the angel Gabriel cites Malachi), but was not Elijah.

^d "The Prophet" is presumably a reference to Deuteronomy 18:15—the Jews figured that this prophecy refers to the Messiah, and so do we.

^e The reference is to Isaiah 40:3. Hebrew poetry, and prose, makes heavy use of parallel or synonymous statements. From the context in Isaiah it seems clear that "in the wilderness" goes with the verb "make straight", not "call out". But why a straight road in the wilderness? Any road facilitates the movement of people and goods, but a straight road through accidented terrain is a major asset. (Actually, Isaiah 40:3-4 describes the construction of a modern super highway.) John was the voice, but it was the people who had to make the road. So how about us? Are we supposed to be making such a road, and if so, how? At the very least we should be proclaiming biblical values to the world by every available means.

^f Some 65% of the Greek manuscripts read "Bethany" instead of the familiar "Bethabara" (I follow the best line of transmission in reading 'Bithabara', with 25% of the Greek manuscripts, while 'Bethabara' has 10%), but in either case we do not know the precise location. However, many Bible maps place 'Bethabara' near Jericho, on the west side of the river, but the Text states plainly that it was "across the Jordan" (= on the east side). A combination of such maps plus the true reading sets up an apparent contradiction or error in the text, which is actually in the map.

^g A tremendous statement! The Sacrifice to end all blood sacrifices is now physically present in the world.

^h John was six months older than Jesus, so he is affirming that Jesus had a prior existence. Since a mere man cannot have a prior existence, John is affirming Jesus' divinity.

ⁱ John does not record the baptism of Jesus, as such, but we know from the other Gospels that this incident took place at that baptism. Nor does John record Jesus' confrontation with Satan in the wilder-

sent me to baptize with water, He said to me,^b “The One upon whom you see the Spirit coming down and resting—this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”^c
³⁴So I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”^d

Jesus begins His public ministry

³⁵Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples. ³⁶And seeing Jesus walking by, he says, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. ³⁸So turning and observing them following^e Jesus says to them, “What do you want?” So they said to Him, “Rabbi” (which translated means “Teacher”), “where are You staying?” ³⁹He says to them, “Come and see.” So they went and saw where He was staying, and stayed with Him that day—it was about the tenth hour.^f ⁴⁰One of the two who heard John and followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹He first finds his own brother Simon and says to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated ‘Christ’). ⁴²And he led him to Jesus. Looking at him Jesus said, “You are Simon, the son of Jonah;^g you will be called Cephas” (which is translated ‘Stone’).^h

ness. In general, John does not repeat information available in the other Gospels. (John wrote after the other Gospels had been in circulation for well over a decade.)

^a This is curious. John and Jesus were related, and their mothers were close, so it seems improbable that they would never have met as boys or youths. Perhaps John means as the Messiah—until His baptism Jesus gave no overt demonstration that He was the Messiah. (However, given the circumstances surrounding both Mary and Elizabeth, I suppose it is possible that the two boys never met.)

^b Notice that the Baptizer affirms that God spoke to him directly, in audible or distinguishable words, which he quotes. God spoke like that 2000 years ago, and He continues to do so.

^c In John’s baptism, John is the agent; in Christ’s baptism, Jesus is the agent; the baptism where the Holy Spirit is the agent is distinct from these. In John’s baptism the substance used for the ritual was water; in Christ’s baptism the substance used is the Holy Spirit. In John’s baptism the person got wet but then dried off, so presumably the real point of the exercise was a spiritual transaction; how much more, then, in Christ’s baptism. I am inclined to link Christ’s baptism (He is the agent) with John 4:13-14 and 7:38-39. “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never ever thirst; rather, the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up into eternal life’” (4:13-14). “Jesus stood up and called out saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. The one believing into me, just as the Scripture has said, out from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ (Now He said this about the Spirit, whom those believing into Him were going to receive, in that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.)” (7:37-39). In other words, when Jesus baptizes you, you are regenerated, you receive a new nature, you receive the Holy Spirit.

^d That is what he said, “the Son of God” (actually, ‘the Son of the God’), which here probably means that there is only one. John clearly identifies and presents the Messiah to the populace. He performed his office.

^e Presumably Jesus waited for them to catch up, so He was observing them during that time. His purpose in passing by there was precisely to attract those two men (so I imagine), and He was doubtless aware when they started out after Him.

^f This is significant. John uses Roman time, so this is 10 a.m. Which means that Jesus spent most of the day with just those two men. You had better believe they were talking the whole time. Jesus knew they would be two of His disciples and was already investing in them—to such good effect that the next day they bring in two more. The Text does not clarify whether or not they spent the night as well.

^g The Text says, “the son of Jonah”. Since Peter obviously had at least one brother, he was not an only son. Perhaps we should understand that Peter was the firstborn. Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) read “John” for “Jonah” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h *Cephas* is Aramaic for ‘stone’; *petros* is Greek for ‘stone’ (a small object, as opposed to a ‘rock’). The name ‘Peter’ is a transliteration into English of *petros*, but since ‘peter’ does not mean ‘stone’ in English, to put ‘Peter’ in verse 42 misses the point.

Nathanael

⁴³The next day He decided to go to Galilee, so He finds Philip^a and says to him, “Follow me.” ⁴⁴(Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.) ⁴⁵Philip finds Nathanael and says to him, “We have found the One of whom Moses in the Law—and also the prophets—wrote: Jesus the son of Joseph, from Natsareth.”^b ⁴⁶So Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Natsareth?” Philip says to him, “Come and see!”^c

⁴⁷Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and says about him, “There, a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit!” ⁴⁸Nathanael says to Him, “From where do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, while you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” ⁴⁹In answer Nathanael says to Him: “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”^d ⁵⁰Jesus answered and said to him: “You believe because I said that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater than these.”^e ⁵¹And He says to him, “I tell you (pl) most assuredly, later on you will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of the Man.”^f

Water into wine

2 ¹On the third day^g a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus’ mother was there. ²Now both Jesus and His disciples had been invited to the wedding.^a ³So when the wine had given out, Jesus’ mother says to Him, “They don’t have any wine!” ⁴Jesus says to her: “What is that to you and me, woman?”^b My

^a I cannot prove it, but I suspect that Philip was the second man, of John’s disciples, who spent the day with Jesus. If so, it seems unlikely that he and Andrew spent the night with Jesus, because in that event Jesus would not have to “find” him.

^b The Hebrew spelling of the town’s name comes over into English as ‘Natsareth’, not ‘Nazareth’. This is crucial to a correct understanding of Matthew 2:23 (please see the note there).

^c “Come and see.” “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” In the final analysis you have to decide for yourself. Check it out.

^d Wow, that was a real switch—from disdainful doubt in verse 46 to faith and submission in verse 49. What caused the change? A mature fig tree’s branches reach to the ground and form a curtain—there is a clear space around the trunk that is cool and private [I have been there]. It was a great place to be alone with God. But for Jesus to see Nathanael there (there were probably hills in between as well) meant that He was supernatural. That statement convinced Nathanael that he was looking at the Messiah, and he immediately declared allegiance. Of the four Gospels, only John uses the name ‘Nathanael’, the others do not; they all use the name ‘Bartholomew’, while John never does. Since Nathanael was one of the apostles, evidently (John 21:2), we may conclude that we have two names for the same person.

^e The demonstrative pronoun is plural but ambiguous as to gender. Since I would expect the singular (presumably it was the single statement that caused Nathanael’s belief) the plural leaves me in doubt. Is it greater things or people, or both?

^f So far as I know, we have no record of when this took place, but no doubt it did. Jesus addressed Nathanael in particular, “He says to him”, but used the plural, “ye”, about seeing the heaven opened. “The Son of the Man” appears to be a phrase coined by the Lord Jesus to refer to Himself; the Text does say “the son of the man”, which does not make very good sense in English, at first glance, but if “the man” refers to pristine Adam and “the son” to an only pristine descendent, it makes great sense. It seems to indicate a perfect human prototype, like Adam was before the fall—the human side of the God-man.

^g Counting from when? 1:19-28 happened on one day; 1:29-34 happened the next (2nd) day; 1:35-42 happened the next (3rd) day; 1:43-51 happened the next (4th) day. So the third day here must count from the last day mentioned (1:43-51), although it could (and in Jewish thought probably did) include it. The wedding started that day, but such weddings often lasted several days (and the wine would run out toward the end, if it did). Jesus and His disciples (four?) probably had about an 80-mile walk, 55 miles up the Jordan valley (relatively smooth and straight) and 25 of rougher terrain. Since they did all their traveling on foot, and were therefore used to it, they could easily make the distance in two days.

time has not yet come.”^c ⁵His mother says to the servants, “Do whatever He may tell you.”^d

⁶(Now there were six stone waterpots set there, according to the purification rites of the Jews, containing 20 or 30 gallons each.) ⁷Jesus says to them, “Fill the pots with water.” So they filled them to the brim.^e ⁸So He says to them, “Now, draw some out and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So they took it. ⁹Well, when the master of ceremonies tasted the water^f that had become wine—he did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew—he calls the bridegroom ¹⁰and says to him: “Everybody serves the good wine first, then, when people are intoxicated, the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!”

¹¹This, the first of the miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee and revealed His glory;^g and His disciples believed into Him.

¹²After this He went down to Capernaum—He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples—but they did not stay there many days.^h

The first cleansing of the Temple—Passover, 27 AD

¹³Now the Jewish Passover was near, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴And in the Temple He found people selling oxen and sheep and doves, also the money-changers at work. ¹⁵When He had made a scourge out of cords, He drove all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen;ⁱ and as for the moneychangers, He

^a The disciples had been invited in their own right, before they were disciples.

^b Jesus was not being disrespectful; this was a normal form of address.

^c I conclude from 1:43 that Jesus was at that wedding on purpose, and probably had an idea of what would happen. Perhaps He was testing His mother’s faith, and maybe her determination. However, as He declares, He was not yet ready to really go public—He would do that in Jerusalem, as recorded in 2:13-25. He would start with a bang, right in the Temple!

^d Mary was evidently in a position to issue orders, which leads me to suspect that she was the mother of the bride, which would also explain why Jesus made a special effort to get there. From verse 12 below, it appears that the whole family was there.

^e That was a lot of water! If it was toward the end of the festivity, there would presumably be a great deal of wine left over. Such excellent wine would bring a good price; perhaps Jesus chose this way to give the new couple a financial boost.

^f Wine has color and smell, as well as flavor—I wonder at what point the water took on those characteristics. Perhaps it was only as the servant handed the goblet to the master, so that the servants had drawn and carried ‘water’; they obeyed what seemed to them to be a strange order.

^g Jesus “revealed His glory”. In what sense? As Jehovah the Son He was the Creator of this world. Transforming water into wine was an act of creation. The chemical components that distinguish wine from water had to be created on the spot, and mixed with the water. This “first miraculous sign” was simply tremendous—it revealed Jesus as Creator. However, although presumably all the guests drank of this new wine, being tipsy they may not have realized what went on. Only the disciples, the servants, and of course Mary, knew what had really happened. Apparently this miracle was not broadcast at that time—like Jesus said, not yet. (Neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke were there, but John, the author of this Gospel, probably was; in which case we have an eyewitness account [John and James were partners with Peter and Andrew; so since Peter and Andrew were invited they probably were too].)

^h The next verse tells us that the Passover was near. The Passover was one (probably the most important) of the three festivals during the year when every God-fearing male had to present himself at the temple in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). Often the whole family would go, so perhaps the whole group mentioned in verse 12 went on to Jerusalem. Jesus had just come up from Judea, only to turn around and go back, which gives us some indication of the importance of the wedding in Cana. That Joseph is not mentioned at all leads one to suspect that he had died by now.

ⁱ The impression I get is that it was mainly the animals that He drove, not the people; in the next verse He commands the dove-sellers to remove them, presumably still in the cages.

overturned the tables and scattered the coins. ¹⁶And to the dove-sellers He said: “Get these things out of here! Stop turning my Father’s House into a marketplace!” ¹⁷Then His disciples remembered that it stands written, “Zeal for Your House consumes me.”^a

¹⁸So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do you show us, since you do these things?”^b ¹⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple,^c and in three days I will raise it.”^d ²⁰So the Jews said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and you will raise it in three days?!” ²¹But He was speaking about the temple of His body. ²²Therefore, when He was raised from among the dead His disciples remembered that He had said this; so they believed the Scripture, even the word that Jesus had spoken.^e

²³Now while He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed into His name, observing the signs that He was doing.^f ²⁴But as for Jesus Himself, He did not entrust Himself to them,^g because He knew all *men* ²⁵and that He had no need that anyone should testify about man, because He Himself knew what was in man.^h

Jesus and Nicodemus

3 ¹Now there was a man among the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²The same went to Jesus at night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that you have come as a teacher from God, because no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³Jesus answered and said to him,ⁱ “Most assuredly I say to you, unless someone is begotten from Above,^j he is not

^a See Psalm 69:9.

^b The commerce going on in the Temple was crooked, and was under the direction of the religious leaders. What Jesus did was an affront, a direct challenge to their authority. He got their attention! From this moment on they knew about Jesus! What He did was so unexpected, so outrageous, that the Jews did not know how to react. Maybe some were just a little afraid He might be the Messiah. (And just maybe a few of them had been there 18 years before and listened to a certain twelve-year-old Boy.)

^c The Lord gives an unexpected meaning to “this temple”, metaphoric, but this prophecy was literally fulfilled.

^d Since Jesus was referring to His own body, once He was dead how could He do this? His spirit did not die, and at the right moment returned to the body and raised it, uniting with it once again (and in so doing He glorified it).

^e Note that my rendering, “They believed the Scripture, even the word that Jesus had spoken”, has the effect of equating His word with Scripture. More precisely, the Lord’s statement in verse 19 was repeated as an accusation three years later, as recorded in Matthew 26:61 and 27:40, and Matthew’s Gospel had already been circulating as Scripture for decades when John wrote. If this line of reasoning is correct, then John is calling Matthew ‘Scripture’! (Of course there was an interval of a number of years (eight) between the resurrection and the publishing of Matthew’s Gospel, but perhaps some did not ‘remember’ until they saw it written down.) I am not aware of any OT prophecy that could be in view here.

^f I take it that it was at this point that the Lord really began to heal on a large scale. He forced the religious leaders to take notice of Him in more ways than one. Nicodemus refers to these signs.

^g I would suggest that our Lord offers us an important example here: He did not entrust Himself to just anybody, even believers. He will command His followers to keep on forgiving those who sin against them, especially ‘brothers’. To forgive does not equal to trust!

^h As Creator He would indeed know what was in man.

ⁱ He does not waste time with the compliment, although it was true enough, but goes directly to a serious theological question.

^j The basic meaning of the Greek word here, *ανωθεν*, is ‘from up/above’. A lot of people who say that they have been ‘born again’ have never been begotten from Above. ‘Begotten’ refers to the cause; ‘born’ refers to the result—I take it that the Lord is talking about the cause.

able to see^a the kingdom of God.” ⁴Nicodemus says to Him: “How can a man be begotten, being old? He can’t enter his mother’s womb a second time and be born, can he?” ⁵Jesus answered: “Most assuredly I say to you, unless someone is begotten by water^b and Spirit he is not able to enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which has been begotten by the flesh is flesh, and that which has been begotten by the Spirit is spirit.^c ⁷Do not be perplexed that I said to you, ‘You (pl) need to be begotten from Above.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you (sg) hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who has been begotten by the Spirit.”^d

⁹Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?”^e ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to Him: “You are the teacher of Israel,^f yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Most assuredly I say to you, we speak what we know and testify to what we^g have seen, but you (pl) do not receive our testimony.^h ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I should tell you the heavenly? ¹³No one has gone up into Heaven except the One who came down out of Heaven—the Son of the Man, who is in Heaven.ⁱ ¹⁴Also, just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness,^j just so the Son of the Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵so that everyone who believes into Him should not be wasted,^k

^a Is ‘see’ just a synonym for ‘enter’ in verse 5 below, or is a difference intended?

^b Why ‘water’? Some have understood this to refer to water baptism, but it seems more likely to me that it refers to the Word (see Ephesians 5:26, John 15:3, John 17:17). As it says in Romans 10:17, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

^c In 1:13 it is “begotten by God”, here “begotten by the Spirit”, in 3:3 and 7 “begotten from Above”—I take it that the expressions are synonymous. Without God’s direct participation no one is saved.

^d Notice that the Lord is saying here that it is **we** who are to be unpredictable, like the wind, or the Spirit (“comes” and “goes” are in the present tense). If you are really under the control of the Spirit you will do unexpected things, just like He does. We all know of types of Christian that are rigid, totally predictable—the Lord Jesus Christ says that such ‘Christians’ have not been begotten by the Spirit. A word to the wise...

^e His philosophical orientation was based on keeping the Law, on human responsibility. Jesus introduces the divine factor, declaring it to be indispensable.

^f The Lord used the definite article with ‘teacher’, which I understand to mean that Nicodemus was the number one teacher at that time.

^g Why “we”? Jesus begins the verse with “I” and begins verse 12 with “I”; so to whom does the “we” refer? Is it the ‘plural of majesty’, as some say? Perhaps He is including one or both of the other members of the Trinity—actually, it is probably the Father; see John 12:49-50. (This is early in His public ministry and He does not yet have a recognized group of disciples traveling with Him.)

^h He had doubtless been teaching, as well as performing miracles, during those days.

ⁱ About 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “who is in Heaven” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Presumably those copyists could not figure out how Jesus could be on earth and in Heaven at the same time, so they altered the Text. But let us stop and think about what this verse says—Jehovah the Son came down out of Heaven all right, but when did He go up? If “the Angel of Jehovah” in the O.T. was Jehovah the Son, as I believe, then He had been back and forth many times. In John 5:19 Jesus said that He could only do what He saw the Father do—so when and how could Jesus see the Father? Even though Jehovah the Son was in the human body of Jesus Christ, evidently there was some sense in which He was also in Heaven; He existed there. Well, that is what John 1:18 says, “who exists in the bosom of the Father.”

^j See Numbers 21:8-9. Once bitten, the only way to avoid an early death was to look at the bronze snake. Similarly, the only way to avoid wasting your life is to believe into Jesus.

^k Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “should not be wasted but” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The phrase is repeated in verse 16, but this is a conversation between two Jews and it is standard Hebrew procedure to repeat things. But why do I render “be wasted” instead of “perish”? Well, what do you think “perish” means? It cannot mean ‘to die’, because Christians die. It cannot

but should have eternal life. ¹⁶Because God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes into Him should not be wasted, but should have eternal life.^a ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world in order to condemn the world,^b but so that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸The one believing into Him is not condemned, but the one not believing has already been condemned,^c because he has not believed into the name^d of the only begotten Son of God.

¹⁹“Now this is the *basis for* the condemning, that the Light has come into the world,^e but the people loved the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were malignant. ²⁰For whoever practices evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds may not be exposed.^f ²¹But whoever does the truth comes to the Light so that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they are done in God.”

John the Baptizer testifies again

²²After these things Jesus, with His disciples, went into the Judean countryside, and there He spent time with them^g and baptized. ²³Now John also was baptizing in Aenon, near Salem, because there was plenty of water there.^h And *people* were coming and being baptized; ²⁴for John had not yet been thrown into prison.

²⁵Then some of John’s disciples had an argument with a Judean about purification. ²⁶So they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, the One who was with you across the Jordan, about whom you have testified—well, here He is baptizing, and everyone is flocking to Him!”ⁱ ²⁷John answered and said: “A person can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from Heaven.^j ²⁸You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent ahead of Him.’ ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands by and

mean ‘to suffer’, because Christians suffer, etc. Although the Greek verb here, *apollumi*, is used in contexts of decay, loss, ruin, destruction, death, I take it that the core idea is ‘waste’—the potential of a person or thing is wasted, does not come to fruition. The potential that your life represents, the reason why you exist, can only be realized if you believe into Jesus—otherwise you will be wasted.

^a The opposite of ‘eternal life’ is not ‘non-eternal life’, it is ‘eternal death’. But ‘death’ does not mean ‘cease to exist’—the human spirit, the image of the Creator, is immortal, it exists forever. There are but two destinies for the human being—unending life or unending death. The central idea in ‘death’ is separation; physical death means the spirit is separated from the body; spiritual death means the spirit is separated from the Creator, forever. The essence of ‘life’ is to be in communion with the Creator, so we can start enjoying our eternal life right here, right now.

^b The world was already condemned; the Son came to offer a way out.

^c Since we are sinners by inclination and by choice, we are already under condemnation; the only way out is to believe into the Lord Jesus.

^d “Believe into the name” = “believe into Him”; a person’s name represents that person.

^e The light makes itself available, comes into our area, announces the address, but we must take the initiative to go to that light.

^f In John 7:7 Jesus said, “The world cannot hate you, but does hate me, because I testify about it that its works are malignant”, and in 8:12 He said, “I am the Light of the world”. Those who love darkness generally hate Jesus.

^g Again, He was investing in those men (not yet the full twelve).

^h To this day there is plenty of water in the Aijalon valley, some 15-20 miles WNW of Jerusalem (Salem is an ancient name for Jerusalem; see Genesis 14:18 and Hebrews 7:1)—perhaps that is where it was. I take it that Jesus and John were in the same area, at this point.

ⁱ I imagine that the ‘argument’ mentioned in verse 25 had to do with the efficacy of the two baptisms.

^j John states a basic truth, which is why it is not good to boast (1 Corinthians 4:7).

hears him, has great joy at the bridegroom's voice. So this my joy has been fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease.^a

³¹"He who comes from Above is above all; he who is from the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth. He who comes from Heaven^b is above all. ³²And to what He has seen and heard He testifies, yet no one receives His testimony.^c ³³The one who receives His testimony certifies that God is true. ³⁴For He whom God sent speaks God's words, because God does not give the Spirit by measure.^d ³⁵The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.^e ³⁶The one believing into the Son has eternal life, but the one disobeying^f the Son will not see the Life, but the wrath of God will remain upon him."^g

Jesus and the Samaritans

4 ¹Now when Jesus^h knew that the Phariseesⁱ had heard, "Jesus is making and baptizing more disciples than John" ²(although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples), ³He left Judea and went away into Galilee.^j

⁴Now He needed to go through Samaria;^k ⁵so He comes to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.^l ⁶Now Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, being worn out from the journey, sat as He was by the well. It was about 6 p.m.^m

^a Now there we have an excellent example to follow; all of us should have the same attitude—"He must increase, but I must decrease".

^b "From Above" = "from Heaven". John is talking about Jesus.

^c So where did Jesus do this 'seeing' and 'hearing'? In Heaven.

^d The Text does not have "to Him", but in the context that is presumably to be understood. To the Son the Father gave the Spirit in full measure, but not to us—at least not in the same sense.

^e John obviously had a pretty good understanding of who Jesus was.

^f The Text has "disobeying", not 'disbelieving'. 'Believing into' has to do with commitment, with identification, with relationship. If you enter into a relationship with the Sovereign of the Universe, He is the **Boss**. Either you obey or bad things start to happen to you.

^g There are differing opinions about where the Baptizer's speech ends—the rest would then be a commentary by the author, John. The verbs in the present tense in verse 32 tip the decision in favor of the Baptizer—John would have had to use a past tense. I take it that the Baptizer's speech goes through verse 35, at least. Verse 36 could be an editorial comment by John, but I see no reason in the Text for taking the verse away from the Baptizer. Notice the verb 'will remain'; the only way out is to obey the Son. (Perhaps 50% of the Greek manuscripts have 'remains', instead of "will remain", which does not change the impact of the statement.)

^h I follow the best line of transmission in reading "Jesus", rather than 'the Lord', albeit with only 21.7% of the Greek manuscripts.

ⁱ The 'Judean' in 3:25-26 was probably a Pharisee.

^j This was a tactical withdrawal. I take it that Matthew 4:12 refers to the same withdrawal. Between John 3:36 and 4:1 the Baptizer was imprisoned. If the Pharisees knew something it would not be long before Herod knew it. It was not part of the Plan for Jesus to have to deal with Herod at this juncture.

^k He could have gone up the coast and avoided most of the mountains, but He "needed" to go through Samaria. Probably because the Father told Him to—it was harvest time in Sychar.

^l See Joshua 24:32.

^m Since John elsewhere always uses Roman time, I assume that he does so here as well. The Text has "the sixth hour". Many versions put "noon", which reflects Jewish time. But the Text says Jesus was worn out, which agrees better with a full day's walk than with a half day's walk. The distance between Salem and Sychar was probably about 35 miles, as the crow flies, but since the whole distance was over accidented terrain, the walking distance would be a good deal more. They had walked some 50 miles in twelve hours. Like the Text says, He was tired! And He was hot and thirsty. John emphasizes that as a human being He felt the full effects of the day.

⁷A woman of Samaria comes to draw water. Jesus says to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) ⁹So the Samaritan woman says to Him, “How can you, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, being a Samaritan woman?” (for Jews do not associate with Samaritans). ¹⁰Jesus answered and said to her: “If you knew the gift of God, and who is the one saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹The woman says to Him: “Sir, you don’t even have a bucket, and the well is deep; so where do you get this living water? ¹²You aren’t greater than our father Jacob, are you? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock.” ¹³Jesus answered and said to her: “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never ever thirst;^a rather, the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up into eternal life.”^b ¹⁵The woman says to Him, “Sir, give me this water! so that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

¹⁶Jesus says to her, “Go, call your husband and come back here.” ¹⁷The woman answered and said, “I don’t have a husband.” Jesus says to her: “You stated correctly that you do not have a husband, ¹⁸because you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is no husband of yours. You spoke the truth there!”^c ¹⁹The woman says to Him: “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you (pl) say that the place where one must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus says to her: “Woman, believe me, a time is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²²You [Samaritans] worship what you do not know; we [Jews] worship what we do know, because the salvation is from the Jews.^d ²³But the time is coming, in fact now is, when the genuine worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Really, because the Father is looking for **such** people to worship Him.^e ²⁴God is Spirit,^a and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

^a Here again the Lord gives a double meaning to a word—in verse 13 He uses “thirst” in a physical sense, but in verse 14 the sense has to be spiritual, since Jesus Himself experienced physical thirst. In verse 15 the woman sees only the physical sense. I personally do not find the spiritual meaning to be transparent. I have been serving the Lord for many years, but still experience spiritual thirst. I have to keep drinking. However, the ‘water’ being the Holy Spirit, any thirst will not be for lack of ‘water’.

^b That is what the Text says, “into eternal life”. Eternal life is a quality of life, more precisely a life in communion with the Father. The picture is not necessarily of a geyser, water spouting up, but there has to be a constant flow. As our capacity increases the flow should also increase. Of course the water must be shared with others, or we become stagnant.

^c Dear me! Would you say that Jesus was making a special effort not to hurt her feelings? But He knew what He was doing, as verse 29 makes clear. So how about us? Are we prepared to hurt people’s feelings?

^d Quite so. The Lamb of God is a Jew, and the Old Testament canon came through the Jewish people (see Romans 3:2). For that matter, most (if not all—Luke [?]) of the New Testament was written by Jews as well.

^e The Father “is looking” for those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. It may be that we have here a window on the reason why God created a race such as ours—persons in His image with the capacity to **choose**. God “is looking” for something, which means He does not have it, at least not automatically, nor in sufficient quantity. I take it that He wants to be appreciated for who He is, but to have meaning such appreciation cannot come from robots—it has to be voluntary. So He created a type of being with that capacity, but He had to take the risk that such a being would choose not to appreciate Him. Unfortunately, most human beings make the negative choice, and with that negative choice come all sorts of negative consequences. Ever since Adam humans are born with an inclination toward sin, so for someone to choose to appreciate God is definitely not automatic, nor even easy. No one can reasonably accuse God of having ‘stacked the deck’ in His own favor, of ‘buying votes’—He seems to have done just

²⁵The woman says to Him: “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes He will explain everything to us.” ²⁶Jesus says to her, “I am He, the one who is talking with you!”^b

The disciples

²⁷At that point His disciples arrived, and they were amazed that He was talking with a woman; yet no one said, “What do you want?”^c or “Why are You talking with her?” ²⁸So the woman left her water jar,^d went her way into the town, and says to the men: ²⁹“Come see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could this be the Messiah?” ³⁰So out they went from the town and started toward Him.

³¹Now in the meantime the disciples were urging Him saying, “Rabbi, eat.” ³²But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³So the disciples started saying to one another, “Could someone have brought Him *something* to eat?” ³⁴Jesus says to them: “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to complete His work.”^e ³⁵Do you not say, ‘There are four months before the harvest comes?’ Well I say, Look! Lift your eyes and observe the fields; they are white for harvest already! ³⁶Now he who reaps receives pay and gathers fruit into eternal life,^f so that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. ³⁷Now the saying, ‘One is the sower and another the reaper,’ is true in this: ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labors.”^g

The Samaritans

³⁹Now many of the Samaritans from that city believed into Him because of the word of the woman, testifying that “He told me everything I ever did!” ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to Him they urged Him to stay with them; and He did stay there two days. ⁴¹Many more believed through His own word, ⁴²and they kept saying to the woman, “It is not just because of what you said that we believe, be-

the opposite. If a human being, against his natural inclination, chooses to appreciate God, then He receives what He is looking for. “In spirit and truth” presumably means that it cannot be faked, cannot be forced, cannot be merely physical, cannot be merely emotional (though both body and emotions can, and often will, be utilized).

^a Again the lack of the definite article presents us with an ambiguity; the rendering ‘a spirit’ is possible. But as I indicate by the underlining, I understand that the quality inherent in the noun is being emphasized.

^b As recorded in the four Gospels, this is the first time Jesus declares bluntly that He is the Messiah, and He does it to a woman, and a Samaritan one at that! That woman had had her ups and downs, but was no dummy; that the people of the town listened to her indicates that she had influence. Jesus knew what He was doing.

^c A number of versions capitalize the ‘You’, as if the question would have been directed to Jesus, but it seems more likely to me that this first question would have been to the woman.

^d That was nice of her; they could get water while she was gone. (It was also a clear indication that she intended to return.)

^e The Lord was totally committed to the Father’s will and game plan; His daily life revolved around it (it was His ‘food’). In His excitement at seeing the plan for Sychar unfold He forgot His physical hunger.

^f That is what the Text says, “into eternal life”. Surely, Jesus is talking about harvesting souls, gathering them into the Kingdom—when someone is born from Above everyone who participated in the process is glad.

^g “I sent you to reap” must refer to activity in the past, so I take it that the Lord is stating a general principle.

JOHN 4

cause we ourselves have heard *Him*,^a and we know that this One is truly the Messiah,^b the Savior of the world!”^c

Jesus in Galilee

⁴³So after the two days He departed from there and went on into Galilee.
⁴⁴(For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet does not have honor in his own country.)^d ⁴⁵So when He came into Galilee the Galileans welcomed Him, having seen all the things that He did in Jerusalem, at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival.

Jesus heals at a distance

⁴⁶So Jesus went again to Cana of Galilee,^e where He made the water wine. Now there was a certain royal official whose son was sick in Capernaum. ⁴⁷When this man heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son,^f for he was about to die. ⁴⁸So Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders you will not believe!”^g ⁴⁹The official says to Him, “Sir, come down before my child dies!” ⁵⁰Jesus says to him, “Go; your son lives.” Well the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and off he went. ⁵¹Now while he was still going down his slaves met him and reported saying, “Your son lives!” ⁵²So he inquired of them the hour in which he got better. And they said to him, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”^h ⁵³So the father knew that it was at the exact hour in which Jesus told him, “Your son lives.” Both he himself and his whole household believed. ⁵⁴Again, coming out of Judea into Galilee, Jesus performed this second miraculous sign.ⁱ

^a As the italics indicate, “Him” is not in the Text; perhaps the addition confuses the picture. What do you suppose the disciples were doing during those two days? I bet the Samaritans were eager to hear all that they could about Jesus, what He had said and done—they kept the disciples busy!

^b About 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “the Messiah” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c All right! They got the message!

^d I believe that the episode recorded in Luke 4:16-30 took place between verses 43 and 45 here, and verse 44 is an echo of Luke 4:24. From Sychar Jesus went directly to Natsareth, was rejected there, and proceeded to Cana. Verse 45 is a summary statement, after the fact. [Of course He was born in Bethlehem, Judea, but I doubt that He is referring to it as ‘his own country’.]

^e I suspect that He had a brother-in-law living there.

^f The man was asking Jesus to make an emergency hike of some 25 miles (unless he was mounted and had brought an extra horse for Jesus; but He probably wasn’t used to riding). Evidently he figured that the healer had to be physically present.

^g Again, Jesus is not exactly ‘polite’.

^h It is virtually certain that the official and his slaves used Roman time, in which case the cure took place at 7 p.m. It could not be 7 a.m. because the man would have met his slaves before noon and they would have said ‘today’, not ‘yesterday’ (verse 52). It could not be Jewish time for a similar reason—if Jesus healed at 1 p.m. the man would have met his slaves before sundown and they would have said ‘today’. The man probably walked (unless he was mounted, but at night the horse would be held to a walk) during at least part of the night; the slaves would have started out at dawn; they probably met at a point much closer to Capernaum than to Cana.

ⁱ That is, He healed at a distance, just by His thought. Curiously, He was in Cana for both of them.

Jesus returns to Jerusalem—Passover, 28 AD

5 ¹After these things there was the^a feast of the Jews, so Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

The pool of Bethesda

²Now in Jerusalem, by the Sheep Gate, there is a pool called Bethesda,^b in Hebrew, which has five porches.^c ³In them a large number of sick people were lying—blind, lame, paralyzed—waiting for the moving of the water; ⁴because an angel would go down from time to time into the pool and stir up the water^d—then the first one to get in after the stirring of the water became well of whatever disease that was holding him.^e

The man selected for healing

⁵Now there was a certain man there who had been sick for 38 years.^f ⁶Seeing this man lying there and knowing that he had already been sick a long time, Jesus says to him, “Do you want to get well?” ⁷The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to throw^g me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming another gets in before me.” ⁸Jesus says to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk!” ⁹Immediately the man became well and picked up his pallet and started to walk! ¹⁰But that day was a Sabbath, so the Jews said to the one who had been healed: “It’s the Sabbath! You aren’t allowed to carry the pallet.” ¹¹He answered them: “The one who made me well—He said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” ¹²So they asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your

^a The manuscript evidence is badly divided here, between ‘the feast’ and ‘a feast’—I take it that the best evidence is on the side of the definite article. In that event the feast was the Passover (with the other alternative it could still be the Passover), the second during Christ’s public ministry; one and a half years are behind Him and there are two to go. For events between the first two Passovers see Mark 1:14-2:17, Luke 4:14-5:39 and Matthew 4:12-8:4.

^b Fully 99% of the Greek manuscripts read the familiar ‘Bethesda’, and this name is attested by the 1st century Copper Scroll from Qumran. The so-called ‘critical text’ (UBS and N-A) serves up the pitiful ‘Bethzatha’, following just five Greek manuscripts (as in TEV, RSV, Jer., etc.). The UBS editors have introduced an historical error into their text on the flimsiest of evidence, even going against their favorites, P⁷⁵ and B.

^c The pool is a rectangle (it is still there), so it has four sides—so where was the fifth porch? Across the middle, dividing the pool into two smaller ones. Instead of ‘porch’ one could use ‘portico’, ‘cloister’, ‘colonnade’—a covered walkway.

^d The angel, whether good or bad, would presumably be invisible to the people, so this information must have been revealed to John.

^e About 0.8% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 3 and all of verse 4 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.). But obviously all those people would not stay there (in discomfort) day in and day out, year in and year out, if nothing was happening. Obviously people got healed (from serious diseases), and verse 7 makes clear that it had to do with the stirring of the water—so why didn’t those manuscripts omit verse 7 as well? The UBS editions do us a considerable disservice by following a very small minority of manuscripts (perhaps 2%) and making the angel ‘of the Lord’. Since angels can be good or fallen, it seems most likely to me that the angel involved was fallen. A capricious, occasional healing condemned all those people to added suffering (being at the pool instead of the comfort of home), including the frustration and despair of those who never made it (like the man Jesus healed). A sadistic procedure is just like Satan.

^f Wow!

^g That is right, “throw”. Hey, where a split second could make the difference no one is going to stand on ceremony—when the water started to move there would be a mad scramble; people would be thrown at the water, literally. (The demons would really enjoy themselves, seeing ‘the image of God’ humiliated in that way.)

JOHN 5

pallet and walk'?" ¹³But the man who was cured did not know who it was, because Jesus had disappeared, there being a crowd in the place.^a

¹⁴After these things Jesus found him in the temple and said to him: "See, you are well. Don't sin any more, so that something worse doesn't happen to you."^b ¹⁵The man went off and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

The Jews want to kill Jesus

¹⁶So because of this the Jews began persecuting Jesus and trying to kill Him,^c because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.^d ¹⁷But Jesus answered them, "Until now, my Father works, I also work."^e ¹⁸So because of this they wanted to kill Him all the more, because He was not only breaking the Sabbath but was even saying that God was His own Father, making Himself equal with God!

Jesus addresses the Jews

He affirms His equality with the Father

¹⁹Then Jesus answered and said to them: "Most assuredly I say to you, the Son is not able to do anything from Himself, except something He sees the Father doing; because whatever things He does, precisely these the Son also does.^f ²⁰For the Father loves^g the Son and shows Him everything that He Himself is doing; and He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may marvel. ²¹Now just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, just so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²²In fact the Father does not judge anyone but has committed all the judging to the Son,^h ²³so that all will honor the Son just as they honor the

^a Let's stop and think about what Jesus did here. There were probably hundreds of sick people there—why did He only heal **one** of them? And why did He disappear into the crowd before the man could find out who He was? And why did He do this on a Sabbath? I think it was all deliberate—He wanted to provoke the Jews. He chose a Sabbath; He chose a man who had a pallet, but who had no slave or other helper; He commanded (yes, commanded) the man to carry the pallet; He got out of the way so the Jews would have the man to themselves. In this way He set up a confrontation, as we will see below. [In passing we may note that if ever there was a 'divine healer' it was the Lord Jesus, and yet He did not empty out this 'hospital'. Maybe divine healers aren't supposed to empty hospitals.]

^b The Lord seems to be implying that the former sickness was the result of sin. But he had been sick for 38 years, so he had paid a heavy price!

^c Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "and trying to kill Him" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The last recorded events before John 5:1 are in Luke 5:12-39. The healing of the paralytic had impressed the Jews, but then Jesus immediately went and ate with publicans; and verses 36-39 were against what the Jews represented. Here in John Jesus challenges their authority over the Sabbath.

^e Not only does Jesus not run and hide, He 'ups the ante'—He claims to be God, as the Jews understood perfectly well (and which in their mind called for the death penalty, since they were not prepared to acknowledge that claim).

^f I find this statement to be amazing, revealing and challenging. Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing; so how about us? I would say that my main 'ministry' problem is that I often don't know what the Father is doing, and so I waste a lot of time and effort.

^g To my surprise the verb here is *φιλέω*, not *ἀγαπάω*—the Father is emotionally attached to the Son. Well, since we have emotions God must have had them first. God affirms that He has soul (Isaiah 42:1, Matthew 12:18, Hebrews 10:38).

^h I suppose this means that it will be the Son who sits on the 'great white throne' (Revelation 20:11).

Father.^a Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.^b

The Son is the just Judge

24“Most assuredly I say to you that the one listening^c to my word and believing on Him who sent me has eternal life; he will not go into judging but has moved out of the death into the Life.^d

25“Most assuredly I say to you that a time is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of the God, and those who listen will live.^e **26**Because just as the Father has life in Himself, just so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; **27**furthermore He gave Him the authority to pass judgment, because He is Son of Man.^f **28**Do not marvel at this, because a time is coming in which all those in the graves will hear His voice **29**and will come out—those who did good things into the resurrection of life,^g but those who practiced evil things into the resurrection of condemnation. **30**I am not able to do anything from myself. As I hear, I judge, and my judging is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.

Four witnesses to Jesus

31“If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.^h **32**There is another who testifies about me, and I know that the testimony that He gives about me is true.ⁱ **33**You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth. **34**Yet I do not accept the testimony from a man; but I say these things so that you may be saved.^j **35**That man was a burning, shining lamp, and for a time you were willing to be glad in his light. **36**But I have a greater testimony than John’s, because the works

^a Of course someone who does not honor the Father will not honor the Son either.

^b I take it that the Lord Jesus is saying that monotheistic people (Jews, Muslims) who claim to honor the Father, but do not honor the Son, are not really doing so. (Perhaps that would not apply to those who have never heard about Jesus.)

^c Most versions render ‘hear’ instead of ‘listen’, both here and in the next verse, but from the context it seems clear that Jesus is not talking about sound striking the eardrum; He is talking about acting on the basis of what is heard.

^d “The death” refers to Satan’s kingdom; “the life” refers to Christ’s kingdom (and they are the only alternatives in this world).

^e It seems clear that the picture here is different from that in verses 28-29. Here Jesus says “now is”, so He is not talking about future judgment; so the dead here are spiritually dead, and those who listen to Him receive spiritual life. In verse 28 the reference is to the physically dead, who are raised to face the final judgment.

^f We as human beings will be judged by another human being, someone who knows what it’s like. There is no definite article with either “Son” or “Man”, so this is not the title He normally used.

^g Notice again the emphasis on doing, because what you do reflects what you **really** believe, and what you really believe is what you are—and you cannot kid God. “All those in the graves” means everyone who has died; all will be raised, and all must face the final Accounting.

^h According to the Law at least two witnesses were required, so if Jesus had only His own word it would not be enough, would not be valid (even though He told the truth).

ⁱ I take it that this witness must be the Father, since in verse 34 Jesus discounts John the Baptizer.

^j Since Jesus has three supernatural witnesses—the Father, His own works and the Scriptures—He does not need John. I do not believe Jesus was angry with John or otherwise dissatisfied with his testimony; it is just that the Jews had already rejected John’s testimony about Jesus (as they had rejected Jesus Himself). As He says, He would like for them to turn around and be saved, so He organizes His argument in that attempt.

JOHN 6

that the Father gave me to complete—the very works that I am doing—they testify about me that the Father has sent me.^a

³⁷“Further, the Father who sent me has Himself testified about me. You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time. ³⁸Nor do you have His word abiding in you,^b because you do not believe on the very one whom He sent. ³⁹You examine the Scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life, yet they are the very ones that testify about me. ⁴⁰But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.^c

The Jews are accused by Moses

⁴¹“I do not accept glory from people. ⁴²Rather I have come to know you,^d that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³I have come in my Father’s name and you do not receive me; should another come in his own name, him you will receive.^e ⁴⁴How can you believe, who receive glory from men^f and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?^g

⁴⁵“Do not suppose that I will accuse you before the Father. **Moses** is the one who accuses you, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶Because if you *really* believed Moses you would believe me, because he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But since you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my sayings?”^h

Jesus is back in Galileeⁱ

6 ¹After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, or Tiberias.^j ²And a huge crowd was following Him because they had seen His signs that He kept performing on the sick.^k ³So Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down there with His disciples.^a ⁴(Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.)^b

^a Nicodemus recognized this.

^b The Lord declares their spiritual bankruptcy. For a religious leader to have never heard God’s voice is pretty poor, but much worse is to study God’s Word without its ever finding a place in your heart.

^c Jesus had proved that He was the Messiah, but He threatened everything that they stood for.

^d That is what the Text says, “I have come to know”—presumably He is referring to knowledge gained by observation; they have clearly demonstrated in His presence that in fact they do not have God’s love.

^e Might this be a prophetic reference to the Antichrist?

^f Here I follow what I consider to be by far the best line of transmission, although attested by less than 30% of the Greek manuscripts.

^g This is serious! Apparently one’s attitude toward glory affects his ability to believe. If the approval of people is more important to you than the approval of God, you probably will not believe into Jesus.

^h The Lord is affirming the inspiration and authority of Moses’ writings; in effect He places them on a level with His own word, for which He claims eternal authority (Luke 21:33).

ⁱ Almost a whole year has elapsed between chapters 5 and 6 here. For the events that transpired during that period see Luke 6:1-9:10, Mark 2:23-6:31 and the corresponding accounts in Matthew.

^j From the parallel accounts it appears that He embarked at Capernaum. (Matthew informs us that He had just heard of the Baptizer’s ignominious death and wanted to get away—perhaps to grieve and assimilate the news.) From John 6:23 we learn that the destination was near Tiberias. Capernaum and Tiberias are both on the western side of the Sea of Galilee, but there is a large bay between them; so they went over 6-8 miles of water.

^k The crowd was not about to let Jesus get away. Mark makes clear that they ran along the shore—the faster runners stayed even with the boat and were waiting on the shore when the boat put in. The others were spread out behind for several miles (like in a marathon) and kept arriving. Any late starters would see the stragglers and could easily follow the action. Apparently He immediately started to heal the sick and went on to teach (Matthew 14:14, Mark 6:34). But just where was it? John says it was near Tiberias, but Luke 9:10 says it was “a deserted place belonging to a town called Bethsaida”. [Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “into a town called Bethsaida”

*Food for 15,000**

⁵Then, raising His eyes and observing that a huge crowd was coming toward Him, Jesus says to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread so that these folks may eat?”^d ⁶Now He said this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was about to do. ⁷Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread^e would not be enough for them, so that each of them could receive a little.” ⁸One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, says to Him, ⁹“There is a little boy here who has five loaves of barley bread and two small fish, but what are they for so many?”^f

¹⁰Then Jesus said, “Make the people recline.” Now there was plenty of grass in the place; so the men reclined, about five thousand in number. ¹¹Then Jesus took the loaves, and having given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples^g to those who were reclining; so too with the fish, as much as they wanted. ¹²So when they were full He says to His disciples, “Collect the leftover fragments so that nothing be wasted.”^h ¹³So they collected and filled twelve basketsⁱ with fragments from the five barley loaves that were left over from those who had eaten.

¹⁴Now then, having seen the miraculous sign that Jesus performed the men said, “This One really is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” ¹⁵So Jesus,

(as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which makes Luke contradict himself (verse 12 says it was a deserted place) as well as the parallel accounts.] I assume that the place was indeed near Tiberias but did indeed belong to Bethsaida—either it had been deeded to the town somehow or the family that owned it was based in Bethsaida. Any near neighbors could not use it, so it was basically untouched—a great place for a picnic.

^a Comparing the other accounts, I take it that they had already spent quite a bit of time on the beach, and the afternoon was wearing away. Since verse 6 says He knew what He was going to do, I assume it was a deliberate move to get the crowd up where there was grass so they could sit down in relative comfort.

^b I frankly do not see what connection this information has with the story, but it does give us a time frame.

^c Why 15,000? Well, Matthew 14:21 says plainly that there were about 5,000 men besides women and children. In any crowd what is there usually most of? Since the context was not one of war (where there would be mostly men) I imagine there were at least 15,000 people there (like mothers with sick children).

^d According to the other three accounts, the disciples had already suggested to Jesus that He send the people away to the surrounding towns to buy food. But let’s stop and think. How many bread stores would a village have, and how much bread would a store still have on hand at 5 p.m.? If they could have gone to every store within a radius of 30 miles, I doubt that they would have found even 10,000 loaves available. The Lord’s question shows that their suggestion was really a cop-out.

^e How much bread can you buy with the wages for 200 days of manual labor? Probably an awful lot of it. But the crowd was so huge that Philip figured that even that much would not do it. [If a day’s wage would buy 50 small loaves, for instance, that would make 10,000 loaves—more people than bread.]

^f I think it must be understood that the boy handed them over willingly, so he participated in the miracle. We also must give to God willingly, and when we do we participate in the results.

^g Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit the reference to the disciples here and have Jesus distributing directly to the crowd (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), making John contradict the other three Gospels.

^h Notice the care that nothing be wasted. A common human reaction would be, ‘easy come, easy go’—since Jesus can make more any time He wants, why worry. But no, the Lord does not look at it that way.

ⁱ They were large baskets, probably borrowed from the fishing boats (see verse 23 below). The disciples probably had help with the collecting; and in any case, they did not keep that food.

JOHN 6

perceiving that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king,^a withdrew up the mountain again by Himself, alone.

Jesus walks on water

¹⁶Now as evening came on His disciples had gone down to the sea, ¹⁷and getting into the boat they started to go across the sea toward Capernaum.^b Well it had been dark for a while and Jesus had not come to them.^c ¹⁸Further, the sea was being agitated by a strong wind blowing. ¹⁹Then, after they had rowed some three or four miles,^d they see Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat; and they were afraid. ²⁰But He said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid!”^e ²¹Then they wanted to receive Him into the boat,^f and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.^g

²²The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea,^h having seen that there was no other boat there except the one into which His disciples had entered,ⁱ and that Jesus had not gotten into the boat with His disciples but only His disciples had gone away—²³although other boats had come from Tiberias,^j near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks— ²⁴so when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats^k and went to Capernaum, looking for Jesus.^l ²⁵When

^a Only John records this information, plus what is given from verse 22 on. I take it that at least up to verse 40 Jesus is basically dealing with the ‘king-makers’.

^b When they started out, the boat would be pointing toward Capernaum / Genesaret / Bethsaida; only as they went on would it become clear that their first destination was Bethsaida (Mark 6:45).

^c This statement puzzles me. The author of this Gospel was in that boat. Did they really expect Jesus to come to them over the water? How? Evidently they did not expect Him to come walking.

^d The Text actually says ‘twenty-five or thirty stadia’. In Matthew 14:24 over 99% of the Greek manuscripts have them “in the middle of the sea”. If you draw a line from Tiberias to Bethsaida (see Mark 6:45) and put an X at four miles you will be in the middle of the widest part of the sea. Matthew further informs us that the wind was contrary and that Jesus came between 3 and 6 a.m. (the 4th watch). They had been on the water at least nine hours and most probably rowing most of that time (they were in a fishing boat, not a little rowboat). They were tired! From the parallel accounts it is clear that Jesus sent them on their way. He deliberately sent them into a difficult and trying situation. We need to understand that He may do the same with us.

^e Only Matthew records that Peter also took a little walk.

^f They were ready for some help.

^g They were still some four miles from Bethsaida, so here we have another remarkable miracle—Jesus transported the boat those four miles instantaneously. There have been repeated references to crossing the sea, so the reading of the so-called ‘critical text’ in Luke 9:10 that places the feeding of the 5,000 in the town of Bethsaida is patently ridiculous. What would motivate the editors to print such a ridiculous reading in their text?

^h These were men who stayed on the scene; I assume that they bedded down on the grass right there, waiting for Jesus to come down from the mountain—these were decision makers, and they still wanted to make Jesus king.

ⁱ Around 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “except the one into which His disciples had entered” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j The point seems to be that only one boat came with Jesus, so when it left there was no other at His disposal. The boats from Tiberias doubtless returned home for the night (the town was not far and the owners would prefer to sleep in their beds).

^k How many people could those boats carry? Probably less than a hundred, all told, but these were special people who had stayed on the scene for a reason.

^l From Matthew and Mark I gather that from Bethsaida Jesus went directly to Genesaret; verse 59 below makes clear that the men found Him in Capernaum, which was close by. So why did Jesus send the disciples to Bethsaida? Perhaps it was to give an accounting to the owner of the place where the

they found Him on another side^a of the sea they said to Him, “Rabbi, when^b did you get here?”

The Bread of Life

²⁶Jesus answered them and said: “Most assuredly I say to you, you are not seeking me because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the bread and were filled.^c ²⁷Do not work for the food that wastes away but for the food that endures into life eternal, which the Son of the Man will give you;^d because on Him God the Father has set His seal.” ²⁸So they said to Him, “What should we do so that we may work the works of God?”^e ²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe into the One whom He sent.”^f ³⁰So they said to Him: “Well then, what sign are you going to do so we may see and believe you?^g What are you going to perform? ³¹Our fathers ate the manna in the desert, just as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.’”^h

³²Then Jesus said to them: “Most assuredly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from Heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. ³³For the bread of God is the One coming down out of Heaven and giving Life to the world.”ⁱ ³⁴Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”^j ³⁵So Jesus said to them: “I am the bread of the Life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes into me will never thirst.^k ³⁶But, as I told you, you have actually seen me, yet you do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will not throw out;^l ³⁸because it is not to do my

multitude was fed—15,000 people can make quite a mess. (I suspect that Jesus had permission to use the place when He wanted to get away, but no one had foreseen such a crowd as that.)

- ^a There is no definite article with ‘other side’, since it was just across the bay, not the other side of the lake.
- ^b “When”, not “how”. Surely, they knew that Jesus could have taken a back trail through the hills and made it on foot without difficulty.
- ^c He does not answer their question but goes to the heart of their problem—they want to make Him king for purely materialistic reasons. Certain kinds of people like free food; or maybe most people do; or maybe almost everybody does.
- ^d Jesus will give the Life, but they have to work for the food that endures into that Life. So how do we “work for the food”? Most people have to work so as to have food to maintain their physical health and strength, and there are clear biblical strictures against laziness, so our Lord’s statement presumably has to do with priorities. ‘Making a living’ should not be our top priority; like Jesus, our top priority should be to do the Father’s will (Hebrews 10:7, John 4:34). What we build in ‘gold, silver, precious stones’ (1 Corinthians 3:12) will indeed “endure into” life eternal.
- ^e I do not think they listened very well; they answered according to their own ideas.
- ^f If we want to serve or please God, the first step is to believe into Jesus. After we belong to Jesus we have the privilege of participating in God’s works.
- ^g These guys are hard to believe—they had seen Jesus multiply the bread and fish; how much more of a sign did they want? They had been so impressed that they wanted to make Him king. But instead of offering free food Jesus is now demanding commitment; so they start to backpedal.
- ^h See Exodus 16:4, Nehemiah 9:15 and Psalm 78:24.
- ⁱ Jesus said that ‘bread’ ‘gives life’. Bread was their staff of life; their physical life depended on it. Similarly, our spiritual life depends on Jesus.
- ^j This seems to be a bit of a change in attitude. They are vacillating.
- ^k I have underlined ‘never’ because Jesus was very emphatic.
- ^l “All that” is in the neuter gender and presumably includes more than people; but does it exclude people? “The one who” refers only to people. Jesus will not throw you out, but you can back out, decide to turn back.

own will that I have come down out of Heaven,^a but the will of the One who sent me. ³⁹Now this is the will of the Father who sent me, that I should lose nothing out of all that He has given me, but should raise it^b up at the last day. ⁴⁰Again this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who ‘sees’ the Son and believes into Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”^c

⁴¹Then the Jews^d started complaining about Him, because He said, “I am the bread that came down out of Heaven.” ⁴²And they were saying: “Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?”^e So how can he say, ‘I have come down out of Heaven’?”^f

⁴³So Jesus answered and said to them: “Stop complaining among yourselves. ⁴⁴No one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,^g and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’^h Therefore everyone who listens and learns from the Father comes to me.ⁱ ⁴⁶(Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God—He has seen the Father.) ⁴⁷Most assuredly I say to you: the one believing into me^j has eternal life.

⁴⁸‘I am the bread of the Life.’^k ⁴⁹Your fathers ate manna in the desert, and they died.^l ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down out of Heaven, so that anyone may

^a Here we have a plain statement: “I have come down out of Heaven”. We can either accept it or reject it: those who say that Jesus was merely a good man are rejecting it.

^b The manuscript evidence is badly divided here, but I take it that the best line of transmission has “it” rather than “him” (neuter rather than masculine)—in the preceding clause, “nothing out of all” is definitely neuter. The ‘problem’ is the verb “raise”—if it is taken as raising the dead then the direct object should be masculine. But “raise” is much more general in use, being used for erecting a building, lifting something up, etc. There is a contrast between verse 39 (things) and verse 40 (people). Verse 39 joins other passages that indicate that during the Millennium the earth will be restored to conditions reminiscent of Eden (compare Romans 8:19-22).

^c Since only His contemporaries could see Jesus physically, everyone else has to ‘see’ Him spiritually. But in verse 36 the Lord says that even though they were seeing Him physically, they were not believing—so even for the contemporaries the ‘seeing’ had to be spiritual. Jesus Himself will raise up His followers.

^d I take it that up to verse 40 Jesus has been interacting with the ‘king makers’. The “Jews” here probably represent the ruling hierarchy—since Jesus was in the synagogue there were others present besides the ‘king makers’.

^e I wonder why they refer to Joseph’s parents. Of course they were assuming that Jesus was in fact Joseph’s son.

^f Notice that they understood clearly that Jesus was claiming that He had come down out of Heaven.

^g As Jesus pointed out to Nicodemus (see note at John 3:6), without God’s direct participation, no one is saved. But see the next verse.

^h See Isaiah 54:13.

ⁱ In verse 44 Jesus emphasizes God’s sovereignty; here He emphasizes human responsibility. We can ‘listen and learn’, and then ‘come’. But in what sense is everyone “taught by God”? Everyone has the light of creation and is born with a conscience, at least. Perhaps there are other ways that God ‘teaches’.

^j About 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “into me” (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.). But the object of one’s belief is of the essence; it is impossible to live without believing in something, so everyone believes. The reading of the so-called ‘critical text’ opens the door to universalism—the more so since the Lord is making a formal statement about how to be saved.

^k Since the Lord is obviously not claiming to be a loaf of literal bread, this is a figure of speech, a metaphor. Bread was their staff of life; they could not live without it. Jesus is our spiritual ‘staff of life’; we cannot live spiritually without Him.

^l I take it that this statement is in response to theirs in verse 31 above.

eat of it and not die.^a **51** I am the living bread which came down out of Heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. Actually, the bread that I will give is my flesh,^b which I will give on behalf of the life of the world.”^c

Chew flesh, drink blood

52 At that the Jews started quarrelling among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?!”^d **53** So Jesus said to them: “Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of the Man and drink His blood, you do not have Life within yourselves. **54** Whoever chews^e my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,^f and I will raise him up at the last day. **55** Really, my flesh is genuine food and my blood is genuine drink. **56** Whoever chews my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.^g **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so also the one who feeds^h on me will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down out of Heaven. Whoever feeds on this bread of mine will live forever (in contrast to your fathers who ate the manna and died).ⁱ **59** He said these things while teaching in a synagogue in Capernaum.

Jesus loses many followers

60 Therefore, upon hearing this many from among His disciples said: “This word is hard! Who is able to hear it?” **61** So Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were complaining about this, said to them: “Does this offend you? **62** What if you should see the Son of the Man going up to where He was at first?” **63** The Spirit is the One who makes alive; the flesh does not benefit anything. The words that I speak to you are spirit, are Life. **64** But there are some among you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the start who they were who did not believe, and who was betraying Him.) **65** And He said, “That is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father.”^k

^a Verse 49 presumably refers to physical death, while verse 50 refers to spiritual death. Notice the “anyone may eat”; this is an open invitation.

^b I take it that He is referring to His physical body, which represents the incarnation, with all that involved.

^c “The life of the world”—wow! Well, according to Romans 8:19-23 the whole creation is groaning, waiting for redemption.

^d They were being strictly literal, which could not be right—if they had started cutting Him up right there, they would have killed Him, and only those physically present could have eaten and drunk.

^e The verb here is different from the “eat” in verse 53. The verb here would typically be used of a cow munching fodder, but fodder is usually crunchy, so the munching is noisy. Because “munch” suggests noise, I have rendered “chew”. In verse 56 chewing is linked to abiding, something we need to do every day.

^f The Roman Church takes this literally when they claim that during their Mass the priest actually converts the elements into flesh and blood (transubstantiation). But since John repeatedly records that it is by believing into Jesus, or His name, that one receives eternal life, then we should understand the eating and drinking here as metaphoric.

^g This reciprocal abiding takes place in the spiritual realm.

^h This is the same verb rendered “chew” above.

ⁱ Many of those who died in the wilderness died in rebellion against God, so the “died” here may refer to spiritual death as well.

^j I find this question to be curious. How does it apply to what He has been saying?

^k Verse 54 emphasizes human responsibility; verse 65 emphasizes divine sovereignty.

JOHN 7

⁶⁶From that time many of His disciples turned back and stopped going around with Him.^a ⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?” ⁶⁸So Simon Peter answered Him: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹Further, we have come to believe and to know that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!”^b ⁷⁰He said to them: “Did I myself not choose you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.”^c ⁷¹He was referring to Judas Iscariot, *son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.

Passover, 29 AD

7 ¹After these things Jesus continued to move about in Galilee,^d since He did not wish to move about in Judea because the Jews were wanting to kill Him.^e

Jesus and His brothers

²Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was near. ³So His brothers said to Him: “Leave here and go up into Judea so your disciples also^f may see the works that you are doing, ⁴because no one does anything in secret while he actually wants to be in evidence. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world!” ⁵For not even His brothers were believing into Him.^g

⁶So Jesus says to them: “My time is not here yet, but your time is always available.^h ⁷The world cannot hate you, but does hate me, because I testify about it that its works are malignant.ⁱ ⁸You guys go up to this feast; I am not going up yet^j to this feast, because my time has not yet fully come.” ⁹So upon saying these things to them He stayed on in Galilee.^k

^a It is possible that Jesus used the language that He did deliberately, precisely to reduce the number of ‘hangers-on’. Too many people hanging around would get in the way, reduce efficiency.

^b Instead of “the Christ, the Son of the Living god”, perhaps 0.5% of the Greek MSS, of objectively inferior quality, read ‘the Holy One of God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)—obviously an inferior reading.

^c The root meaning of ‘devil’ is ‘slanderer’: presumably Judas was a human being, so Jesus was not calling him a literal demon.

^d All of chapter six took place in Galilee, so why make a point of Jesus’ continuing there? 6:4 says that the Passover was near, but 7:2 says that the Feast of Tabernacles was near—that is six months later. As a God-fearing male, Jesus had to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, so He must have gone, although none of the Gospels records it. I take it that He went without calling attention to Himself, and returned immediately to Galilee, for the reason given in the second half of the verse.

^e Between 6:71 and 7:2 six months elapsed. For events that occurred during that period see Matthew 15:1-18:35, Mark 7:1-9:50 and Luke 9:18-50.

^f These would have to be dwellers in Judea who were not following Jesus around. Since His statement about eating His flesh, the number of hangers-on was drastically reduced, giving the impression that He was losing popularity in Galilee.

^g Well now, those brothers were not very nice, were they? I take it that they knew very well that the hierarchy was plotting to kill Jesus (it seems to me obvious that the Jews had researched Jesus’ past and family, and had doubtless been working on His brothers), so they were trying to send Him to His death. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

^h I assume that He meant that they could repent and believe into Him at any time.

ⁱ If we raise the standard of biblical values in the public arena, calling a spade a spade, the world will hate us too—try it and see!

^j Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “yet” (as in NASB, TEV, RSV, etc.). The reading of the so-called ‘critical’ text has the effect of ascribing a falsehood to Jesus, since He did in fact go to the feast (and doubtless knew what He was going to do). Among the 97% are P^{66,75} and B—since the UBS editors usually attach the highest value to P⁷⁵ and B, isn’t it strange that they reject them in this case?

^k That is, His brothers started out on their way to Jerusalem and Jesus stayed behind, for the moment.

Jesus leaves Galilee—the last six months of His public ministry

¹⁰Now when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He too went up, not openly but in secret like. ¹¹So the Jews were looking for Him at the feast and saying, “Where is he?” ¹²And there was a lot of murmuring about Him among the crowds. Some were saying, “He is good”; others were saying, “On the contrary, he’s deceiving the people.” ¹³However, no one was talking openly about Him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus teaches in the Temple

¹⁴Now when the feast was already half over Jesus went up into the temple and started to teach. ¹⁵And the Jews were marveling saying, “How is this man learned, not having been educated?”^a ¹⁶So Jesus answered them and said: “What I teach is not mine, but His who sent me.”^b ¹⁷If anyone wants to do His will,^c he will know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. ¹⁸Someone who speaks on his own is seeking his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Moses versus the Jews

¹⁹“Did not Moses give you the Law? And yet not one of you keeps the Law! Why do you want to kill me?” ²⁰The crowd answered and said, “You *must* have a demon! Who wants to kill you?”^d

²¹Jesus answered and said to them: “I did one work, and you all marvel. ²²Consider this: Moses gave you circumcision (not that it comes from Moses, but from the patriarchs),^e and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the Law of Moses won’t be broken, are you angry at me because I made a whole man^f well on the Sabbath?^g ²⁴Stop judging on the basis of appearances, but judge the righteous judgment.”

Public opinion divided

²⁵Now some of the Jerusalemites were saying: “Isn’t this the man they are wanting to kill? ²⁶Yet look! He is speaking openly and they are saying nothing to Him. Could it be true that the rulers know that this is really the Christ? ²⁷On the

^a That is, He had never been to a recognized theological seminary, rabbinical school, or whatever. But He knew more than they did! (Which of course was hard for them to swallow.)

^b Jesus is evidently aware of what they are saying or thinking, since He addresses it.

^c If we want to **do**, we will know. The Lord did not say, if we just want to know—we have to be committed to obey before we know what the order is. Once we are committed to obey, it is in God’s own interest to talk to us.

^d The ‘crowd’ is made up of common people who are not in the know with a sprinkling of Pharisee types, the bosses. Jesus is really addressing the bosses, but the common people don’t get it.

^e It started with Abraham, 430 years before Moses.

^f The Lord seems to be contrasting circumcision, which involves only a small part of the body, with His healing, which involved the whole body.

^g Hey, the last healing on a Sabbath in Jerusalem, as recorded by John, happened a year and a half ago! In fact, none of the four Gospels records any activity by Jesus in Jerusalem during the year and a half since John 5. Jesus seems to be implying that they are still mad about that!

other hand, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ comes nobody knows where He is from.”^a

²⁸So Jesus called out in the temple, teaching and saying: “You do know me, and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the One who sent me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹I do know Him because I am from Him, and He sent me.”^b ³⁰So they tried to arrest Him, yet no one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come.

³¹Now many of the crowd were believing into Him, and they were saying, “Whenever the Christ comes He won’t perform more signs than these which this man has done, will He?” ³²The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about Him, so the Pharisees and the chief priests sent operatives to arrest Him.

³³Then Jesus said: “For a little while I am still with you, and then I go to the One who sent me. ³⁴You will look for me and not find me; also, where I am you cannot come.”^c ³⁵So the Jews said among themselves: “Where does this fellow intend to go that we won’t find him? He doesn’t intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does he? ³⁶What word is this that he spoke, ‘You will look for me and not find me’; also, ‘where I am you cannot come?’”

The last day of the Feast

³⁷Now on the last and most important day of the Feast, Jesus stood up and called out saying: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸The one believing into me, just as the Scripture has said, out from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.”^d ³⁹(Now He said this about the Spirit, whom those believing into Him were going to receive,^e in that the Holy Spirit had not yet been *given* because Jesus had not yet been glorified.)

⁴⁰So upon hearing this word many from the crowd began to say, “This One really is ‘the Prophet!’” ⁴¹Others were saying, “This One is the Christ!” Others were saying: “Surely the Christ isn’t coming out of Galilee, is He? ⁴²Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Christ comes out of the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”^f ⁴³So there developed a division in the crowd be-

^a If no one could know where the Messiah came from, how come the rulers were able to tell Herod that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem? The people had bought into a false idea. Verses 25-27 presumably record bits from various speakers.

^b The Lord is very emphatic about His heavenly origin. Of course the Jews want to be rid of Him because He most definitely is not fitting into their scheme of things. I take it that there is divine intervention at work so they are not able to arrest Him.

^c “Where I am”—that is what the Text says. I imagine that the idea is the same as in John 3:13, “who is in Heaven”. He has just said in verse 33 that He is going back to Heaven. So, He is telling those Jewish leaders that they cannot go to Heaven!

^d Just where does the Scripture say this, and why “rivers” (pl); wouldn’t one be enough? Reference Bibles will give a variety of suggestions, none of which really fit. I personally believe that the reference is to Ezekiel 47:1-12, and most especially to verse 9 where the Hebrew text has two rivers (or torrents)—when that river got to the Dead Sea it evidently divided, so as to go along both banks at once. Living water takes life and health wherever it goes. So how much living water is flowing out of me, or you? The secret of that water is given in verse 12: “their water flows from the sanctuary” (compare 1 Corinthians 6:19).

^e When you believe into Jesus you receive the Holy Spirit.

^f I smell a rat. In verse 27 above they claimed that no one knew where the Christ was coming from; now here they say it is Bethlehem. I suspect that there were people planted in the crowd whose job it was to create confusion, and they felt no obligation to tell the truth.

cause of Him. ⁴⁴Further, some of them were wanting to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him.

The operatives are empty-handed

⁴⁵Then the operatives came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why haven’t you brought him?” ⁴⁶The operatives answered, “No man ever spoke like this man!” ⁴⁷So the Pharisees answered them: “You haven’t been fooled too, have you? ⁴⁸None of the rulers or the Pharisees have believed into him, have they? ⁴⁹But this crowd that doesn’t know the law is accursed!”

⁵⁰Nicodemus (the one who came to Him at night, being one of them) says to them, ⁵¹“Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing, does it?” ⁵²They answered and said to him: “You aren’t from Galilee too, are you? Search and see that no prophet has ever arisen out of Galilee.”^a ⁵³So each one went to his own house.^b

The Light of the world at work

8 ¹Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.^c ²And at dawn He went again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; so sitting down He started to

^a A bit of an overstatement—Jonah was from Gath Hepher of Zebulun, north of Natsareth (2 Kings 14:25).

^b Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts omit 7:53-8:11, including most of the early ones; but that means that 85% contain it, including the Latin tradition that dates from the 2nd century. Assuming (for the sake of the argument) that the passage is spurious, how could it ever have intruded here, and to such effect that it is attested by some 85% of the MSS? Let’s try to read the larger passage without these verses—we must go from 7:52 to 8:12 directly. Reviewing the context, the chief priests and Pharisees had sent officers to arrest Jesus, to no avail; a ‘discussion’ ensues; Nicodemus makes a point, to which the Pharisees answer:

(7:52) “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”
(8:12) Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world...”

What is the antecedent of “them”, and what is the meaning of “again”? By the normal rules of grammar, if 7:53-8:11 is missing then “them” must refer to the “Pharisees” and “again” means that there has already been at least one prior exchange. But, 7:45 makes clear that Jesus **was not there** with the Pharisees. Thus, UBS [the ‘critical’ text] introduces an aberration. And yet, Metzger claims that the passage “interrupts the sequence of 7.52 and 8.12 ff.” (p. 220)! To look for the antecedents of 8:12 in 7:37-39 not only does despite to the syntax but also runs afoul of 8:13—“the Pharisees” respond to Jesus’ claim in verse 12, but “the Pharisees” are somewhere else, 7:45-52 (if the Pericope is absent).

Metzger also claims that “the style and vocabulary of the pericope differ noticeably from the rest of the Fourth Gospel”—but, would not the native speakers of Greek at that time have been in a better position than modern critics to notice something like that? So how could they allow such an “extraneous” passage to be forced into the text? I submit that the evident answer is that they did not; it was there all the time. I also protest their use of brackets here. Since the editors clearly regard the passage to be spurious they should be consistent and delete it, as do NEB and Williams. That way the full extent of their error would be open for all to see. Unfortunately, NIV, NASB, NRSV, Berkeley and TEV also use brackets to question the legitimacy of this passage.

But why was the story omitted? Leading church father and theologian, Augustine (about A.D. 430), answers: “Certain persons of little faith, or rather enemies of the true faith, fearing, I suppose, lest their wives should be given impunity in sinning, removed from their manuscripts the Lord’s acts of forgiveness toward the adulteress, as if He who said ‘sin no more’ had granted permission to sin.” (See Augustine, “Adulterous Marriages” [2.7] trans. by Charles T. Huegelmeier, in *Saint Augustine: Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects* [New York: Fathers of the Church, 1955], p. 107.) [I took this material on Augustine from *Living Water: The Gospel of John—Logos 21 Version*, Absolutely Free Incorporated, p. 74.]

^c There is a basic three-way split in the manuscript attestation for these twelve verses (7:53-8:11)—the three major groups represent three lines of transmission that are both ancient and independent. It follows that where two agree against one, the two presumably retain the original reading. In these verses there are 25 places where two groups agree against one, six others where 2½ agree against ½, and just

JOHN 8

teach them.

A dirty deal

³Then the scribes and the Pharisees bring to Him a woman caught in adultery; and placing her in the center ⁴they say to Him: “Teacher, we found this woman committing adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now in our law Moses commanded that such women are to be stoned;^a so what do you say?” ⁶They said this to test Him, so that they might have an accusation against Him.

But stooping down^b Jesus began to write on the ground with His finger, taking no notice. ⁷But since they kept on asking Him, straightening up He said to them, “Let the one without sin among you throw the first stone at her.” ⁸And stooping down again He continued writing on the ground.^c ⁹Now upon hearing *this*, and being convicted by their conscience, they began to go out one by one, starting with the older ones down to the least. So only Jesus was left, with the woman in the center.^d

¹⁰So straightening up, and not seeing anyone except the woman, Jesus said to her: “Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹So she said, “No one, Lord.” Jesus said to her: “Neither do I condemn you.^e Go, and from now on don’t sin any more!”

Jesus dialogs with the Pharisees

¹²Then Jesus spoke to them again,^f saying: “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk around in the darkness,^g but will have the light of the Life.”^h ¹³So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about yourself; your testimony is not valid.” ¹⁴Jesus answered and said to them: “Even though I testify about myself, my testimony is valid, because I know where I came from and where I am going.ⁱ But you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵You are judging according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judging is valid, in that I am not alone *in judging*, but I and the Father who sent me *are together*. ¹⁷It is written precisely in your law that the

one place where each of the three major groups has its own reading. It happens that one of the three groups is always in the majority (in the 31 places), so it is the only one that is always right in those 31 places—so in the one place where there is a three-way split I follow that group, because it has the best credibility quotient.

^a According to Leviticus 20:10 **both** the man and the woman were to be executed—so where is the man? This was obviously a put-up job; if they got her “in the act” the man was probably one of them. Those guys were dirty!

^b Recall that He is sitting, so He just bends forward so as to reach the ground.

^c A small minority of the manuscripts completes the verse with “the sins of each one of them”. I, for one, would like to know what Jesus wrote, and I wouldn’t be surprised if He wrote just that, but I take it that John did not record that phrase.

^d The center of what? The center of the crowd—the accusers had all left, but the crowd wasn’t going any place! They hadn’t seen a show like this for a long time!

^e Jesus was not even a witness, and it required at least two witnesses to condemn; so of course He could not condemn her. But He makes clear that He does not condone her behavior.

^f “Them” refers to the crowd, and “again” means that He resumes His teaching after having been so rudely interrupted. The interruption occupies verses 3-11, so we are referred back to verse 2.

^g “The darkness” = Satan’s kingdom.

^h There is a certain secret society that requires a candidate to declare that he is coming out of darkness in search of light. A Christian who does this is formally denying Jesus.

ⁱ An interesting argument—why would His knowing His origin and destination validate His witness? I imagine that He is really referring to His identity; as God His witness is always valid.

testimony of two men is valid: ¹⁸I am one testifying concerning myself and the Father who sent me testifies concerning me.” ¹⁹Then they said to Him, “Where is your father?”^a Jesus answered: “You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me you would also know my Father.” ²⁰Jesus spoke these words in the treasury, while teaching in the temple; yet no one arrested Him, because His time had not yet come.^b

“you will die in your sins”

²¹Then Jesus said to them again: “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going you cannot come.”^c ²²So the Jews said, “He won’t kill himself, will he, since he says, ‘Where I am going you cannot come?’”^d ²³He said to them: “You are from below; I am from Above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”^e ²⁴That is why I told you that you will die in your sins, because if you do not believe that I am,^f you will die in your sins.”^g ²⁵So they said to Him, “Who are you?” And Jesus said to them: “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. ²⁶I have many things to say and to judge about you, but He who sent me is true, and what I myself have heard from Him—these things I say to the world.”^h ²⁷They did not understand that He was speaking to them about the Father.ⁱ ²⁸Then Jesus said to them: “When you lift up the Son of the Man, then you will know that I am^j and that I do nothing from myself; but just as my Father has taught me, these things I speak. ²⁹And the One who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, because I always do the things that please Him.”^k

^a Their question is reasonable. Since Jesus is adducing His Father as a witness they want to know where they can find Him, to confirm the witness. But Jesus does not give a direct answer, as He usually did not, when dealing with Pharisees.

^b Supernatural intervention is implied.

^c I wonder if the Lord is not referring to two future stages, short and long range. Since there are still six months to go until His death, He will go away from Jerusalem (He divided those six months between Judea and Perea) and they will be looking for Him, to kill Him. That is the short range. Long range—since they will not repent they will die lost and so not go to Heaven.

^d But of course they could kill themselves too, and would die sooner or later in any case, so they would be together in Hades (on that hypothesis).

^e Here we have a plain statement.

^f Most versions supply a ‘He’, making the phrase “I am He”; but the Text just has “I am”. Any Jew would immediately think of Jehovah calling Himself ‘I am’. Having just said that He was from Above, and not of this world, it seems to me clear that Jesus is claiming to be Jehovah—but they just do not want to get the point.

^g To “die in your sins” is to be spiritually lost. If they do not recognize Him as the Messiah, they are lost. They have already seen more than enough evidence, but have rejected it; since Jesus knows that they are not going to turn around, He states that they are lost. (Here it is ‘sins’ (pl) while in verse 21 it is ‘sin’ (sg); if a difference is intended I don’t know what it is.)

^h Again, Jesus links His teaching directly to the Father.

ⁱ But they should have—their blind spot may have been the result of supernatural interference. (In John 5:17-18 they had already understood that He was making Himself equal with God.)

^j With the supernatural darkness from 12:00 to 3:00, the earthquake, the torn veil, and later the report of the guards at the tomb, they would know for sure that they had crucified the Messiah. But they would not (perhaps could not) repent. Their doom was sealed.

^k Presumably if we always did the things that please the Father He would not leave us alone either. I suspect that when we choose to do wrong the Father lets us fend for ourselves.

“the Truth will make you free”

³⁰While He was saying these things many believed into Him. ³¹So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed Him: “If you abide in my word, you really are my disciples;^a ³²and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free.”^b ³³They answered and said to Him: “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’”^c ³⁴Jesus answered them: “I tell you most assuredly that everyone committing sin is a slave of sin.^d ³⁵Now the slave does not remain in the household forever; the son does remain forever.^e ³⁶Therefore, if the Son should make you free, you really will be free. ³⁷I know that you are descendants of Abraham, but you are wanting to kill me because my word finds no place in you.^f ³⁸On my part, I speak what I have observed with my Father, while on your part you do what you have observed with your father.”^g

“your father is the devil”

³⁹They answered and said to Him, “Our father is Abraham!” Jesus says to them: “If you were children of Abraham, you would do the works of Abraham; ⁴⁰but now you are wanting to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God.^h This *sort of thing* Abraham did not do! ⁴¹You do the works of your father.” Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication;ⁱ we have one Father—God.”^j ⁴²So Jesus said to them: “If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came forth from God and I am here.^k Further, I have not come

^a So what happens if we don't abide in His Word? And how can you abide in something that doesn't exist (for you)? There are still thousands of languages spoken in the world that do not have even one verse of the Bible translated into them. How can speakers of such languages be true disciples of Jesus? I have actually heard some who claim they have been 'baptized in the Spirit' say they don't need the Bible, because the Holy Spirit speaks to them directly. Now why would the Holy Spirit speak to someone who disagrees with the Lord Jesus? In this connection, notice especially John 16:14-15.

^b Free from what? Free from self, free from sin.

^c The ones who were believing were sprinkled throughout the crowd, but Jesus' opponents were still in the front row. I assume from verse 37 that it is the opponents who speak here in verse 33. They conveniently forget that they are under the Roman yoke.

^d Apart from Jesus Christ every human being is a slave of sin. The only way out is to become a slave of Jesus Christ. The only true freedom available in this life is through submission to Him.

^e A son becomes part of the genealogical record, a slave does not. Some versions capitalize “Son” here (as in the next verse), but I take it that Jesus is making a generic statement. However, in verse 36 it must be “Son”, because “make you free” is plural, referring to His hearers.

^f Their hearts were closed against His message. He was demanding a change of world view.

^g Jesus has affirmed several times that He could observe the Father, but in what sense could the Jews observe Satan? Our Lord's statement makes me curious. Perhaps the Jews were doing what they saw Satan doing (rather than seeing him physically). Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts have 'heard from' rather than “observed with”.

^h Here Jesus identifies clearly the source of His teaching: ‘my Father’ equals ‘God’.

ⁱ The Jews had doubtless done exhaustive research on Jesus. They knew that He was born within six months after the wedding of Joseph and Mary, and that He was born full size. [Recall that Jesus had been rejected by the people of Natsareth, so there were plenty of people who would be happy to ‘spill the beans’.] Assuming, as they did, that the father was human, whether Joseph himself or someone else, Jesus would be the result of fornication. So they here throw that information in Jesus' face.

^j Since Jesus has rejected their claim to Abraham, they now claim God!

^k As John will write later, “he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20). So anyone who loved the Father (not having seen Him) would certainly love the Son who was physically present and visible. Jesus keeps reiterating His divine origin.

on my own, but He sent me. ⁴³Why don't you understand what I say?—because you are not able to *really* hear my word.^a ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil,^b and it is the desires of your father that you want to do. He was a murderer^c from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him.^d Whenever he speaks the lie he speaks from his own things, because he is a liar and the father of *lying*.^e ⁴⁵But since I speak the truth you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which of you convicts me of sin?^f So if I speak the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷The one who is of God hears God's words; that is why you do not hear, because you are not of God."^g

⁴⁸So the Jews answered and said to Him, "We say that you are a Samaritan and have a demon^h—are we wrong?" ⁴⁹Jesus answered: "I do not have a demon; rather, I honor my Father, while you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my glory; there is One who seeks and judges. ⁵¹Most assuredly I say to you, if anyone should keep my word he will never ever see death."ⁱ

"before Abraham was, I AM"

⁵²So the Jews said to Him: "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died and so did the prophets; yet you say, 'If anyone should keep my word he will never ever taste death!' ⁵³Surely you aren't greater than our father Abraham, who died?^j And the prophets are dead. Who do you make yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴Jesus answered: "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'^k ⁵⁵Yet you have not known Him, but I do know Him. And if I should say that I do not know Him I would be a liar just like

^a Their 'father' had blinded their minds (2 Corinthians 4:4). Those Jewish leaders were "sons of the disobedience" if there ever were any, and Satan is actively at work in such people (Ephesians 2:2).

^b 1 John 3:8 makes clear that in fact Satan has lots of other 'children'.

^c They want to murder Jesus, showing thereby that they are worthy sons of their father. Satan instigated the death of the first couple, and may have influenced Cain to kill Abel.

^d If there is no truth in Satan then I conclude that it is impossible for him to tell the whole, undistorted truth. He may tell a partial truth, etc., but always with the intent to deceive.

^e So whenever we tell a lie we are doing Satan's thing. And whenever we accept a lie (like evolutionism, Marxism, Freudianism, humanism, relativism, etc.) we give Satan a foothold in our minds, which he usually turns into a stronghold.

^f I suppose that the point here is that if they could point to any sin in His life this would raise a question about His character, and therefore about His credibility. But since they can't, His character is above question; so they should believe Him.

^g Here is another plain statement.

^h A lot of people heard Jesus say that the leaders were not of God but of the devil. They did not want to swallow that in silence but they could not refute Him either, so they resort to 'ad hominum' argument.

ⁱ The Lord is unusually emphatic here. He is evidently referring to spiritual death, but the Jews took it as referring to physical death. Notice that He said "keep my word"—again the emphasis is on commitment and obedience.

^j Of course He was greater than Abraham, but they were wearing spiritual blinders.

^k They have been refusing to understand repeated hints, so here Jesus makes a flat statement: His Father is God, Jehovah. Perhaps 30% of the Greek manuscripts have 'your God', making it an indirect quote.

JOHN 9

you (pl);^a but I do know Him and I keep His word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day;^b yes, he saw it and rejoiced.”

⁵⁷So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old,^c and you have seen Abraham?!” ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM!”^d ⁵⁹Then they picked up stones to throw at Him;^e but Jesus was concealed^f and went out of the temple, going through the middle of them; yes, that is how He got away!

The man born blind

9 ¹Now as He was passing by He saw a man blind from birth. ²And His disciples asked Him saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, in that he was born blind?”^g ³Jesus answered: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but so that the works of God might be displayed in him.^h ⁴I must accomplish the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”ⁱ

The man is healed

⁶Upon saying these things He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud on the blind man’s eyes.^k ⁷And He said to him, “Go

^a Their father is a liar; they are liars. Rather than being conciliatory, Jesus is definitely aggressive. If any of them are to be saved they have to start on the basis of abject surrender.

^b What day was that? I suppose He is referring to the time that He, Jehovah the Son (the Angel of Jehovah), paid Abraham a personal visit. From the Record it is clear that Abraham knew very well that he was talking with Jehovah. Don’t you know that was the high point in Abraham’s life! Hey, just stop and think about what happened.

^c This statement intrigues me. Jesus was thirty-three, and they had researched His past, so why did they say ‘fifty’? Could it be that Jesus looked older than He was? I wonder if the heavy pressures of His life style and ministry did not take a toll on His physical body, making Him prematurely gray, as it were.

^d Here Jesus is openly, unmistakably claiming to be Jehovah. They are obliged to get the point, and not wanting to acknowledge Him they pick up stones. At this point to argue, as some have done, that Jesus was merely a good, moral man won’t wash. Either He was God, as He claimed; or He was a charlatan, a megalomaniac; or He was demonized. The Jews at that time took the third option: I take the first.

^e Since certain situations demanded a stoning, there were doubtless piles of ammunition placed strategically around the temple premises.

^f The familiar “hid Himself” is not the best rendering here. Jesus did not try to hide behind a pillar, or whatever. Obviously they would have seen Him and started stoning. He became invisible and simply walked out, passing right through the middle of them. About half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “going through the middle of them; yes, that’s how He got away” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 99.5% are doubtless correct, and supply an important detail.

^g Wait a minute—if being born blind was the result of the man’s own sin (as they suggest), when did he commit it? In any case, Jesus rejects their basic premise.

^h Wow! Did you get that? Jesus is saying that it was part of the Plan—the man was born blind so that the Messiah could come along years later and give him sight. (Does that fit anywhere in your theology?)

ⁱ Perhaps half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “we” for “I” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Virtually the same handful of manuscripts also has “Him who sent us” (in this verse), but none of the versions mentioned goes along—a curious proceeding.

^j In Matthew 5:14 Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world”—so as long as we are here there is light, and so it isn’t night yet. We had better get on with accomplishing the Father’s works.

^k How unhygienic! The dirt in the street or road would be mixed with manure and all sorts of other contaminants, and human saliva is worse than a dog’s. So why did Jesus do it? I don’t know. Apparently it was part of His game plan to use a variety of procedures. There are cultures today where the shamans use saliva to heal, and to them this incident is especially significant.

wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, ‘Sent’). So he went and washed, and came away seeing!

⁸Then the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind^a started saying, “Isn’t this the man who sat begging?” ⁹Others said, “This is he”; still others, “He is like him.” He kept saying, “I’m the one!”

¹⁰So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered and said: “A man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed, I saw!” ¹²Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He says, “I don’t know.”

The man is excommunicated

¹³They bring the man who was formerly blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴(Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes.)^b ¹⁵So once again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. So he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”^c ¹⁶Then some of the Pharisees said, “This man cannot be from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath,”^d Others were saying, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they address the blind man again, “What do you say about him, in that he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”^e

¹⁸However the Jews did not believe concerning him that he was blind and received sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had received sight. ¹⁹And they asked them saying: “Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰So his parents answered them and said: “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹but by what means he now sees we don’t know, or who opened his eyes we don’t know. He is of age. Ask him. He will speak for himself.” ²²His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, because the Jews had already agreed that if anyone confessed Him to be Christ he would be barred from the synagogue.^f ²³That is why his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So they summoned the man who had been blind a second time and said to him: “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵So he answered and said: “That He is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that having been blind I now see!”^g ²⁶So they said to him again: “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”^h ²⁷He answered them: “I already told you and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become His disciples

^a Instead of “blind”, perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘a beggar’, as in most modern versions.

^b 7:37 says “the last day of the feast”, which was Tuesday, Oct. 17, 29 (I believe). Chapter 8 took place the next day, Wednesday. Here we are told that the healing of the blind man happened on a Saturday. Since we are still in Jerusalem (verse 7—Siloam is there), it may well have been the first Saturday after the events of chapter 8.

^c The man’s answer is almost rude in its brevity. I don’t think he liked the Pharisees.

^d Of course they were defining the terms—it was the rules they had imposed on the Sabbath that were not being kept.

^e He is being cautious. I conclude from the context that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, but like his parents he was aware of the risk involved (verse 22).

^f In their culture, to be barred from the synagogue was to be socially ostracized.

^g Beautiful!

^h The poor Jews are in a pickle. The fact of an extraordinary work of creation (giving sight where there never was any) won’t go away, yet they refuse to acknowledge the obvious explanation. [Sort of like the ‘scientists’ of our day who refuse to acknowledge the Creator.]

too, do you?” ²⁸They reviled him and said: “You are that fellow’s disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. ²⁹We know that God spoke to Moses; but this fellow—we don’t know where he’s from.”^a ³⁰The man answered and said to them: “Why, this is remarkable—you don’t know where He is from; yet He opened my eyes! ³¹Now we know that God doesn’t listen to sinners;^b but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, to him He listens. ³²Since time began it was never heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind.^c ³³If this man were not from God he would not be able to do anything.” ³⁴They answered and said to him, “You were totally born in sins, and you are teaching us?” And they expelled him.^d

³⁵Jesus heard that they had expelled him, and finding him He said to him, “Do you believe into the Son of God?”^e ³⁶He answered and said, “And who is He, Lord, that I may believe into Him?” ³⁷So Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and He is the One who is speaking with you.” ³⁸So he said, “Lord, I believe!” And he worshipped Him. ³⁹And Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see, and those who ‘see’ may become blind.”^f

⁴⁰And some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words and said to Him, “We aren’t blind too, are we?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them: “If you were ‘blind’ you would not have sin. But now you say, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.”^g

Jesus the Shepherd

A true shepherd

10 ¹“Most assuredly I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is a shepherd^a of the sheep. ³To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and

^a Not precisely true.

^b He knew his Bible—Psalms 66:18.

^c Jesus had already restored sight to many blind people, but evidently this was the first instance of giving sight to one born blind, congenitally blind. No one challenged the man’s statement. The man’s argument here is very strong; irrefutable, in fact.

^d The Pharisees here demonstrate their moral and intellectual bankruptcy. They couldn’t answer the man, he had bested them fair and square, so they resort to the cowardly tactic of expelling him. (“Totally born in sins”—like the disciples, the Pharisees figured there was a lot of sin involved, for the man to be born blind.)

^e Less than 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “Man” instead of “God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f In verse 5 of this chapter Jesus declared Himself to be “the Light of the world”. Light enables people to see—“so that those who do not see may see”. But too much light blinds—“and those who ‘see’ may become blind”. The Pharisees had ‘spies’ dogging Jesus wherever He went, and they speak up in the next verse (40). Romans 2:17-20 explains their attitude:

Look, you declare yourself a Jew, and rest on the Law, and boast in God, 18 and know the Will, and approve the superior things, being instructed out of the Law. 19 Further, you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth. [“The embodiment of knowledge and truth” is an excellent description of the Scriptures.]

The light of the Law enabled them to see, up to a point, but the Light that Jesus offered blinded them, since they did not want to acknowledge it.

^g According to Romans 5:13, “sin is not imputed where there is no law”, because it is the Law that defines what sin is (Romans 3:20). So those who are without the light of the Law are ‘blind’ in that sense, and their sin is not imputed. In contrast, the Pharisees prided themselves on having the light of the Law, to the point of being guides to the blind, but since they themselves did not obey the Law, their sin remained.

leads them out. ⁴And whenever he takes out his own sheep he goes ahead of them,^b and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will not follow a stranger; rather they will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶Jesus gave them this illustration, but they did not understand what He was telling them.

The Door

⁷Then Jesus addressed them again: “Most assuredly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers,^c but the sheep did not listen to them.^d ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved,^e and will go in and out and find pasture.^f ¹⁰The thief comes only in order to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.^g I have come so that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

The Good Shepherd

¹¹“I am the good shepherd.^h The good shepherd lays down his life on behalf of the sheep. ¹²But the hired man, not being the shepherd and not owning the sheep, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep, and runs away; and the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³Now the hired man runs away because he is a hired man and it does not matter to him about the sheep.

¹⁴“I am the good shepherd, and I know my own *sheep*, and I am known by them. ¹⁵Just as the Father knows me, I also know the Father, and I lay down my life on behalf of the sheep. ¹⁶I also have other sheep, that are not of this fold;ⁱ I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

¹⁷“Because of this the Father loves me, in that I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself.^j I

^a “A shepherd”—the fold was communal, so the sheep belonged to a variety of shepherds. That is why each one had to call his own sheep by name (verse 3). The doorkeeper would know all the shepherds.

^b He ‘leads’, not ‘drives’. Going out they need to be led; only the shepherd knows where they are going.

^c Although some 50% of the Greek manuscripts (also the three ancient versions) omit “before me”, we are virtually obliged to understand this, in any case, since presumably Jesus means pretending to be the Messiah. Gamaliel refers to two possible candidates in Acts 5:36-37.

^d Any true servants of God, such as Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38), would not be taken in by an impostor.

^e Jesus is the doorway, the only means of access into eternal life, a truth He will emphasize again in John 14:6.

^f What does a sheep want? Protection and pasture. These Jesus offers, but since people are more complex than sheep, He offers abundant life.

^g The original thief is Satan. “The thief comes” VS “I have come”—since Jesus contrasts “the thief” with Himself, that thief is presumably Satan. Jesus calls him a murderer and a liar in John 8:44. A thief is usually a liar as well, and vice versa.

^h Here Jesus changes the figure—as the good shepherd He really cares about the sheep, to the point of dying for them.

ⁱ “This fold” presumably refers to Israel, so the “other sheep” would be Gentiles. Paul develops this theme in Ephesians 2:11-22.

^j This is important! The cross did not kill Jesus; He dismissed His spirit—see John 19:30 and Matthew 27:50. In Mark 15:39 the loud shout followed immediately by death convinced the centurion. He had seen many crucifixions and was doubtless hardened to it. He knew that a person on a cross dies from asphyxiation. The weight of the body pushes the diaphragm against the lungs and you cannot breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure that prolonged the agony—rather than die they would push against the nail to get a breath. Finally, when too weak to do that they would die for lack of air. (That

have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.”^a

¹⁹Therefore there was another division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰Many of them were saying: “He has a demon and is raving mad. Why do you listen to him?” ²¹Others were saying: “These are not the sayings of someone who is demonized. A demon cannot open blind people’s eyes, can it?”^b

“My sheep hear my voice”

²²Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem;^c and it was winter. ²³And Jesus was walking about in the temple,^d in Solomon’s porch. ²⁴Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him: “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered them: “I did tell you, and you do not believe.^e The works that I do in my Father’s name—these testify concerning me. ²⁶But you do not believe because you are not among my sheep, just like I told you.^f ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸And I give them eternal life, and they will never ever be wasted; and no one will snatch them out of my hand.^g ²⁹My Father, who has given *them* to me, is greater than all;^h and no one is able to snatch out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

³¹Therefore the Jews picked up stonesⁱ again to stone Him. ³²Jesus answered them: “Many good works I have shown you from my Father. For which one of them are you stoning me?” ³³The Jews answered Him saying, “It is not for a good work that we are stoning you, but for blasphemy; precisely because you, being a man, make yourself God!” ³⁴Jesus answered them: “Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’?^j ³⁵If He called them ‘gods’ to whom the Word of God came—

is why they broke the legs of the two thieves; they then died within a few minutes.) Obviously, if you are dying without air you cannot shout! The centurion knew that the cross had not killed Jesus. But what mere human can just tell his spirit to leave? $2 + 2 = 4$. Jesus had to be the Son of God.

^a The whole procedure was part of the Plan. An ordinary human being can kill himself, all right, but cannot change his mind later and come back. To Jesus the Father gave the ability to re-unite spirit and body—presumably a unique occurrence.

^b So they thought, but on the basis of what happens in Spiritist and Satanist circles, it appears that if a demon causes blindness (which they can), the same or a stronger one can remove it.

^c Chapter 8 happened on Oct. 18, 29 (I think). Chapter 9 and 10:1-21 presumably happened shortly after. Here in 10:22 it is Dec. 17, 29—two months later. I suppose that Luke 10:1-14:24 occurred during those two months; which means that the seventy were sent out during the last six months of the Lord’s earthly ministry. Their target was interior Judea, in contrast to the twelve, whose target was Galilee.

^d It was probably cold and He was walking to stay warm.

^e Quite right. Their ‘suspense’ was pretended; they simply did not want to acknowledge Him. So they twist and squirm.

^f When was that? Probably two months before, as recorded earlier in this chapter.

^g Being snatched is one thing; jumping out is another. You can’t ‘snatch’ yourself, it must be done by an outside force, and no such force is greater than God. But, if you don’t want to go to Heaven, you won’t. Jesus puts it very plainly in John 15:6, “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch...” ‘Abiding’ is up to us; we are not forced to do it. If we choose not to, we are out.

^h About 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts (with variations), of objectively inferior quality, read “What my Father has given me is greater than all” (as in TEV, etc.).

ⁱ The temple courts were paved and presumably swept with some regularity. So how come there were stones lying around? I imagine there were piles of stones, of the right size and strategically placed, precisely for moments like this one. (If stoning serious offenders is an obligation, you need to be prepared.)

^j The reference is to Psalm 82:6, where the speaker is God (verse 1). Jesus calls the Psalms ‘law’.

and the Scripture cannot be broken^a—³⁶do you say ‘You are blaspheming’ to the One the Father sanctified and sent into the world because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? ³⁷If I am not doing the works of my Father, do not believe me. ³⁸But if I am doing *them*, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in Him.”^b

³⁹So they tried again to seize Him, but He escaped from their hand.^c

The last three months

⁴⁰He went away again across the Jordan, to the place where John was baptizing at first; and He remained there. ⁴¹And many came to Him and said, “Though John did not perform any sign, everything John said about this man was true.” ⁴²And many *of the people* there believed into Him.^d

Lazarus of Bethany^e

11 ¹Now a certain man, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha, was sick. ²(It was the Mary who [later]^f anointed the Lord with myrrh and wiped His feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was sick.) ³So the sisters sent to Him saying, “Lord, please, the one you love is sick!”

Jesus lets Lazarus die on purpose

⁴Upon hearing it Jesus said, “This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵(Now Jesus loved^g Martha and her sister and Lazarus.) ⁶So, when He heard that he was sick He stayed where He was two more days!^h ⁷Then after this He says to the disciples, “Let us go into Judea again.”ⁱ

⁸The disciples say to Him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and you are going back there?” ⁹Jesus answered: “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks during the day he doesn’t stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰But if anyone walks in the night he does stumble, because the light is not in him.”^j

^a The Lord inserts this as an aside, but it is an important statement in itself—Scripture cannot be broken. If we build our lives on God’s Word we have a secure foundation, one that cannot be shaken. (Your faith in that Word may be shaken, but not the Word itself.)

^b The Lord is still appealing to them to repent, to change direction.

^c See John 8:59 and Luke 4:30, where Jesus used supernatural means to avoid a premature death. Presumably this is a third instance.

^d We are back in Bithabara (see John 1:28). Although people came to John from all over, presumably the local residents, because of the convenience, would have made up a large percentage of the crowd. They heard John say, “Behold the Lamb of God!” This may be the first time that Jesus came back to this spot, and He may have stayed there for a bit. So they got their chance.

^e I take it that the events recorded in Luke 14:25-18:17, or most of the ministry in Perea, occurred between 10:42 and 11:1, here.

^f John is writing many years after the fact. Mary became identified by her famous deed, which actually took place several weeks after the raising of Lazarus, and is recorded in chapter 12.

^g Here the verb is *αγαπαω*; in verse 3 it is *φιλεω*.

^h And how long had it taken the messengers to find Him? Perhaps no more than a day; from Bethany to Jericho was all downhill.

ⁱ They are in Perea, on the eastern side of the Jordan.

^j “The light is not in him”—I take it that here in verse 10 Jesus refers to spiritual darkness and light, because no one has sunlight inside him. With God’s light inside, Jesus was not going to stumble, regardless of the time of day.

¹¹Having said these things He says to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going in order to awaken him.” ¹²His disciples said to Him, “Lord, if he is sleeping he will get well.” ¹³But Jesus had spoken of his death, while they thought He was talking about natural sleep. ¹⁴So then Jesus said to them plainly: “Lazarus died. ¹⁵And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”^a ¹⁶Then Thomas (called Twin) said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s us go too, so that we may die with Him.”^b

¹⁷So when Jesus had come, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.^c ¹⁸(Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had joined the women around^d Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.) ²⁰Then Martha, when she heard that Jesus was coming,^e went to meet Him; but Mary remained sitting at home.^f

Martha

²¹Then Martha said to Jesus: “Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.” ²³Jesus says to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha says to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” ²⁵Jesus said to her: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes into me, though he may die, will live; ²⁶and everyone who both lives and believes into me will never ever die.^g Do you believe this?” ²⁷She says to Him, “Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the One coming into the world.”^h

Mary

²⁸Having said these things she went and called her sister Mary, saying privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling you!” ²⁹Upon hearing it she gets up quickly and goes to Him. ³⁰(Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was in

^a “Let us go to him”—would you say that about a corpse? Jesus knows what He is going to do.

^b Thomas has received negative ‘press’, off and on, but his heart was in the right place.

^c Four days—that seems like quite a bit. In verses 11 and 14 Jesus makes clear that Lazarus had died before He left Perea. Someone in a hurry could make the distance in one day. I can’t prove it, but I imagine that the events recorded in Luke 18:18-19:27 (and the parallel passages in Matthew and Mark) occurred between verses 16 & 17, here. Jesus probably spent a night at Zacchaeus’ house (see Luke 19:5), doing the climb (of over 3,000 vertical feet) from Jericho to Jerusalem the next morning. The Lord deliberately took His time, delayed His arrival.

^d Instead of “the women around Martha”, perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read just “Martha” (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.). It seems obvious that the sisters would be surrounded by women.

^e Since Jesus stopped outside the village (verse 30), I wonder how Martha got the word. Perhaps Jesus sent one of the disciples, but there may well have been a lookout watching the road.

^f Mary was quite possibly unhappy with Jesus. It was obvious that He had not come when called, or He would have arrived several days sooner. She would conclude that He just didn’t care that much. Since Jesus acted deliberately, it is clear that the Plan involved making the sisters go through that emotional suffering. We need to fix firmly in our minds that belonging to Jesus does not mean a free ride—we too may suffer precisely because of the outworking of God’s Plan. After all the discussion is over, we have two options: rebel or submit.

^g The verb ‘die’ in verse 25 refers to physical death, in verse 26 it refers to spiritual death, while the verb ‘live’ refers to spiritual life (although one might translate the Text as ‘will not die forever’, rather than “will never ever die”, indicating that physical death is temporary). Note that ‘lives’ and ‘believes into’ are in the present tense, and then note the word ‘both’. Once you have life in Christ, you need to keep on believing.

^h Martha was not a theologian; she may not have understood it all, but she knew who Jesus was! Like Martha, we don’t have to understand everything, but we do need to know who Jesus is.

the place where Martha met Him. ³¹Then the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, when they saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her saying, “She is going to the tomb to weep there.” ³²Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, upon seeing Him she fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died!”^a

Jesus is troubled

³³So when Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. ^b ³⁴And He said, “Where have you put him?” They say to Him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus wept. ^c ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Couldn’t this man, who opened the eyes of the blind, have also kept this one from dying?” ³⁸Then, groaning within Himself again, Jesus arrived at the tomb.

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead

It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus says, “Remove the stone!” Martha, the sister of the deceased, says to Him, “Lord, he already stinks; it’s been four days!”^d ⁴⁰Jesus says to her, “Did I not say to you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?”^e ⁴¹Then they took away the stone from where the deceased was lying. Jesus raised His eyes and said: “Father, I thank You that You heard me.”^f ⁴²I know that You always hear me, but I spoke for the sake of the crowd standing around, so that they may believe that You sent me.”^g ⁴³Upon saying these things He shouted with a loud voice,^h “Lazarus, come out!”ⁱ ⁴⁴And out

^a I see a significant contrast between the sisters. Both of them say the same thing, but in a different tone. Mary is given over to her grief, she has no hope. Martha goes on to declare her confidence in Jesus; she still has hope.

^b Why? What troubled Him? He would not be inconsistent with Himself and His commitment to the Father’s will, the Plan. Seeing Mary’s despair, perhaps He felt distress at the suffering the Plan was causing—He did not enjoy the fact that He was responsible for that suffering.

^c The verb rendered ‘wept’ is really ‘shed tears’, different from the verb in verse 33, which is often associated with mourning. Jesus was not mourning, knowing what He was about to do. So why did He weep? Perhaps He was empathizing with their grief. But I imagine that their hopeless perspective also troubled Him—their view of death was inadequate.

^d That is just what she said. Hey, at that moment Martha was not thinking about how it would read 2,000 years later! She reacted instinctively and blurted it out. Being a practical person she wanted to avoid further distress.

^e When had He said that? The Text does not say, but I imagine it was during their earlier conversation—to me it is obvious that they said more than is recorded. In any event, we have here an important declaration. Have you seen the glory of God lately?

^f He is saying in so many words that He and the Father had already talked about the plan of action.

^g He was talking out loud on purpose, so that the people around would hear what He said.

^h That is what the Text says. Of course to shout is to use a loud voice, so the point seems to be that He really put His lungs into it—you could have heard Him a mile away! Well, Lazarus heard Him in Hades, which is in the middle of the earth somewhere (Matthew 12:40, Ephesians 4:9). Yes, but, could He not have done it with a whisper? I suppose so. So why did He yell? I do not know; I was not there. However, there may have been some symbolism involved—the longer one is dead the harder it is to bring him back.

ⁱ As someone has said, if the Lord hadn’t specified ‘Lazarus’ He might have emptied the graveyard!

the deceased came! Bound hand and foot with bandages,^a and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus says to them, “Loose him and let him go.”^b

The reaction

⁴⁵So many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed into Him. ⁴⁶But some of them went off to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷Then the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council^c and said: “What can we do? Because this man performs many miraculous signs; ⁴⁸if we let him *go on* like this everybody will believe into him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation!”^d

⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them: “You know nothing at all!^e ⁵⁰Nor do you consider that it is advantageous for us^f that one man should die on behalf of the people, rather than the whole nation perish!” ⁵¹(Now he did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die on behalf of the nation;^g ⁵²and not only on behalf of the nation, but also to gather into one all the scattered children of God.)^h ⁵³So from that day on they *really* plotted to kill Him.ⁱ

A tactical withdrawal

⁵⁴Therefore Jesus no longer moved about openly among the Jews, but went away from there into the country near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim; and He stayed there with His disciples.^j

The Passover is near

⁵⁵Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many from the country went up to Jerusalem before the Passover in order to purify themselves. ⁵⁶So they were looking for Jesus,^k and as they stood in the temple they were saying to each other, “What do you think—that he won’t come to the feast at all?” ⁵⁷Now the chief

^a He must have come jumping out like a kangaroo—with his feet tied he could not walk. It must have been an interesting sight. And with his eyes covered he could not see, so obviously he had supernatural help.

^b Would you have wanted to be the first one to start untying? I bet it was Martha. Notice that Jesus did not do what they could do: removing the stone and unwrapping Lazarus was up to them.

^c There is no definite article with ‘council’, so I doubt that it was the full Sanhedrin: they would not want Nicodemus, or any others who were sympathetic to Jesus, to be there.

^d This was their ‘hidden agenda’. Jesus had more than substantiated His claim to be the Messiah, but they did not want the political consequences of installing Him.

^e Dear me, he wasn’t very nice! But John says he was prophesying, so it may have been God telling them what He thought of them.

^f For “us” perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read “you” (as in NIV, NASB, TEV etc. [LB omits]). Since this is a prophecy, the difference is significant.

^g The ‘nation’ in question would be the Jewish nation. I find it interesting that God would choose to speak through Caiaphas. He was not the real high priest (who was Annas) but reflected a Roman imposition whereby the Jews had to name a new one every year, and that year it was Caiaphas. Maybe from God’s point of view Annas was worse.

^h The actual terms of the prophecy seem to be limited to the one nation, so I take it that verse 52 is an added application offered by John.

ⁱ They have been wanting to kill Him for some time, but at this point it becomes **top** priority.

^j The time available was probably not more than two weeks, if that. It was a last bit of rest before the final storm, but the Lord doubtless took advantage of the opportunity to teach the disciples, without the distraction of the crowds.

^k I think this refers back to verse 53—it is the leaders who are conversing among themselves.

priests and the Pharisees had together issued an edict that if anyone knew where He was he should report it, so they could arrest Him.

The last week

Mary anoints Jesus' feet^a

12 ¹Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was (the deceased whom He raised from the dead). ²So they gave a dinner for Him there—Martha was serving, while Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³Then Mary, bringing a pound of pure oil of nard, very costly, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped His feet with her hair!^b And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

Judas has a problem

⁴Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son (who was about to betray Him), said, ⁵"Why wasn't this oil sold for 300 denarii^c and given to the poor?" ⁶(Now he did not say this because the poor mattered to him, but because he was a thief and had the money-box; and used to pilfer what was put in it.)^d ⁷So Jesus said: "Let her be; she has performed this with a view to my burial. ⁸For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Lazarus is a problem

⁹Then a large crowd of the Jews learned that He was there; and they came, not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰So the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well,^e ¹¹in that because of him many of the Jews were defecting and believing into Jesus.

The Triumphal Entry

¹²The next day a large crowd that had come to the feast,^f when they heard^g that Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, ¹³took branches from palm trees and went out to meet Him. And they started shouting:

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"^h

"King of Israel!"ⁱ

^a This incident must not be confused with the one recorded in Matthew 26:6 and Mark 14:3. Here Mary anoints His feet on Saturday (March 30, 30), while in Matthew and Mark an unidentified woman anoints His head on Wednesday (April 3, 30). The houses are also different.

^b She has obviously forgiven Him for letting her brother die, and might even have been making amends for having doubted Him.

^c 300 denarii represented one year's wages for a working man (manual labor); it was indeed an expensive offering.

^d This is an editorial comment offered after the fact. Obviously they all trusted Judas at the time or they wouldn't have made him treasurer, and if he was caught the purse would go to someone else. In fact, John may have received this information by divine revelation.

^e If they succeeded in killing Jesus first, then He would not be around to raise Lazarus a second time.

^f If they had "come" to the feast, they were not local residents. As Matthew 21:10 makes clear, the locals did not know what was going on.

^g I wonder how that happened.

^h This is a quote from Psalm 118:26, where "the Lord" is Jehovah.

ⁱ Comparing the parallel accounts, we get a better idea of the variety of expression: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Hosanna in the highest!" "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the

JOHN 12

¹⁴And finding a young donkey Jesus sat on it; just as it is written:

¹⁵“Fear no more, daughter of Zion.

Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”^a

¹⁶(Now His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him, and they had done them to Him.)^b

¹⁷So the crowd that had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. ¹⁸That is also why the crowd met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said among themselves: “You can see that you are not making any difference! Just look, the world has gone off after Him!”

Some Greeks

²⁰Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the feast.^c ²¹So these men approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him saying, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”^d ²²Philip goes and tells Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. ²³But Jesus answered them saying: “The hour has come for the Son of the Man to be glorified.^e ²⁴Most assuredly I say to you, if a grain of wheat, having fallen into the ground, does not die, it remains alone;^f but if it dies it bears a lot of fruit.^g ²⁵The one ‘loving’ his life will waste it, and the one ‘hating’ his life, in this world, will preserve it into eternal life.^h ²⁶If anyone would serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, my servant will be too.^a Further, if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.^b

name of the LORD!” “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

^a See Zechariah 9:9.

^b Presumably the Holy Spirit was involved in this—John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:13. The ‘remembering’ would not necessarily have been immediate or automatic.

^c It is difficult to know just when this episode occurred; as I compare all four accounts, I doubt that it happened as part of the triumphal entry. It seems more likely to me that it happened the next day, after the cleansing of the temple. The atmosphere would be tense, and as non-Jews (even though converts to Judaism) they were keeping a low profile; so they act indirectly.

^d They were not asking to look at Him from a distance; they could manage that without help. They wanted to talk with Him.

^e The impression one gets is that Jesus did not address the Greeks directly, but I wonder if they didn’t sort of tag along and thus were within earshot. We know that the Lord could read thoughts, and so He would know what they really wanted—I assume that what they wanted did not fit in the Plan at that point. However, if the Greeks were within range, verses 24-26 would be for them just as much as for anyone else.

^f Once a seed is planted, if it doesn’t germinate it rots, and is wasted, but the germinating process destroys the seed, it ‘dies’. How this applies to us is developed in the next verse.

^g Jehovah the Son had ‘fallen to the ground’ some 34 years before, but now He was going to die—the ‘fruit’ is still being produced!

^h To understand what the Lord is saying here, let us go to the parallel passage in Luke 9:23-25. “If anyone desires to come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what will it profit a man to gain the whole world but waste or forfeit himself?” What does the Lord mean when He speaks of losing one’s “life”? One does not lose one’s soul for love of Christ. Nor is the reference to being killed. Rather, Jesus has in mind the life we live, the accumulated results of our living. All that I have done up to this moment plus all that I will yet do until overtaken by death or the rapture of the Church, whichever happens first—that is the “life” that is at risk (in my own case).

²⁷“Now my soul is distressed, and what should I say—Father, rescue me from this hour?” But this is why I came to this hour—²⁸“Father, glorify your name!” Then a **Voice** came out of Heaven, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again!” ²⁹So the crowd that was standing by and listening said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”^c ³⁰Jesus answered and said: “It was not for my sake that this Voice came, but for your sakes. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be thrown out.”^d ³²While I,

Let us look at our Lord’s words a little more closely. There seems to be a contradiction here—if you lose, you save; if you want to save, you lose. How can it work? The following context helps us out. In verse 26 Jesus explains verses 24-25 in terms of His second coming. The parallel passage, Matthew 16:27, is clearer. “For the Son of the Man is going to come in the glory of His Father, with His angels, and then He will repay each according to his deeds.” Christ was thinking of the day of reckoning. In other words, “we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10) and “each of us will give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive his due according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10). I understand that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is referring to the same occasion, the day of reckoning. After declaring that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, Paul speaks of different materials that one might use in building on it: “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay, straw”. (Although the primary interpretation of this passage presumably has to do with the performance of teachers and leaders in the church, I believe it clearly applies to the daily life of each believer as well.) The point is, our deeds will be tested by fire. If fire has any effect upon gold or silver it is only to purify them, but its effect on hay and straw is devastating! Okay, so what?

Let us go back to the beginning. God created the human being for His glory; to reflect it and contribute to it. I suppose we may understand Psalm 19:1 and Isaiah 43:7 in this way, at least by extension. But Adam lost this capacity when he rebelled against God. For this reason the sentence that weighs against our race is that we “fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). But the Son came into the world to restore our lost potential. Ephesians 1:12 and 14 tell us that the object of the plan of salvation is “the praise of His glory” (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20). And 1 Corinthians 10:31 puts it into a **command**: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Now then, the point of all this is not to ‘ruin’ our lives, to take all the ‘fun’ out of them (as many seem to think). God is not being arrogant, unreasonable, too demanding. Quite the contrary—He is just trying to save us from throwing away our lives. Surely, because the glory of God is eternal (Psalm 104:31), and when I do something for His glory, that something is transformed and acquires eternal value—it becomes “gold, silver, precious stones”. Works done for the glory of God will go through the fire without harm. On the other hand, what is done with a view to our own ambitions and ideas is “straw”. We all know what fire does to straw!

So there it is. To be a slave of Christ means to live with reference to the Kingdom; it means to do everything for the glory of God. In this way the slave “saves” his life because he will be building it with “gold and silver”, which will pass through the fire at the judgment seat of Christ without loss. In contrast, the believer who refuses to be a slave of Jesus builds his life with “hay and straw”, which will be consumed by the fire—and so he “loses” his life; he lived in vain; the potential that his life represented was wasted, thrown away. What a tragedy!

^a If we want to be where Jesus is, we need to stick close to Him. (Well, you know, that’s really kind of obvious, but how many of us do it?)

^b Each underlined pronoun corresponds to an emphatic pronoun in the Original Text. What the Lord did here was quite unusual; in other places He emphasized one pronoun, but not five in a row, and especially with all five referring to Himself! So what was He trying to tell us? I take it that He is telling us to focus on HIM, his person and our relationship to Him. He needs to be **number one**, without competition. He is talking about total commitment, but not without recompense—the Father will honor him.”

^c It seems clear that the bystanders did not hear the words, at least not to distinguish them; they heard the Voice, which must have been impressive (they compared it to thunder). A similar thing happened on the road to Damascus; only Paul understood the words.

^d “Thrown out” as ruler of this world; upon Christ’s victory through the cross and the resurrection Satan was deposed. Satan continues to carry on as if he were still the ruler, but he is acting on the basis of bluff and usurpation. If Christ is now the true and legitimate ruler of this world, why is Satan allowed to carry on? The Father is ‘seeking’ those who will worship Him in spirit and truth, not because it is

if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all *people* to myself.”³³(Now He said this to indicate by what kind of death He was about to die.)^a ³⁴The people answered Him: “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah remains forever; and so how can you say, ‘The Son of the Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘the Son of the Man’?”^b

³⁵Then Jesus said to them: “The Light will be with you just a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that darkness does not overtake you;^c the one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. ³⁶While you have the Light,^d believe into the Light, so that you may become sons of light.”^e Jesus said these things, and going away He was hidden from them.

An editorial comment

³⁷Although He had performed so many signs in their presence, they were not believing into Him; ³⁸so that the word spoken by Isaiah the prophet should be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what we heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD *really* been revealed?”^f

³⁹Therefore they were unable to believe, in that Isaiah said again:

⁴⁰“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,^g
lest they should see with their eyes
and understand with their hearts
and should turn around, and I would heal them.”

⁴¹Isaiah said these things when^h he saw His gloryⁱ and spoke concerning Him.

easy or convenient. So there has to be testing, there has to be an adverse context: so no one can claim that God is ‘buying votes’ (which was Satan’s allegation about Job).

- ^a Again, although our Lord was literally ‘lifted up’, His intended meaning would not be immediately obvious to His hearers.
- ^b I find it interesting that the people were evidently equating ‘the Son of the Man’ with the Messiah, which was precisely correct; but what Jesus was saying did not match their expectations.
- ^c Since most people did their traveling on foot, they would understand this principle very well—you need to make as much distance as you can while there is light.
- ^d Presumably He was referring to His physical presence among them.
- ^e By believing into Jesus they would become ‘sons of light’—they would live according to the values of the Kingdom of Light, not those of the kingdom of darkness.
- ^f The reference is to Isaiah 53:1. Many years ago (over 50) I did an exegesis of this passage for my Hebrew professor at Dallas Seminary. The section really begins at 52:13—in verses 13-15 Jehovah describes the suffering of the Messiah. In verses 1-3 the people of Israel try to justify or explain why they rejected Him; you can almost hear them whine: “Who would have believed what was reported to us? And to whom has the arm of Jehovah *really* been revealed?” (They argue that the way in which the Messiah was presented was unexpected, unreasonable, unacceptable.) The word usually rendered ‘report’ (in verse 38), *ακουη*, refers to something you hear, not something you say.
- ^g Both Matthew (13:15) and Paul (Acts 28:27) also quote Isaiah 6:10 (as John is doing here), and they agree with the LXX; they give the impression that the people did it to themselves, rather than being a judicial act of God. What is involved is a different vowel pointing for the consonants of the main verbs. Since the original text had no vowel pointing, and both sets of pointings are possible and legitimate, we are looking at an option of the translator or interpreter. I imagine that both sides of the ambiguity are true, much as in the case of Pharaoh—during the first five plagues he hardened his own heart, after that God hardened his heart.
- ^h Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read “because” instead of “when” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The difference in meaning is significant.
- ⁱ Wait a minute! Whom did Isaiah see? John is talking about Jesus, so when did Isaiah see Jesus? The quote in verse 40 is from Isaiah 6:10. The quoted words were spoken by Jehovah, verse 8, the One who

⁴²Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed into Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be expelled from the synagogue;^a ⁴³for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.^b

The last public word

⁴⁴Jesus called out and said: “The one believing into me believes not into me but into Him who sent me. ⁴⁵And the one seeing me sees Him who sent me. ⁴⁶I, Light,^c have come into the world so that everyone who believes into me will not remain in the darkness.^d ⁴⁷Also, if someone hears my words and does not believe, I do not judge him; because I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.^e ⁴⁸The one who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken, that is what will judge him on the last day;^f ⁴⁹because I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me, He gave me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰And I know that His command is eternal life. So whatever I say, I say it just like the Father told me.”^g

The last night

13 ¹Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world He loved them to the end.^h

Jesus washes the disciples' feet

²And after supper^a (the devil already having put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him),^b ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given

was sitting on the throne, verse 1. In verse 5 Isaiah says of Him, “my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts”. So John is affirming that the One on the throne was Jehovah the Son, Jesus. I love it!

^a To be barred from the synagogue was to be excommunicated, and in consequence to be socially ostracized.

^b This is bothersome. In Matthew 10:32 the Lord Jesus said, “whoever confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in the heavens”. So what happens if you don't confess? Like the rulers here who were ‘secret believers’. But in verse 33 the Lord goes on to say, “whoever denies me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in the heavens”. Is there a difference between denying and keeping quiet? Proverbs 29:25 says, “the fear of man brings a snare”. Writing to the Laodicean church the glorified Christ said, “because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16). If confessing is to be ‘hot’, and denying is to be ‘cold’, then keeping quiet is to be ‘lukewarm’. All in all it looks like the odds are in favor of confessing (see Luke 12:4-5). (See the note at John 5:44.)

^c In verses 35 and 36 He has already referred to Himself as “the Light”—here there is no article, so I take it that He is emphasizing the quality inherent in the noun.

^d Again, ‘the darkness’ refers to Satan's kingdom.

^e This refers to His first advent. At His second advent He will indeed judge.

^f ‘Ignorance of the law is no excuse.’ If the Bible exists in your language and you know how to read (or you know someone who can read), then you could have learned Jesus' sayings. Claiming that you did not know will not hack it.

^g In John 5:19 Jesus affirms that he only did what He saw the Father do. Here He affirms that He only said what He heard the Father say. Although the Father and the Son are distinct persons, as Jesus repeatedly made clear, His identification with the Father was so complete that to see Him was to see the Father, to believe into Him was to believe into the Father (verses 44-45, above).

^h This appears to be a cover statement, introducing the rest of the book. What Jesus would do in the upper room, in the garden, on the cross, after the resurrection, were expressions of His love for His own. His love took Him through to ‘the end’, the last consequence—nothing was left undone. How could He return to the Father if He didn't do all that had to be done? He had been sent to recover all that the first Adam had lost, and He did!

JOHN 13

everything into His hands,^c and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴He gets up from the meal and lays aside His garments,^d and taking a towel He tied it around Himself. ⁵Then He poured water into the basin^e and began to wash the disciples' feet and to dry them with the towel with which He was wrapped.^f

Simon Peter

⁶So He comes to Simon Peter, and he^g says to Him, "Lord, you wash my feet?!" ⁷Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know [by experience] after this."^h ⁸Peter says to Him, "You will never ever wash my feet!"ⁱ Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with me." ⁹Simon Peter says to Him, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!"^j ¹⁰Jesus says to him: "One who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet, but is clean all over. And you (pl) are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹(He knew who was betraying Him; that is why He said, "Not all of you are clean.")

Jesus explains His action

¹²So when Jesus had washed their feet and put His garments back on, He reclined again and said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You address me as 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and you speak correctly, because I am. ¹⁴So

^a Less than 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read 'during' supper (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which confuses the account. There was an ordinary meal, and then the Passover ritual itself. The meal was basically over, but they couldn't proceed with the ritual because they were ceremonially unclean—their feet hadn't been washed (they were dirty from the dust of the road).

^b This editorial aside seems to interrupt the flow of the narrative, but John does this sort of thing in other places as well. However, it furnishes important background information for verse 27 below.

^c The Plan depended on Him, was "in His hands". For Him to know that He was "going to God" (end of verse) meant that He knew He was going to win.

^d The Text has 'garments', plural, so the rendering 'robe' doesn't seem to fit. I gather that Jesus stripped down to a loincloth, or basic underclothing, which is what a servant might wear. Since He was about to perform the duty of a servant (that should have been there, but wasn't), it was a graphic symbolism.

^e Yes, 'the' basin. When the Lord sent some disciples to prepare the room, they would not only have to be sure that there were thirteen couches, properly arranged [they did not sit on chairs, they reclined on couches, with their heads in toward the table, and so their feet would stick out—just right for washing], but also see to a basin, water and a towel, so that the necessary ceremonial washing could be performed. So this was 'the' basin that had been placed there on purpose.

^f Normally there would have been a servant there to perform the duty of washing feet, but I assume that the Lord had given instructions not to have one. There was an ongoing dispute among them as to who was the greatest (Luke 22:24), so naturally none of them was prepared to take the place of the servant. They could eat the meal with dirty feet, as they did, but not the Passover. I imagine that the situation began to get uncomfortable—it was time to proceed with the ritual, but first someone had to wash feet, and no one was offering. So finally Jesus Himself gets up.

^g The pronoun is emphatic. The picture seems to be that Jesus had already done several pairs of feet, whose owners had submitted in silence. But now it is Peter's turn and he cannot take it (maybe he had a more tender conscience than the others).

^h The Lord makes an important distinction here—He advises Peter that he doesn't understand what is going on, as Peter proves the next time he opens his mouth, but in the future his knowledge on this subject will have been gained by experience.

ⁱ Peter loses it: his answer is totally without restraint.

^j Peter continues to demonstrate that he is not understanding, but his heart is in the right place. Faced with the possibility of being cut off from the Lord, he swings to the other extreme—now he wants a bath.

then, if I, Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵Because I have given you an example, so that you also should do just as I did to you.^a

¹⁶“Most assuredly I say to you, a slave is not greater than his owner, neither is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you understand these things, you are blessed if you do them.^b

¹⁸“I do not speak concerning all of you—I know whom I chose. But let the Scripture be fulfilled: ‘The one eating bread with me lifted up his heel against me.’^c ¹⁹I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am. ²⁰Most assuredly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives me,^d and he who receives me receives Him who sent me.”

The traitor is identified^e

²¹Having said these things, Jesus was distressed in His spirit and testified saying, “Most assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray me!” ²²So the disciples started looking at each other, at a loss as to whom He meant.^f ²³Now one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining beside Jesus' bosom.^g ²⁴So Simon Peter motions to him to inquire whom it might be that He was referring to. ²⁵And leaning back against Jesus' breast he says to Him, “Lord, who is it?” ²⁶Jesus answers, “It is the one to whom I will give the piece of dunked bread.” And dunking the bread He gives it to Judas Iscariot, Simon's son. ²⁷And after the sop, then Satan entered into him.^h Whereupon Jesus says to him, “What you are doing, do

^a First, we have the physical example of washing feet—those communities that practice foot-washing have more basis for doing so than the rest of us have for not doing so (foot-washing can be an important spiritual exercise).

Second, we have the spiritual reality behind the example. The crucial point is in verse 10, “One who is bathed has no need except to wash his feet”. Anyone who has been ‘washed in the blood of the Lamb’ has had his bath. But walking on the paths of life we get our feet dirty, we sin, and sin breaks our fellowship with God—you can't go into the living room with dirty feet. We need the blood of Christ for our daily cleansing, upon which depends our fellowship and communion with Him—as He said to Peter, “If I do not wash [not ‘bathe’] you, you have no part with me”. I regard Philippians 2:5-8 as a parallel passage: He took the form of a slave (verse 7), and His ‘work’ took Him to the cross, where He shed His blood, upon which both our salvation [bath] and daily walk [washing] depend.

^b We have here a condition of fact—the Lord is assuming that they understand; it follows that it is not enough to understand—we must do, in order to be blessed.

^c The reference is to Psalm 41:9.

^d To represent Christ on this earth is both a great privilege and a great responsibility.

^e This is the second time; for the first see Matthew 26:21-25, Mark 14:18-21 and Luke 22:21-23.

^f The way I used to think about Judas, I would have expected that the others would immediately suspect who it was, and start looking at him out of the corner of their eye. But no, they were clueless—no one thought of Judas! Which tells me that up to that moment he had conducted himself in an exemplary way; in fact, they trusted him so much that he was the treasurer.

^g They were reclining on their sides, propped up on their left elbows (unless someone was left handed). So John was next to Jesus, with his back to Jesus' bosom. In order to put his question, he leaned back until his shoulder touched Jesus' chest (he would have to rest his weight there), and in that way he was looking up at Jesus.

^h As we know from verse two, Satan had already planted the idea in Judas' head/heart, but at this point he enters the man—Judas wasn't just demonized, he was satanized! Evidently Satan required permission to do this, and giving the sop was the signal; Jesus gave him the go-ahead. Obviously Satan had to be there, in that upper room! (If he was in that upper room, why can't he be in your church? Any Judases in your church?) I take it that Satan entered Judas to make sure that he would carry through with the plan.

quickly!”^a ²⁸(Now none of those reclining at the table knew why He said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas had the moneybox, some supposed that Jesus was telling him to buy what they needed for the feast, or to give something to the poor.)^b ³⁰So having received the sop, immediately he went out. And it was night.^c

A new commandment

³¹When he had gone out Jesus says:^d “Now the Son of the Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in Him. ³²Since God has been glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him with Himself, and He will do so presently.^e

³³“Little children, I am with you *just* a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where **I** am going you cannot come,’ so now I say to you.

³⁴“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you^f—that you also love one another. ³⁵By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”^g

Jesus warns Peter^h

³⁶Simon Peter says to Him, “Lord, where are you going?”ⁱ Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but later you will follow me.”^j ³⁷Peter says to Him: “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake!” ³⁸Jesus answered him: “You will lay down your life for my sake? Most assuredly I say to you, no rooster can crow until you have denied me three times!^k

^a Although to the disciples it would appear that Jesus was addressing Judas, I rather suspect that He was actually addressing Satan, since it was Satan who would now control the man’s thoughts. He orders him to get on with it; that is right, Jesus gave Satan an order, and Satan obeyed.

^b This is instructive—even though Jesus had just said that it was Judas, the others just could not believe it.

^c Commentators like to wax eloquent on this statement. It was literally night, perhaps about 9 p.m., but it was also spiritually ‘night’—Satan’s finest hour.

^d The verb is in the present tense; I get the impression that as soon as the door clicked behind Judas the Lord started speaking. The events have been set in motion that will culminate in His being glorified.

^e Actually, ‘do so’ stands for ‘glorify Him’, that is repeated from the previous clause.

^f The Law says to love your neighbor as yourself; Grace says to love as Christ loves—clearly a higher standard!

^g Since *agape* love is an unknown commodity in the ‘world’, demonstrations of it do tend to get attention.

^h This is the first warning. The second is recorded in Luke 22:31-34, which I would place after John 16:15, toward the end of the proceedings in the upper room. Both the context and the content of the warning differ from John. The third warning, in two parts, is recorded in Matthew 26:31-35 (1st part) and Mark 14:27-31 (2nd part). The first two warnings happened in the upper room, the third after they had left it.

ⁱ Peter didn’t hear the ‘new commandment’: he was stuck on the prior statement. (This sort of thing happens during sermons all the time. So if the preacher says something unexpected, he had better stop and explain or he loses his audience.)

^j I imagine that the Lord is referring to Hades, in the first instance (referring to physical death), but then also to Heaven. It is not part of the Plan for Peter to die just yet (in fact, he was delivered from prison in a supernatural way to avoid a premature death—Acts 12:6-11), but of course he will die and go to Heaven later on.

^k The emphasis here is on the obligatory absence of any cockcrow until Peter has denied [at least] three times. There is no definite article with ‘rooster’, so it is “a rooster”; the negative is double, therefore emphatic, “absolutely not”. If you have lived where there were a number of roosters, you know that one or another can sound off at any time, and some one of them will crow almost on the hour throughout the night, while at dawn they put on a chorus. It was probably somewhere around 9 p.m. when Jesus issued this warning, and Peter’s first denial probably happened at least five hours later. For not a single rooster to crow anywhere within earshot during that time required supernatural intervention—which

14 ¹“Do not let your (pl) heart be distressed; you believe into God and you believe into me.^a ²In my Father’s house are many dwellings^b (otherwise I would have told you).^c I am going away to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.^d ⁴Now you know where I am going, and you know the way.”

Thomas’ question

⁵Thomas says to Him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”^e ⁶Jesus says to him: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one goes to the Father except through me.^f ⁷If you had known me, you would have known my Father as well;^g from now on you both know Him and have seen Him.”

Philip’s question

⁸Philip says to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” ⁹Jesus says to him: “Such a long time I have been with you, and you have not known me, Philip?^h He who has seen me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ ¹⁰Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own; rather it is the Father who dwells in me who does the works.ⁱ ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or else, believe me because of the works themselves.^j

is why I render “no rooster can crow” (if an angel can close lions’ mouths [Daniel 6:22], closing roosters’ beaks would be a cake walk).

^a A Greek verb is ambiguous in the 2nd person plural between Indicative and Imperative, and since that form occurs in both clauses here, there are four possibilities—Ind. Ind., Ind. Imp., Imp. Ind., Imp. Imp. The choice is up to the translator, which is why you will find differences among the versions at this point. We have already been told, in John 6:64, that Jesus knew who did not believe; it follows that He also knew who did. He knew that the eleven believed, so it seems more likely to me that He spoke in the Indicative. He is appealing to them to be consistent with their belief.

^b ‘House’ and ‘dwelling’ translate different words. I suppose that “my Father’s house” is a synonym for Heaven.

^c You can find quite a variety of interpretations and translations of this clause. I assume that the Lord had certainly given them teaching on the subject of Heaven; He here assures them that if their expectations were false He would have warned them. I take it that over 95% of the Greek manuscripts do not have “that” introducing the next clause.

^d He wants us. We are important to Him. So much so that before He created our race He had determined to pay the price for our redemption—1 Peter 1:19-20.

^e Peter wasn’t the only one who hadn’t figured it out. But we may thank Thomas for eliciting the tremendous statement that occupies verse 6!

^f Jesus answers both questions: He is the way, and He is going to the Father. The only way that any human being, including Adam and Eve and all the Old Testament saints, can go to the Father is on the basis of the shed blood of the Lamb of God.

^g The Lord is saying that up to that moment the disciples had not really gotten the point—they were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, all right, but did not understand the Messiah’s relationship to the Father. But as a result of the immediately coming events, culminating with the advent of the Holy Spirit, they will understand.

^h It sounds like Jesus is a little disappointed. They are slow pupils.

ⁱ Notice again the close connection between saying and doing—“I speak... the Father does”. If, like Jesus (John 12:49-50), we only speak what the Father says, He will act on the basis of our word too.

^j This is basically the same appeal He had already made to the Pharisees.

“Greater works than these”

12“Most assuredly I say to you,^a the one believing into me, he too will do the works that I do;^b in fact he will do greater works than these,^c because I am going to my Father. **13**Further, whatever you (pl) may ask in my name,^d that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14**If you ask anything in my name, I will do it! **15**If you love me, keep my commandments. **16**Also,^e I will ask the Father and He will give you another Enabler,^f so that He may stay with you throughout the age^g **17**—the Spirit of the Truth,^h whom the world is unable to receive,ⁱ be-

^a “Most assuredly” is actually “amen, amen”—rendered “verily, verily” in the AV. Only John registers the word as repeated, in the other Gospels it is just “amen”. In the contemporary literature we have no example of anyone else using the word in this way. It seems that Jesus coined His own use, and the point seems to be to call attention to an important pronouncement: “Stop and listen!” Often it precedes a formal statement of doctrine or policy, as here.

^b This is a tremendous statement, and not a little disconcerting. Notice that the Lord said, “will do”; not ‘maybe’, ‘perhaps’, ‘if you feel like it’; and certainly not ‘if the doctrine of your church permits it’! If you believe you **will do!** The verb ‘believe’ is in the present tense, 2nd person singular; if you (sg) are believing you will do; it follows that if you are not doing it is because you are not believing. 2 + 2 = 4. Doing what? “The works that I do.” Well, Jesus preached the Gospel, He taught, He cast out demons, He healed all sorts and sizes of sickness and disease, He raised an occasional dead person, and He performed a variety of miracles (water to wine, walk on water, stop a storm instantaneously, transport a boat several miles instantaneously, multiply food, shrivel a tree—and He implied that the disciples should have stopped the storm and multiplied the food, and He stated that they could shrivel a tree [Peter actually took a few steps on water]). So how about us? The preaching and teaching we can handle, but what about the rest? I once heard the president of a certain Christian college affirm that this verse obviously could not mean what it says because it is not happening! Well, in his own experience and in that of his associates I guess it is not. But many people today cast out demons and heal, and I personally know someone who has raised a dead person. Miracles are also happening. So how about me? And you?

^c Well now, if we cast out demons, heal and perform miracles, isn’t that enough? Jesus wants more, He wants “greater things” than those just mentioned. Notice again that He said “will do”, not maybe, perhaps, or if your church permits. But what could be ‘greater’ than miracles? This cannot refer to modern technology because in that event such ‘greater things’ would not have been available to the believers during the first 1900 years. Note that the key is in the Lord’s final statement (in verse 12), “because I am going to my Father”. Only if He won could He return to the Father, so He is here declaring His victory before the fact. It is on the basis of that victory that the ‘greater things’ can be performed. Just what are those ‘greater’ things? For my answer, see my outline, “Biblical Spiritual Warfare”, available from my site: www.prunch.org.

^d In verse 12 the verb ‘will do’ is singular, both times, so it has to do with the individual. Here, ‘you may ask’ is plural, reminiscent of Matthew 18:19-20. To ask “in Jesus’ name” is to ask something Jesus would ask, or is asking (remember John 12:49-50)—notice that the purpose is to glorify the Father (or more precisely, that the Father be glorified in/through the Son), not to satisfy any selfish wish we may have.

^e I take it that verse 16 is parallel to verse 13, and both are tied to verse 12.

^f Greek has two words for ‘another’, another of the same kind and another of a different kind. Here it is another of the same kind—being two members of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit are definitely of the ‘same’ kind!

^g Strictly, ‘into the age’; ‘age’ is singular, and for the meaning ‘forever’ we would expect the plural, ‘into the ages’. I doubt that the Lord is promising that the Holy Spirit will remain in us (see next verse) throughout eternity, just during this age. During this age we need the Holy Spirit in us to counteract the ‘flesh’ or fallen nature; in Heaven we will be free of all contaminants.

^h That is what the Text says, ‘the’ Truth. The Holy Spirit represents the Truth, whereas Satan represents ‘the lie’ (John 8:44).

ⁱ 1 John 5:19 says that the whole world ‘lies in the wicked one’; Satan exercises control over it. The world is controlled by ‘the lie’ and thus is incapable of receiving the truth. Just try speaking out against relativism, humanism, abortion, homosexuality, materialism, permissiveness, etc. and see how the world reacts.

cause it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you do know Him, because He is staying with you and will be in you.^a

¹⁸“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you [shortly].^b ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live you also will live.^c ²⁰In that day^d you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹The one who has my commandments and keeps them, he is the one who loves me. Now the one who loves me will be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and reveal myself to him.^e

Judas' question

²²Judas (not the Iscariot) says to Him, “Lord, just how is it that You are going to reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?” ²³Jesus answered and said to him: “If anyone loves me he will keep my word. So my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.^f ²⁴The one who does not love me does not keep my words;^g further, the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

The Teacher, the peace; the Father, the enemy

²⁵“I have spoken these things to you while being with you. ²⁶But the Enabler, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and remind you of everything I said to you.^h

²⁷“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; it is not like the world gives that I give to you.ⁱ Do not let your heart be distressed or intimidated.^a

^a “Will be in you”, presumably a prophetic reference to Pentecost and after. During this age the Holy Spirit resides in the true believer.

^b I assume that the reference is to His appearances during forty days (Acts 1:3) after His resurrection. They saw Him die on Friday and saw Him alive on Sunday, so they were not ‘without’ Him very long. Pentecost was fifty days after Passover; the Ascension was at least forty days after the Resurrection; so the interval between Ascension and Pentecost was only 7-8 days. Indeed, He did not leave them orphans.

^c “I live”, present tense. As the I AM who is Life, at any moment throughout eternity (past or future) He can say, “I live”. As “the resurrection and the life” He can guarantee our future life.

^d What ‘day’ is that? I assume that it refers back to verse 16, to the coming of the Enabler. With the indwelling Holy Spirit they will have a better understanding of the relationships.

^e The Lord gives an important insight on spiritual growth, here: our love → our obedience → His love → His self revelation. Can you love someone you don't know? Perhaps in theory, but not really. The more you know someone the more you love him/her (especially if they are nice). As we come to know the Lord we grow to love Him, which translates into obedience, which leads Him to reveal Himself to us, which increases our knowledge of Him, which increases our love for Him, which increases our obedience, which increases His self revelation, which increases our knowledge, love, obedience, and so on. It is an upward spiral which takes us ever closer to Him.

^f Like, wow—did you get that? We have always been taught (correctly) that the Holy Spirit indwells the true believer, but here the Lord says that the Father and the Son can be at home with us as well. That is all three persons of the Trinity! There is a condition, however—we must keep Jesus' word, which is really the Father's (next verse). The indispensable evidence that we love God is to obey His word; this stimulates His love in return. There is evidently some sense in which we influence the manifestation of His love, at least. The answer to Judas' question is that the ‘revealing’ is one on one, and is triggered by one's obedience. So the world is out.

^g In verse 23 “my word” is singular, here “my words” is plural; I take it that these phrases are being used interchangeably.

^h We understand that this activity of the Holy Spirit would be especially prominent during the writing of the Gospels. They complement but do not contradict one another.

ⁱ The world can offer peace of a sort, for a time, with a price tag, but it's an illusion.

²⁸“You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away and I am coming *back* to you.’ If you loved me you would have been glad that I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ because my Father is greater than I.^b ²⁹I have told you now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe.

³⁰“I will no longer talk much with you, because the ruler of the world is approaching;^c actually, he has nothing in me.^d ³¹Rather, I habitually do just as the Father commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.^e

“Get up, let us leave here.^f

The true vine

15 ¹“I am the vine, the true one,^g and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Any branch in me which does not produce fruit He lifts up,^h and every one producing fruit He prunes, so that it may produce more fruit.ⁱ ³You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.^j ⁴Abide in me and I in you.^k Just as a branch is incapable of producing fruit by itself, except it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me.

^a Satan will certainly use the world to try to intimidate and distress us, but how we react is up to us. We can decide to “let the peace of God rule in our hearts” (Colossians 3:15).

^b How does that work? Well, if you really love someone you are more concerned for their well-being than you are for your own. For Jesus to return to the Father would certainly be better for Him. (And because He sent the Holy Spirit it also became better for them, and for us.)

^c Like Jesus said a few hours later to the soldiers in the garden, “this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). Satan was ‘approaching’ to do his thing, to perform his part in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

^d This is **important!** Satan had absolutely no hold on Jesus. At no time had Jesus done anything that could give Satan a finger hold or toehold in His life. Whenever we sin we give Satan such a hold—and the oftener we repeat a given sin the stronger that hold becomes, until it becomes a stronghold. If we confess and reject the sin, such a hold can be broken, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

^e Jesus proved His love for the Father by obeying Him, giving us the example.

^f Some have concluded that they left the upper room at this moment, but I take it that 18:1 states that it was only at that point that they actually left. We must not interpret the Text according to ‘western’ culture; in Brazil (for example) it is bad form for a visitor to leave before at least two false starts. You start making noises at least half an hour before you actually have to leave. The disciples may well have stood up at that point, but I take it that chapters 15-17 still took place in that room—once they were out walking it would be difficult for all of them to hear Him, and I assume that the Lord certainly wanted all of them to hear clearly.

^g There is emphasis on “true”, which implies a contrast with the false one. I suppose that Jesus may have been referring to Jeremiah 2:21: “Yet I had planted you [Israel, see verse 4] a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?” For a similar idea see Isaiah 5:1-7.

^h The Greek verb here covers a considerable semantic area. The familiar ‘takes away’ is one of its basic meanings, but ‘lifts up’ is another of its meanings and makes better sense here (the cutting off comes in verse 6). People plant (or buy) vineyards because they want grapes, and you can’t have grapes without branches, so you don’t destroy them without reason. When it’s blossom time you go down the rows looking for any branches that the wind and rain have knocked down—a branch on the ground won’t produce. You lift them up, shake off the dirt and fasten them up, to give them a chance. I take it that’s the picture here—if we have fallen, the Father picks us up, brushes us off and gives us another go. Of course if we never produce, then we are suckers, and He goes ‘snip’ (verse 6).

ⁱ I understand that a given stretch of vine or branch only produces grapes once, it is only the new growth that produces grapes, so if you want to increase production you must cut the vine back.

^j Jesus had been ‘pruning’ those disciples for two years or more.

^k From the way this is stated I conclude that although this ‘abiding’ is a two-way street, it actually depends on us. That is, as we abide in Him He will abide in us—He won’t stop first; only if we stop abiding in Him will He stop abiding in us.

⁵“I am the vine, and you are the branches. The one who abides in me and I in him, he is the one who produces much fruit, because apart from me you are incapable of doing anything.^a ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown out, like a branch, and dries up; well they gather such and throw them into the fire, and he is burned up.^b ⁷If you abide in me and my sayings^c abide in you, you will ask whatever you desire and it will happen for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit; and you will become disciples to me.^d

We love

⁹“Just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you;^e abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,^f just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹I have spoken these things to you so that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be made full.^g ¹²This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.^h ¹³No one

^a We seem to have a hard time getting this through our heads, but our Lord is very clear—all our activism is fruitless. If we wish to produce fruit for Christ’s Kingdom we **MUST** abide in Him.

^b That is what the Text says, ‘he’ is burned. The direct object of ‘gather’ and ‘throw’ is plural (referring to what normally happens to dead branches), but the subject of ‘be burned’ is singular. The ‘he’ must refer back to the beginning of the verse, to the one who does not abide in Christ. Few figures of speech fit in every detail. Of course an actual branch cannot just decide to jump out of its vine or tree; an outside force must cut or break it off. But we have volition—verbs like ‘abide’ or ‘remain’ clearly imply that the choice is up to us; we can indeed decide to leave our Vine, we can stop believing. Notice again the sequence of events, “if anyone does not abide in me he is thrown out”—a branch that is ‘abiding’ is not thrown; only if you choose to leave will you be thrown. I am a theologian (ThM) and am well aware that people tend to buy into a theological system, or doctrinal package, and they then impose that system on the Bible—if some passage does not fit, they do whatever damage may be necessary to that passage to make it fit. But I am also a linguist (PhD), and I know that human language is governed by rules—to disobey those rules is a form of lying, and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), so if in interpreting the Bible you disobey those rules, you make a liar out of God, which is not very smart! In this passage the Lord Jesus Christ gives instruction that is perfectly plain. If the Word of Christ says one thing and your doctrinal package says another, then you had better stop and think. Which holds more authority for you, which are you going to follow, the Word of Christ or your doctrinal package? If you choose the latter, you are an idolater—to place your church’s doctrine above the Word of God is a form of idolatry. Idolatry always has negative consequences.

^c The Greek word is $\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ not $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$; if a distinction is intended I suppose the emphasis here would be on the content of what He taught. This is how we abide in Him, by obeying His Word.

^d The pronoun is dative, not genitive, so to render ‘my’ disciples is not precise; since Jesus obviously could have used the genitive if that was what He wanted to say, then the choice of the dative is significant. In my own experience, not a few have said in my hearing that they were my disciples; I smiled and said ‘Thank you’, but seldom did I want to claim them (for varying reasons). I take it that here the Lord is saying that He will claim us as His disciples as we produce much fruit.

^e Wow!

^f “Abide in my love” is a command, not an option, and the way we do it is by obeying Him. I take it that ‘my love’ refers to His loving us, so again He is saying that our obedience triggers the manifestation (at least) of His love, in an ongoing relationship. We have probably all heard of ‘unconditional love’, but I wonder if they really know what they are talking about. It may be that God offers us His love without prior condition, but to enter into that love we have to believe into Jesus, which involves commitment on our part. Love that is not reciprocated becomes frustrated love.

^g I take it that ‘my joy’ is not exactly the same as ‘your joy’. I can often tell when God is happy with me, and when He is not, and it is directly tied to the level of my obedience. I take it that His joy remaining in us refers to His being happy with us; of course the only way our joy can be full is if He is indeed happy with us (because of our obedience).

^h Comparing this command with verse 9 it appears that we are to love just like God loves! Help! How can we manage that? Well, maybe that is why we need the Enabler—only under the control of the Holy Spirit can I love as God does.

has greater love than this, that someone should lay down his life for his friends.^a

14You are my friends if you do whatever I command you.

15“I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his owner is doing; rather I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I heard from my Father.^b **16**It was not you who chose me but I who chose you, and I appointed you so that you should go and produce fruit, and that your fruit should endure, so that whatever you may ask the Father in my name He may give you. **17**These things I command you so that you love one another.^c

The world hates

18“When the world hates you, you can be sure that it has hated me first. **19**If you were of the world, the world would be fond of its own.^d So because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, that is why the world hates you.^e **20**Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his owner.’^f If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. **21**Now they will do all of these things to you because of my name, in that they do not know the One who sent me. **22**If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be having sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. **23**The one who hates me hates my Father too. **24**If I had not done among them the works that no one else has done, they would not be having sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.^g **25**However, this was so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled, ‘They hated me without cause.’^h

26“Now when the Enabler comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of the Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify concerning me. **27**And you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.ⁱ

16 ¹“I have spoken these things to you to avoid your being caused to stumble^j ²—they will excommunicate you; indeed, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering God service!^a ³And they will do these things

^a That is how Jesus proved His love for us.

^b We can be ‘horses’ (Psalm 32:9), slaves or friends. A ‘horse’ is a Christian who does his own thing, who does not listen to God—He has to use pain to get his attention. A slave listens, and obeys, but the owner does not necessarily explain the big picture, the dream, the plan. With a friend you share your dream, the big idea. Jesus offers us the privilege of being friends, but there is one little detail—you cannot be a friend without being a slave! I take that to be the point of verse 14.

^c I understand the Text to be saying that our loving one another is the intended result of the commands, not their content.

^d The Greek verb is φιλέω, not αγαπάω. Actually, there is little, if any, αγαπη love in the world.

^e If the world doesn’t hate you, perhaps you should stop and take stock. Why not? Are you just like them? Nothing about you challenges their lifestyle?

^f See Matthew 10:24.

^g Presumably the Lord is not saying that they were sinless; I take it He is referring to a particular sin—they rejected the full light that He brought, and are now overtly hating Him and the Father. Before Jesus ministered among them, they claimed that they loved God, and maybe actually thought that they did, but the Light exposed what they really were.

^h This statement may be found in Psalm 35:19 and 69:4. Verses 9 and 21 of Psalm 69 are also applied to Christ in the NT. Notice that Jesus calls the book of Psalms their ‘law’.

ⁱ It is after the coming of the Enabler that they will testify. In fact, they pretty much stayed in hiding until He came, but then they became bold as lions.

^j Suffering and persecution causes some Christians to doubt God, and even to rebel against Him, and Jesus does not want that to happen to them.

because they have not known either the Father or me. ⁴Now I have told you these things so that when the time comes you may remember that I told you about them; I did not tell you these things from the beginning because I was with you.^b

What the Enabler will do

⁵“Now then, I am going away to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless I am telling you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, because if I do not go away the Enabler will not come to you, but if I do go I will send Him to you.^c

⁸“Now when He comes he will convict the world about sin and about righteousness and about judgment: ⁹first about sin, because they do not believe into me;^d ¹⁰then about righteousness, because I am going away to my Father and you will no longer see me;^e ¹¹then about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.^f

¹²“I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear it now.^g ¹³However, when He, the Spirit of the Truth, has come, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears.^h He will also communicate to you the things that are coming. ¹⁴He will glorify me because He will take of what is mine and communicate it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine;ⁱ that is why I said that He takes from what is mine and will communicate it to you.

Sorrow to joy

¹⁶“In just a little you will not see me, and in another little you will see me, because I am going to the Father.”^j ¹⁷Then some of His disciples said among themselves: “What is this that He is telling us, ‘In just a little you will not see me, and in another little you will see me,’ and because ‘I am going to the Father?’” ¹⁸So they said: “What is this ‘little’ that He mentions? We do not know what He is talking about.”^k

^a Like Saul of Tarsus—he thought he was serving God by persecuting the Christians (see Acts 23:1).

^b While Jesus was with them they enjoyed His protection.

^c Jesus could only be physically present in one place at a time. The Holy Spirit can be in all believers all around the world all the time—clearly to our advantage.

^d Since to believe into Jesus is the only cure for sin, to reject Him is the ultimate sin—you lock yourself into the consequences = spiritual death.

^e The resurrection was the proof that the Father accepted the sacrifice of the Lamb (Romans 4:25, he “was raised **because** of our justification”)—having committed no sin of His own, Jesus could pay for ours. If He had committed sin on His own, He could not return to the Father.

^f If the big boss has been judged, then no one under him will escape.

^g We have no record that He told them those things during the 40 days before His Ascension, so it may have been left for the Spirit to do (verse 13)—although probably a lot happened during those days that is not recorded.

^h Whenever the Son spoke, it was really the Father speaking (John 12:50); the same is true of the Holy Spirit. The Trinity works together.

ⁱ Wow!

^j Perhaps 0.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “because I am going to the Father” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^k With hindsight it appears that the first ‘little’ referred to the less than 24 hours before His burial, when He would be hidden from view. The second ‘little’ would refer to the forty days between resurrection and ascension, during which they did indeed see Him.

¹⁹Well Jesus knew that they were wanting to question Him and said to them: “Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, ‘In just a little you will not see me, and in another little you will see me’?” ²⁰Most assuredly I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will become grieved,^a but your grief will be turned into joy.^b ²¹When a woman gives birth she has pain, because her time has come; but when the child is born she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. ²²So in your turn you are now experiencing grief, but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³In that day^c you will not question me about anything.

“Most assuredly I say to you that whatever you ask the Father in my name He will give you. ²⁴Until now you have not asked anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Figures of speech

²⁵“I have told you these things using figures of speech, but a time is coming when I will no longer talk to you with figures of speech; rather I will tell you plainly about the Father. ²⁶In that day you will ask in my name; I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf, ²⁷because the Father Himself is fond of you,^d in that you have become fond of me and have believed that I came forth from God. ²⁸I did come forth from the Father and have come into the world. I am leaving the world again^e and am going to the Father.”

²⁹His disciples say to Him: “Hey, now you are speaking plainly and using no figure of speech! ³⁰Now we know that you know everything and don’t need anyone to question you.^f By this we believe that you came forth from God.”^g

“Take heart!”

³¹Jesus answered them: “Do you believe now, *really*? ³²Listen, an hour is coming, actually it has already arrived, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and you will leave me alone.^h Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³I have spoken these things to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression;ⁱ but take heart, I have conquered the world!”^j

^a This refers to the first ‘little’—upon His death they will **really** be grieved.

^b This refers to the second ‘little’—upon His resurrection there will be joy.

^c Perhaps the ‘day’ here is different from the one in 14:20; and yet, even after seeing the risen Lord, they still got discouraged. By the sea shore Peter still asked Him a question, so maybe the ‘day’ is the same as in 14:20. It was the coming of the Holy Spirit that gave them joy that could not be stolen.

^d The verb is φιλεω, not αγαπαω.

^e Jehovah the Son had visited this world many times during the O.T. period. During the 33+ years of incarnation He changed His abode (John 1:14).

^f They seem to be implying that before He was confused and needed help; their questions made Him think things through, or some such thing. But now He finally got it sorted out! (If it were not so pitiful it would be humorous.)

^g I frankly don’t understand the disciples’ reasoning here. How about all His miracles, etc. etc.?

^h It happened that very night.

ⁱ Just so. Any system dominated by Satan will be oppressive, for everybody, but his special malice will be directed at those who serve Christ.

^j Yes, amen! I take it that the ‘world’ here refers to the world system controlled by Satan. Jesus did indeed conquer it. He lived within that system for 33 years without ever succumbing to it, without ever being tainted by it. Since He conquered the world, we can too! So let’s take heart!

Jesus prays

17 ¹Jesus spoke these things,^a raising His eyes to Heaven and saying:

For Himself

“Father, the hour has come! Glorify Your Son, so that Your Son also may glorify You, ²just as You gave Him authority over all humanity, so that He will give eternal life to all those whom You have given Him.^b ³Now eternal life is this: that they may know You,^c the only true God, and the One whom You sent—Jesus Christ.^d ⁴I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You have given me to do.^e ⁵So now, Father, You glorify me by Your side with the glory that I had along with You before the world existed!^f

For the Apostles

⁶I have revealed Your name^g to the men whom You have given me out of the world. They were Yours and You gave them to me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷They now know that everything You have given to me is from You; ⁸because I have given them the sayings which You have given to me; and they have received and known for sure that I came forth from You,^h and they have believed that You sent me. ⁹I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given me, because they are yours. ¹⁰Actually, all my things are Yours and Yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹Now I am no longer in the world,ⁱ yet these are in the world, and I am coming to You.

^a I take it that ‘these things’ is cataphoric, referring forward to the content of the prayer.

^b Here is a clear statement of divine participation in our salvation. The whole process is under the authority of the Father.

^c I take it that the reference here is to experiential knowledge. ‘Eternal life’ refers mainly to a quality of life (more than longevity), and that quality is defined by relationship with the Father. The person who conceives of God as a distant, detached authority figure doesn’t really know Him.

^d This is the first recorded time that the Lord used this title, ‘Jesus Christ’ (in Matthew 16:20 there is ‘Jesus, the Christ’—as in over 95% of the Greek manuscripts). He did so when He could also say, “I have finished the work that You have given me to do” (next verse) (He still had a few hours to go, but is declaring His victory). In Acts and the epistles the title is very frequent—it affirms that Jesus is the Messiah. Also, what happens to those who only ‘know’ the Father, but not the Son?

^e The older I get, finishing ‘the work You have given me to do’ looms larger and larger in my mind.

^f As it says in 1 Peter 1:19-20, the Lamb, with His blood shed, was foreknown before the foundation of the world. Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:10 and John 1:3,10 make clear that the Son was the primary agent in the creation of this planet. So Jehovah the Son is both Creator and Lamb—before He created He knew that man would rebel and He Himself would have to pay the terrible ransom. From our Lord’s statement here I get the impression that as soon as the Son started dealing with this planet He gave up some of His glory. So now He is asking to have it back. Ephesians 1:20-21 makes clear that the Father granted His request, the Son is back where He was before. And He took us with Him (Ephesians 2:6)! Thank You, Lord!! Also, our Lord’s statement here goes against any ‘Gnostic’ type view that has Jesus beginning as an inferior being and working up through successive levels of perfection, or what have you.

^g “Your name” = “You”; a person’s name represents that person. This is very clear in John 3:18. Jesus revealed the Father to the world.

^h Over and over again the Lord returns to the theme of their knowing and believing where He came from, His divine origin. So this must be important! Someone who does not believe that Jesus is God cannot be a true Christian.

ⁱ He would still be around for another forty days, or so, but the countdown has begun.

“Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given to me, so that they may be one just as we are.^a **12**While I was with them in the world I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You gave me, and not one of them was lost except the son of perdition, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.^b **13**But now I am coming to You, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made full in them.^c

14“I have given them Your word;^d and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **15**I am not asking that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the malignant one.^e **16**They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.^f **17**Sanctify them by Your Truth; Your Word is Truth.^g **18**Just as You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.^h **19**And for their sakes I sanctify myself,ⁱ so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

For all believers

20“I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe into me through their word; **21**that they all may be one, just as You, Father, are in me and I in You; that in Us they also may be one, so that the world may believe that You sent me. **22**In fact, the glory that You gave to me I have given to them,^j so that they may be one just as We are one: **23**I in them and You in me, so that they may be perfected into one; also so that the world may know that You sent me, and have loved them just as You have loved me.^k

^a I imagine that this will only be fully realized after we are glorified.

^b This is perhaps the clearest of a very few passages in the Bible that might be said to indicate what has been called ‘double predestination’ or ‘preterition’, that is, that someone is predestined to be lost. In Hebrew usage (Jesus, a Jew among Jews, was presumably speaking Hebrew here) a ‘son’ of something is characterized by that something; so a ‘son of perdition’ is characterized by lostness; the Scripture in question would be part of the Old Testament and hence written long before the person was born. (I have not been able to locate a clear text to that effect, but there are indirect ones.)

^c Although He was addressing the Father, Jesus evidently did so out loud—precisely so that the disciples would hear, with a view to joy.

^d Yes! Oh praise God! That Word delivers us from Satan’s kingdom in every way, including worldview. So it is only natural that Satan’s ‘world’ will hate us.

^e “The malignant one” is Satan. Satan got one of the twelve, but must not get any more of them.

^f He repeats what He just said in verse 14, so it must be important. Jesus was not of this world because He literally came from Heaven, which could not be said of those disciples. But in the context of verse 15 the reference is probably to the ‘world’ dominated by Satan, the system. Their allegiance is no longer to Satan’s system.

^g The Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify us; it is His ‘sword’ (Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12).

^h See John 20:21.

ⁱ To ‘sanctify’ something to God means to separate/dedicate/consecrate it for His exclusive use. While on earth Jesus concentrated His attention and energies on a single goal, to execute the Plan, the Father’s will. To the extent that we pay attention to the Truth, we will do the same.

^j What ‘glory’ was that? In Romans 3:23 I imagine that the ‘glory’ of God has to do with His essence, His character. The new ‘man’ or nature that a regenerated person receives is related to that essence/ character. It is that nature in common that makes us ‘one’. However, since most Christians seldom allow the new nature to control them, in practice we don’t see all that much unity. But in Heaven it will come to fruition.

^k Tremendous!

²⁴“Father, those whom You have given to me, I desire that they also may be with me where I am,^a so that they may observe my glory, which You have given me, because You loved me before the founding of the world. ²⁵Righteous Father! Indeed the world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent me. ²⁶Yes, I have made Your name known to them and will make it known, so that the love with which You have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”^b

Betrayal and arrest

18 ¹Having said these things Jesus went out with His disciples across the Kidron ravine, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. ²Now Judas, the one betraying Him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with His disciples. ³So Judas, having received the detachment *of soldiers* and operatives from the chief priests and Pharisees, he arrives there with lanterns, torches and weapons.

Jesus knocks the soldiers down with His word

⁴Then Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to Him, went forward and said to them, “Who are you looking for?” ⁵They answered Him, “Jesus the Natsorean.” Jesus says to them, “I am he.” (Now Judas, His betrayer, was also standing with them.) ⁶So when He said to them, “I am he,” they went backward and fell to the ground!^c ⁷Then He asked them again, “Who are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus the Natsorean.” ⁸Jesus answered: “I told you that I am he. So if it is me you are looking for, allow these men to go” ⁹(so that the word that He spoke might be fulfilled, “Of those you have given me I did not lose even one”).^d

¹⁰Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.)^e ¹¹So Jesus said to Peter: “Sheathe the sword!^f The cup that the Father has given me, must I not drink it?”

To Annas first

¹²Then the detachment, the commander^g and the operatives of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. ¹³They took Him to Annas first, because he was

^a He wants His bride.

^b Here is the ‘spiral’ again: the more we know, the more we love, the more we obey...

^c Have you ever tried to imagine this scene? Try imagining that you are one those soldiers, and the person you have been sent to arrest knocks you down, just with his word! So are you going to want to try anything against him, really? Hey, I think I would get up and run away as fast and as far as I could! I see two miracles here: 1) He knocked them down with His word; 2) He obliged them to stay there and get on with their job, because it was the appointed time for Him to be taken, tried and crucified. But He made it perfectly clear that He was in control of the situation.

^d I take it that the Iscariot had not been given to Him by the Father, at least in the sense of 17:6—“They were Yours and You gave them to me”. Presumably the Iscariot never belonged to the Father.

^e John probably knew him personally; see verse 15 below.

^f We know from Luke 22:51 that Jesus healed the ear, or Peter could have been in trouble. The parallel accounts give more detail.

^g The word here (*chiliarch*) refers to a commander of a thousand men (or of a cohort = about 600); this could only be a Roman officer of high rank. So how did they get him to come along? Obviously Pilate had been informed and was participating. For a detailed discussion, please see the Appendix: “Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time”.

JOHN 18

the father-in-law of Caiaphas,^a who was high priest that year.^b ¹⁴(Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.)

Peter denies Jesus

¹⁵Now Simon Peter kept following Jesus, as also the other disciple. Well that disciple was known to the high priest,^c so he went into the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶But Peter was *left* standing outside by the door. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper (*f*), and brought Peter in. ¹⁷So the servant girl, the doorkeeper, says to Peter, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?"^d He says, "I am not!" ¹⁸Now the servants and operatives had made a charcoal fire, because it was cold,^e and they were standing there warming themselves. So Peter stood with them and warmed himself.^f

Caiaphas interrogates Jesus

¹⁹Then the high priest questioned Jesus about His disciples and about His teaching. ²⁰Jesus answered him: "I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogue and temple, where the Jews always congregate, and I have spoken nothing in secret. ²¹Why do you question me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them. Sure, they know what I said."^g ²²But upon His saying these things one of the operatives standing by slapped Jesus saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If I spoke wrongly, identify the wrong; but if rightly, why do you hit me?"^h ²⁴(Annas had sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.)ⁱ

^a The bigger reason was that Annas was the real high priest, according to the Law (the office of high priest was for life). He was the power behind the throne, so to say. Caiaphas was the political high priest (that year), for purposes of dealing with Rome.

^b A careful look at the parallel accounts makes clear that all of Peter's denials took place at Caiaphas' palace, as also all the recorded questionings, etc. So between verses 13 and 15 Jesus is taken to Caiaphas (see verse 24 below).

^c Annas is never referred to as the high priest by John, so this is Caiaphas.

^d Everyone there, including the girl, knows that John belongs to Jesus, so her question is perfectly natural, without malice—she assumes that Peter must also. Notice that Peter denies right in front of John! Don't you know that John kept his eye on Peter from that moment on!

^e It was after midnight in early April.

^f For a detailed discussion of Peter's denials, please see the Appendix: "How many times did Jesus say Peter would deny Him?".

^g The Lord's observation here was perfectly reasonable and in accord with the law. The priest should have produced witnesses, rather than asking Jesus to testify against Himself.

^h Since everything that was going on was unjust and illegal, I find it to be curious that Jesus reprimanded the man.

ⁱ The eclectic text, following about 9% of the Greek manuscripts, reads "then Annas sent...", creating a conflict with the parallel passages (perhaps 1% read "but Annas sent/had sent..."). The use of parenthetical comments, or historical/cultural asides, is standard procedure for John; for a partial list see: 1:44, 2:6, 4:2,9,44, 6:4,64, 7:50, 9:14, 11:2,18-19,30-31, 12:1,6,16, 13:2,11,28-29 (there are at least a dozen more). I take it that verse 24 here is just one more instance; it is as if at this point John realizes that the reader could think that the proceedings were still going on at Annas' house.

Peter again

²⁵Well Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, “You aren’t one of His disciples too, are you?”^a So he denied it and said, “I am not!” ²⁶One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the one whose ear Peter had sliced, says, “Didn’t I see you with Him in the garden?”^b ²⁷So Peter denied again, and immediately a rooster crowed.^c

Crucifixion day*Jesus taken to Pilate*

²⁸Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. They themselves did not enter the Praetorium, so that they would not be defiled but could eat the Passover.^d ²⁹So Pilate went out to them^e and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” ³⁰In reply they said to him, “If he were not an evil-doer we would not have handed him over to you.”^f ³¹So Pilate said to them, “You take him and judge him according to your law.” So the Jews said to him, “We are not permitted to execute anyone.”^g ³²(This was to fulfill the statement that Jesus made, indicating what sort of death He was about to die.)^h

Pilate and Jesus

³³Then Pilate went back into the Praetorium, called Jesus and said to Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” ³⁴Jesus answered him, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others inform you about me?” ³⁵Pilate answered Him: “I’m not a Jew, am I? Your own nation, that is, the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶Jesus answered: “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my subjects would fight so that I not be delivered to

^a We don’t know what John was doing all this time, except that he was right there in that compound; I think it perfectly likely that he would talk to Peter from time to time. They knew that John was a disciple, but did not know Peter. Also, the windows of the house were doubtless open (no air conditioning), so they probably heard Caiaphas ask about His disciples. Actually, Luke 22:61 says Jesus turned and looked at Peter, so the window had to be open, and Jesus was near the window but with His back to it. Since Caiaphas was presumably facing Jesus he was also facing the open window and his voice would certainly carry out to the patio. Their question was not unreasonable.

^b Now here we have a little malice; you can imagine the intonation in the man’s voice! Peter goes into a cold sweat. I bet he was wishing he was someplace else. (I wonder if he was still wearing his sword.)

^c In keeping with his usual procedure, John records three denials by Peter that are not mentioned by the other Evangelists, and I would say that the rooster crow here is the first of the two (Mark 14:68, 72). A close comparison of all the details surrounding the denials (who provoked it, in what terms, when, where, Peter’s response) shows that there had to be a minimum of six, more likely eight, denials—3/4 before the first rooster crow, 3/4 before the second. Peter was being satanized (Luke 22:31), and it took a look from the Lord to break the spell (Luke 22:61).

^d Aren’t these guys cute? They are perpetrating a totally illegal and immoral plot, but they think they are squeaky clean, no problem—but to set foot in the Praetorium, now that would be dirty! If your values are twisted, you are twisted.

^e It seems to me obvious that the hierarchy had made a deal with Pilate; he was waiting. Hey, you do not go marching up to the Governor’s headquarters at 5:30 a.m. and demand a hearing; and there is no indication that Pilate came out in his pajamas. He was up, dressed and waiting.

^f Their answer seems a bit petulant. I gather that the deal they thought they had with Pilate included that he would just take Jesus and condemn Him. Pilate’s attitude takes them by surprise.

^g Pilate was rubbing salt in their wound, reminding them that they were a subjugated people—he knew they wanted to kill Jesus, so when he tells them to judge Him he forces them to acknowledge their subjugation. (Roman governors were probably not appointed on the basis of being nice.)

^h Jesus had to die on a cross, but crucifixion was a Roman procedure, not Jewish—they would probably have stoned Him.

the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from here.”^a ³⁷So Pilate said to Him, “You are a king then?” Jesus answered: “As you say, I am a king; for this I was born. And for this I came into the world, to testify to the Truth. Everyone who is of the Truth hears my voice.” ³⁸Pilate says to Him, “What is truth?”^b

Barabbas

Upon saying this he went out to the Jews again and says to them: “I find no crime in him at all.”^c ³⁹Now we^d have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover; so do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you?” ⁴⁰Then they all cried out saying, “Not this fellow, but Barabbas!” Well, Barabbas was a bandit!

Soldiers mock Jesus

19 ¹So then Pilate took Jesus and had Him flogged. ²And the soldiers twisted a crown out of [poisonous] thorns and put it on His head; they also threw a purple robe around Him ³and started saying, “Hail, O King of the Jews!” And they slapped Him repeatedly.

“Behold the Man!”

⁴Pilate then went out again and says to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no crime in him at all.”^e ⁵Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe; and *Pilate* says to them, “Look at the man!” ⁶Well when the chief priests and the operatives saw Him they shouted, saying, “Crucify! Crucify him!” Pilate says to them, “**You** take and crucify him, because I find no crime in him.”^f ⁷The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he made himself ‘Son of God!’”

Pilate and Jesus, again

⁸Hey, when Pilate heard this statement he was more afraid than ever!^g ⁹So back into the Praetorium he went and says to Jesus, “**Where** are you from?” But Jesus did not answer him. ¹⁰So Pilate says to Him: “Are you not speaking to **me**? Don’t you know that I have authority to crucify you and authority to release you?” ¹¹Jesus answered: “You would have no authority over me at all if it had not been

^a But one day, probably quite soon now, it will be.

^b Apparently the question was rhetorical; he didn’t wait for an answer.

^c Comparing John with Luke 23:4-12 it appears that between verses 38 and 39 here Jesus was sent to Herod. Notice that Pilate declares Jesus to be innocent.

^d I here follow the best line of transmission, although representing only some 20% of the manuscripts. Upon reflection this reading looks correct—how could the Jews have a custom that placed an obligation on their conquerors?

^e Pilate’s reasoning is not obvious to me, unless the normal procedure would be to get on with the execution. But Pilate is not happy and is looking for a way out; he had received a message from his wife in the meantime (Matthew 27:19). Perhaps he hoped they would be satisfied when they saw how much He had already suffered.

^f This is the second time that Pilate declares that he finds no crime in Jesus. He is declaring His innocence, so he will knowingly condemn an innocent man.

^g And not without reason. The conversation recorded in 18:33-37 would certainly have impressed Pilate and left him troubled. Then his wife added fuel to the fire. And now this. Pilate was not a religious type, presumably, but Jesus was impressive! Pilate was in over his head, and knew it.

given to you from Above.^a Therefore the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”

The Jews best Pilate

¹²From that moment Pilate really tried to release Him; but the Jews kept shouting, saying: “If you release this fellow you are no friend of Caesar’s! Whoever makes himself a king is opposing Caesar!”^b ¹³Well, upon hearing this statement Pilate led Jesus outside and sat down on the judgment seat, in a place called ‘Stone Pavement’, while in Hebrew ‘*Gabatha*’^c ¹⁴(now it was the day of preparation for the Passover;^d the hour was about six a.m.),^e and he says to the Jews, “Look at your king!” ¹⁵But they shouted, “Out! Out! Crucify him!” Pilate says to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”^f ¹⁶So then he handed Him over to them to be crucified.

Jesus is crucified

So they took Jesus and lead Him away. ¹⁷And carrying His cross He went out to the place called ‘Skull’, which in Hebrew is called ‘*Golgotha*’; ¹⁸there they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle. ¹⁹Now Pilate had also written a notice, and put it on the cross; and the inscription was:

JESUS THE NATSOREAN^g
THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁰So many of the Jews read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; further, it was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin!^h ²¹So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Don’t write, ‘The king of the Jews’,

^a Pilate represented the Roman empire, the greatest temporal power at that time (whose ruler was supposedly divine), but Jesus calmly affirms that there is a higher power and that He represents that higher power—and Pilate believed Him! Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus, and really tried to avoid it, but the Jews did an end run.

^b Oops! Pilate owed his position to Caesar’s good graces, and simply could not afford to do something that could be construed (even with a little twisting) as treason. He is beaten and knows it.

^c This action signaled that he had reached a decision and was about to give the verdict.

^d If the Jews were still preparing for the Passover, then Jesus and His disciples observed it a day early—which must have seemed strange to the disciples. But as the ultimate Passover Lamb, Jesus had to die on that preparation day.

^e The Text says “the sixth hour”, which in Roman time is six a.m. If it were Jewish time it would be noon, which will not work here. Actually it says ‘around’ or ‘about’ six—I assume that it was a little after the hour.

^f Ah, Pilate gets his ‘pound of flesh’. He doubtless knew a bit about Jewish culture and religion, including their messianic hopes. In effect the Jews here deny the Messiah—Caesar is their only king! Pilate rescued this bit of satisfaction out of a bad deal.

^g That Pilate put “the Natsorean” (not Natsarene [Nazarene]) indicates that he had researched Jesus. The reference is to Isaiah 11:1: Jesus was David’s Branch, the Messiah. Pilate was making a statement.

^h Comparing the other Gospels, the full inscription was, “This is Jesus the Natsorean, the King of the Jews”. To put all of that in three languages would require a board of fair size. But why did Pilate use three languages? One would have been enough (it was customary to put the crime over the victim’s head). I take it that Pilate was **not** happy, having been bested by the Jews; and as I have said above, I think he was personally convinced that Jesus was a king. By putting ‘this is the king of the Jews’ he was making a statement, one that virtually any literate person would be able to read, given the three languages.

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but that the fellow said, 'I am the king of the Jews.'" ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written!"^a

Psalm 22:18 is fulfilled

²³Now when the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took His clothes and made four parts, a part for each soldier.^b They also took His tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. ²⁴So they said among themselves, "Let's not rip it, but toss for it, *to see* whose it will be," so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast a lot."

That is why the soldiers did these things.^c

Jesus provides for His mother

²⁵Now Jesus' mother and her sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were standing by His cross. ²⁶So Jesus, seeing His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He says to His mother, "Woman, there is your son!" ²⁷Then He says to the disciple, "There is your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.^d

The shout of victory

²⁸After this, knowing that everything was now accomplished so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus says, "I'm thirsty!" ²⁹Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; so they filled a sponge with sour wine, placed it on a hyssop, and put it to His mouth. ³⁰Then, when He had received^e the sour wine, Jesus said, "Paid in full!"^f And bowing His head He dismissed His spirit.^g

^a The chief priests have gotten all they are going to get out of Pilate; he was making a statement, but he was also getting back at them a little bit.

^b This probably means that Jesus was left without any; one final bit of humiliation.

^c See Psalm 22:18. John seems to be affirming a cause/effect relationship. The centurion could have claimed the tunic, or whatever, but casting a lot had been prophesied.

^d Notice that Jesus is still perfectly lucid. As Mary's oldest son, He was responsible for her well-being (we understand that Joseph was gone by now), so He passes that responsibility over to the Apostle John (the author of this Gospel); and John accepts it.

^e From the word 'received' it appears that He did swallow some. Since sour wine was not used at the Passover, this does not conflict with the Lord's statement in the upper room (Matthew 26:29) that He would not drink of "this product of the vine". All four Evangelists mention the sour wine. There was evidently a pot/vessel full of it (the soldiers were in for many hours of vigil and that was what they drank). The mocking offer mentioned in Luke 23:36 happened before the darkness; the other three accounts after. The offer recorded in Matthew 27:48 and Mark 15:36 was triggered by Jesus' cry, "My God, my God..." The one in John 19:29-30 by His saying, "I am thirsty". I venture to suggest that there was an interval between His despairing cry and His statement—after the cry He may have lapsed back into silence for a bit; He was trying to make contact with the Father. It may be that the sour wine sort of 'wet His whistle' so He could let out His shout of victory.

^f Matthew, Mark and Luke all affirm that Jesus gave a great shout, but without giving the content. I take it that John supplies that information, although he does not mention that it was a shout. "*Τετέλεσται*"—that was what they wrote on bills and promissory notes when they were paid off = 'paid in full'. When something is shouted the individual sounds can be distorted, but John was right there and could read His lips, if necessary. It was a shout of victory: "We did it!" "Finished!" "Paid in full!"

^g That is right—the cross did not kill Jesus, He just told His spirit to leave. In John 10:17-18 he was very clear: no one could take His life from Him, but He could lay it down (please see the note at John 10:18).

A soldier spears His side

³¹Now then, because it was Preparation Day, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews requested Pilate that their legs might be broken and they be removed. ³²Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other one who had been crucified with Him. ³³But upon coming to Jesus, they did not break His legs, since they saw that He had already died. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵And the one who saw has testified,^a and his testimony is true (yes, he knows he is telling the truth), so that you may believe. ³⁶Because these things happened so that the Scripture should be fulfilled: “Not a bone of His will be broken.”^b ³⁷And again another Scripture says: “They will look on Him whom they pierced.”^c

Jesus is buried

³⁸After these things Joseph, the one from Arimathea (being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews), requested Pilate that he might remove the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave permission. So he came and removed Jesus’ body. ³⁹Now Nicodemus also came^d (the one who at first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.^e ⁴⁰Then they took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in linen strips, with the aromatic spices, according to the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹Now at the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried.^f ⁴²So that is where they put Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, since the tomb was nearby.

Resurrection Day**The empty tomb*

20 ¹Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb early, while it is still dark, and sees that the stone has been removed from the tomb. ²So she runs and comes to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and says to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and

^a John, the author of this Gospel, was right there (verses 25-26 above), so he could see very clearly what came out of Jesus’ side—that the blood had separated was a clear sign of physical death. (I guess we don’t need to know, really, just how the separation came about, whether by purely natural processes or with supernatural intervention; in any case, John is emphatic about what he saw.)

^b See Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and Psalm 34:20.

^c See Zechariah 12:10.

^d He helped Joseph take down the body, and they transported it to the tomb in a linen sheet (Matthew 27:59).

^e Do you suppose they just ‘happened’ to have a hundred pounds of expensive spices lying around? Almost certainly everything had been prepared before hand, including the tomb, on purpose. These men had doubtless received specific instructions and were waiting in the wings to perform their part.

^f Isaiah 53:9 affirms that the Messiah would have a rich man’s burial, and He did—a brand new tomb (rather large), and a hundred pounds of expensive spices. The body of an executed criminal would normally be treated ignominiously, and I imagine that was what the high priests intended, but the Father made sure that the Son received an honorable burial. Matthew 27:60 informs us that Joseph had himself prepared that tomb, and he did so at a spot near Golgotha. The next verse (here in John) indicates that this was done on purpose, for the reason mentioned. Joseph and Nicodemus clearly did what they did under divine guidance, and of course God knew that the tomb would need to be near Golgotha, etc.

^g For a harmonization of all the details furnished by the four Gospel accounts, please see the Appendix: “Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection”.

we^a don't know where they put Him!"^b ³So Peter and the other disciple took off, heading for the tomb. ⁴Well the two started running together, and the other disciple outran Peter and got to the tomb first. ⁵And stooping to look he sees the linen strips lying there; however he did not go in. ⁶Then following him comes Simon Peter and went into the tomb; and he sees the linen strips lying there, ⁷and the facecloth^c that had been on His head not lying with the linen strips, but folded up in a separate place.

John sees and believes

⁸So then the other disciple went in too, the one who got to the tomb first; and he saw and believed.^d ⁹(For they did not yet know the Scripture, that He had to rise from among the dead.)^e ¹⁰Then the disciples went back home.

Jesus appears first to Magdalene

¹¹Well Mary stood outside at the tomb, crying.^f Then, while she was crying, she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹²And she sees two angels^g in white, sitting one at the head and one at the feet of where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³And they say to her, "Woman, why are you crying?" She says to them, "Because they removed my Lord, and I don't know where they put Him." ¹⁴And upon saying this she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, yet did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus says to her: "Woman, why are you crying? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing that He was the gardener, says to Him, "Sir, if you carried Him away, tell me where you put Him, and I will remove Him." ¹⁶Jesus says to her, "Mary!" Turning she says to Him, "Raboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷Jesus says to her: "Stop clinging to me,^h for I have not yet ascended to my Father;^a but go to

^a "We"—presumably Magdalene is referring to the other women who were with her, as in the parallel accounts.

^b Pure supposition—she had not looked in the tomb; she jumped to a false conclusion. It is clear that there was no longer a shining angel sitting on the stone outside (Matthew 28:2).

^c That there was a facecloth indicates that there was not a sheet that covered the body from head to toe (as in the 'shroud of Turin'). This was also true of Lazarus (John 11:44).

^d What did John 'see' that made him 'believe'? He saw the linen strips 'lying', that is, in the form of the body, only there was no body inside them! If someone had stolen the body, as Magdalene supposed, they would have taken the wrapped package (much easier to carry, not to mention 100 pounds of expensive spices) and there would have been no linen strips. If someone had unwrapped the body there would have been a mound of linen strips and spices piled up (how much cloth would it take to wrap up a hundred pounds of spices?). No, Jesus simply passed through the cloth, as He would later pass through the wall, leaving the package like a mummy or empty cocoon. When John saw that he understood that the only possible explanation was resurrection.

^e But they should have; Jesus had told them repeatedly. But wait just a minute! Where in the OT is there such a Scripture? John wrote this Gospel over fifteen years after the other three had been 'published' and were in circulation, so his term 'Scripture' may be referring to them.

^f When the disciples took off running, of course Magdalene followed them back to the tomb. But she was winded, and could not keep up with them (actually, in that culture women probably seldom ran, so she would really be out of breath, but she was not about to be left out of the action, either). The Jerusalem at that time probably covered a relatively small area; it was probably no more than half a mile from the house to the tomb, if that, so she may have arrived as they were leaving; if not, they would pass her on the road.

^g How did John know they were angels? He had just been there and knew there were no human beings around (the guards were presumably gone before the two got there). The angels were in white, but probably not shining, or Magdalene would have been shaken out of her despair. She was so locked in to her sorrow that not even seeing the wrappings collapsed without the body sank in.

^h That is what the Text says. I take it that Magdalene was an emotive person, capable of sudden 'ups' and 'downs'. From the way the Lord pronounced her name she knew who it was; from deep sorrow she

my brothers^b and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father—my God and your God.’”¹⁸ Mary Magdalene goes to the disciples, reporting that she had seen the Lord and He had said these things to her.

Disciples commissioned

¹⁹Then at evening on that first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the middle, and He says to them, “Peace to you!”²⁰ And upon saying this He showed them His hands and His side. Well, the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord!²¹ So Jesus said to them again: “Peace to you!^e Just as the Father sent me, I also send you.”^d ²²Upon saying this He breathed on them and said: “Receive Holy Spirit!^e ²³To whomever you forgive the sins,^f they are forgiven to them; to whomever you retain, they have been retained.”^g

Thomas

²⁴Now one of the twelve, Thomas (called Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he

swings to a transport of joy and impulsively throws her arms around Him. Hey, she is **not** thinking of how this is going to read 2000 years later: in fact, she is not thinking at all, just feeling.

^a The causal connection here seems difficult to us—what did His not having ascended have to do with it? Various suggestions have been offered. My guess is as follows: Magdalene had not heard the teaching in the Upper Room, more precisely, John 16:7. “I am telling you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, because if I do not go away the Enabler will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you.” She had just gotten her Master back and was not about to turn Him loose—she was feeling, not thinking. But Jesus had to ascend so He could send the Enabler, which would be better for everybody. She wants to hang on to Him, but He tells her to stop: the old relationships are gone, everything is now new. (Within a very few minutes He will allow the other women to hold His feet, so mere physical contact is not the problem; in fact, He will later invite the disciples to touch Him.)

^b He does not just reprimand her, He gives her something to do. But just who are the “brothers”? Since the angel had told the other women to tell the disciples, I am inclined to imagine that the Lord sends her to His half brothers, although she started out with the disciples (next verse).

^c This is what He said “again”, having already said it (verse 19).

^d This is tremendous! In my own experience (as a missionary, son of missionaries), I have seldom heard a missionary challenge based on John 20:21. The champion is Matthew 28:19-20, ‘the great commission’, followed by Mark 16:15 and perhaps Acts 1:8; but John 20:21? “Just as... so also”—Jesus is sending us just like the Father sent Him. So how did They do it? The Father determined and the Son obeyed: “Behold, I have come to do your will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7). And what was that will? To destroy Satan (Hebrews 2:14) and undo his works (1 John 3:8). Since Jesus did indeed defeat Satan (Colossians 2:15, Ephesians 1:20-21, etc.) what is left for us is the undoing of his works. For more on this subject see my article, “Biblical Spiritual Warfare”, available from my site, www.prunch.org.

^e There is no definite article with “Holy Spirit” and I hesitate to add it. Perhaps we should try thinking of ‘Holy Spirit’ as a proper name.

^f This is a literal rendering, but I hesitate to change it. The primary reference is presumably to the sins of that person, but it is sometimes necessary to pronounce forgiveness for sins of past generations (see 2 Samuel 21:1-14).

^g That is what the Text says, “have been”. The idea seems to be that sins are already retained (as soon as a sin is committed it is on the account); Jesus gives them the prerogative to change that situation, undoing the retaining, as it were. Presumably the forgiving and retaining have to do with the consequences of the sin in this life (not for salvation). I take it that the undoing of Satan’s works (1 John 3:8) must reverse consequences (to the extent that this may be possible). Since Satan is involved in all sin, indirectly at least (or so I imagine), I conclude that verse 23 here falls within the competence of anyone who has the Holy Spirit.

said to them, “If I do not see the nail prints in His hands and put my finger into the nail prints, and put my hand into His side, I will **not** believe!”^a

²⁶Well after eight days^b His disciples were inside again, and Thomas with them. The doors were locked [again]; Jesus came and stood in the middle, and said, “Peace to you!” ²⁷Then He says to Thomas: “Bring your finger here and perceive my hands; bring your hand and put it into my side;^c do not be unbelieving but believing!” ²⁸Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus says to him: “Because you have observed me, you have believed. Blessed are those who believe without seeing!”^d

Why this book

³⁰Now then, Jesus actually performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, that are not written in this book; ³¹but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have Life through His Name.

Epilogue

Breakfast on the beach

21 ¹After these things Jesus, risen from the dead,^e revealed Himself to His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and He did it like this: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called Twin), Nathanael (from Cana of Galilee), Zebedee’s sons^f and two others of His disciples were together. ³Simon Peter says to them, “I’m going fishing.” They say to him, “We’re coming with you.” Off they went and got right into the boat, and that whole night they caught nothing.

⁴Well when daybreak had now come Jesus stood on the beach; however the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Then Jesus says to them, “Boys, you don’t have any food, do you?” They answered Him, “No.”^g ⁶So He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find.” So they did,^h and now they were unable to haul it in because of the multitude of fish! ⁷Then that disciple whom Jesus loved says to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” Upon hearing that it was the Lord, Simon Peter tied on his outer garment (for he was stripped) and plunged into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the little boat dragging the net with the fish (for they were not far from the land, but about 100 yards).

⁹Then, as they stepped onto the land they saw a charcoal fire in place with fish lying on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus says to them, “Bring some of the fish that you

^a Thomas is very emphatic. Jesus is dead and his hopes are too! (Presumably he had watched the crucifixion from a distance.)

^b Their method of calculation included the day from which the count was made (as they do in Brazil as well), so this is the next Sunday.

^c Since Jesus had not been there to hear Thomas, how did He know what he had said? We know the answer, but it delivered a knock-out punch to Thomas. Evidently he did not try to touch Jesus, but without further ado said, “My Lord and my God!”

^d This blessing includes us.

^e I follow the best line of transmission in reading “risen from the dead”, albeit representing only 25% of the Greek manuscripts, at this point.

^f Recall that they were James and John (the author of this Gospel).

^g You can bet they are not feeling like making small talk.

^h I find it interesting that they apparently obeyed without question—there was something about that voice.

have just caught.” ¹¹Simon Peter got up^a and dragged the net onto the land, full of one hundred and fifty-three large fish [!]; and *although* being so many, the net was not torn.^b

¹²Jesus says to them, “Come have breakfast!” Well not one of the disciples dared to ask Him, “Who are you?”—knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³Then Jesus comes and takes the bread and gives it to them, as also the fish.^c

¹⁴This was already a third time^d that Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from among the dead.

Jesus reinstates Peter

¹⁵So, when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus says to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?”^e He says to Him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I’m fond of you.”^f He says to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶He says to him again, a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?”^g He says to Him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I’m fond of you.” He says to him, “Shepherd my sheep.” ¹⁷The third time He says to him, “Simon, son of Jonah, are you **fond** of me?” Peter was grieved in that the third time He said to him, “Are you fond of me?”^h and said to Him: “Lord, you know all things. You **know** that I’m fond of you!” Jesus says to him: “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸Most assuredly I say to you, when you were younger you used to get dressed and walk where you wished; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not wish.” ¹⁹(He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) And upon saying that He says to him, “Follow me!”ⁱ

About the author

²⁰But turning around Peter sees the disciple whom Jesus loved following (that is the one who reclined on His chest at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who is betraying you?”). ²¹Seeing him, Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, what about **him**?” ²²Jesus says to him: “If I want him to remain until I come, what is

^a That is what the Text says. Well, what do you suppose he did when he got to land, since he obviously got there well before the others. From verse 12 I gather that Peter had not ventured to speak. He is wet and therefore cold, and there is a fire. I bet he went straight to the fire and squatted down to warm himself, but he was too embarrassed to attempt a conversation. So he welcomes a chance to do something and jumps up when Jesus asks for fish.

^b Like, wow! They were evidently special fish, all large. But why 153? I do not know. The whole thing is supernatural, including the net not tearing.

^c Notice that Jesus serves them. Well, the situation was a bit strange, and the men probably felt awkward; so He helps them out.

^d This would presumably be the first appearance in Galilee, following the two in the upper room.

^e My first impression was that Jesus asked if Peter loved Him more than the others did, but Peter’s answer does not seem to fit with that idea. My next impression would be that Jesus asked if Peter loved Him more than he loved the fish (and therefore, fishing), but His use of *αγαπω* does not seem to fit. The only other option that I see would be that Jesus asked if Peter loved Him more than he loved his colleagues.

^f Jesus uses *αγαπω*; Peter uses *φιλεω*.

^g Notice that He omits ‘more than these’, so the question has been weakened.

^h Now Jesus weakens His question still further, using Peter’s verb—He is probing Peter. But the repeated command to feed His sheep indicates that Peter is being reinstated.

ⁱ The first time He said this to Peter had been 3^{1/2} years before, also on the shore of that lake [could it have been the same spot?]. Jesus renews His call. But Jesus actually starts walking away, and Peter follows Him (to be followed by John).

JOHN 21

that to you? You follow me.” ²³So this saying spread among the brothers,^a that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him [Peter] that he [John] would not die,^b but, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?”

²⁴This is the disciple who is testifying to these things, and who wrote them; and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵Indeed, there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that not even the whole world^c could contain the books that would be written! Amen.

^a “The brothers”—this became a common way to refer to the Christian community.

^b But John was the last of the Apostles to die, close to A.D. 100.

^c The world that he knew would not include the Americas, nor all of Africa or Asia, and perhaps not even all of northern Europe (presumably). However, his use of ‘suppose’ indicates that he is not making a scientific statement.

ACTS

of the Apostles

Opening considerations

A link to Luke

1 ¹The first account I prepared, Theophilus [God-lover],^a concerned all that Jesus began to do and to teach^b ²until the day in which He was taken back,^c after He had given commandment, by Holy Spirit,^d to the apostles whom He had chosen; ³to whom He also showed Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing evidences, appearing to them during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.^e ⁴And being together He directed them not to go away from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father,^f “which you heard from me; ⁵John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with Holy Spirit not many days from now.”^g

Jesus returns to Heaven

⁶Well then, being together^h they asked Him saying, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?”ⁱ ⁷So He said to them: “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has placed within His own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be witnesses to me^j—both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and even to the last *part* of the earth.”^k

^a Since in addressing Luke to Theophilus the author added the honorific ‘honorable’ or ‘excellent’, this was presumably a specific man, but I would like to think that the two books are also addressed to all lovers of God. Actually, Luke 1:4 makes clear that he was a specific man.

^b Why “began”? Presumably because this book will relate what He continued to do and teach, through the Apostles. He is still at work in our world, through us.

^c Jehovah the Son was given (John 3:16, Isaiah 9:6) to this earth for thirty some years, then He was taken back.

^d There is no definite article with “Holy Spirit”, and I hesitate to add it. Perhaps we should try thinking of ‘Holy Spirit’ as a proper name. To carry out the commands in Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:46-48 and John 20:21 would require the Holy Spirit’s enabling.

^e I get the impression that the Lord did a lot more appearing and teaching during those 40 days than has been recorded.

^f Luke is repeating what he wrote in Luke 24:49, which in turn refers to John 14:16 and 26 (from John 14:31 it appears that what Jesus did started with the Father).

^g The grammar requires that the material within quotation marks be handled as a direct quote, even though it is a bit awkward, in English.

^h The reference is to verse 4, which refers to Luke 24:49-50, which informs us that Jesus led them out to Bethany; so they had assembled in the city. A certain Greek particle is used in both verse 1 and verse 6, making them grammatically parallel; verses 1-5 refer to the former account, verse 6 begins the present account.

ⁱ Messiah and kingdom are closely linked in their minds. Jesus is the Messiah, now victorious over death, so where is the Kingdom? Jesus does not question the fact implicit in their question, but tells them that the **time** is classified information.

^j A very small minority of Greek manuscripts (perhaps 2%), of inferior quality, read ‘my witnesses’ instead of ‘witnesses to me’. To my mind, at least, there is a significant difference in meaning—to be a witness **to** Jesus involves **being** like Him (Matthew 10:25) and **doing** like Him (John 14:12).

^k There is a strategy here: ‘both...and...and’ = simultaneously. If you stay in your ‘Jerusalem’ until you win everyone, you will never get to the world (there are many people who do not want God, period, so they will never be won). ‘Judea’ and ‘Samaria’ are treated as a unit, grammatically, so we have our town, our country and the world. “Last” is an adjective used as a noun, so we must supply ‘part’ or

ACTS 1

⁹Upon saying these things, as they watched, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And as they were staring into the sky, while He was going, suddenly two men in white clothing^a stood beside them; ¹¹and they said: “Men of Galilee,^b why do you stand gazing up into the sky? This very Jesus who is being taken up from you into the sky, He will come *again* in the precise manner that you observed Him going into the sky.”^c

¹²They then returned to Jerusalem from the mount called ‘of Olives’, which is near Jerusalem (a Sabbath day’s journey).^d

A replacement for Judas Iscariot

¹³When they had entered [the city] they went up into the upper room^e where they were staying: namely Peter and James, John and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas of James.^f ¹⁴All these were continuing with one purpose in prayer and petition, along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.^g

¹⁵Well in those days Peter stood up in the middle of the disciples^h (the number of people assembled there was about 120) and said: ¹⁶“Men,ⁱ brothers: It was necessary that this Scripture be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by David’s mouth^j concerning Judas, who was guide to those who arrested Jesus; ¹⁷in that he was numbered with us and obtained his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸(In fact this man acquired a field with the wages of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle, and all his innards were spilled out.^k ¹⁹And

‘place’, or else render ‘end’; note that the word is singular. I take it that no part of the world is to be left unreached.

^a I wonder if these were the same two angels who officiated at the empty tomb.

^b Why do the angels emphasize that the men are from Galilee? The ‘men’ refers only to males, so presumably they were the Eleven. It does appear that none of the first apostles were from Judea, which I find to be curious. On the other hand, the Pharisee types had such a stranglehold on Jerusalem society that the Text refers to secret believers, ‘for fear of the Jews’. That stranglehold was a factor throughout Judea, but much less in Galilee. So much so that the Judeans tended to look down their spiritual noses at Galileans.

^c The angels are emphatic; the return is going to be just like the departure. I take it that the Lord will return with the same glorified human body, visibly, come out of a cloud, and His feet will touch down at the same spot where they left (see Matthew 24:30, “coming on the clouds”, and Zechariah 14:4, “His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives”).

^d Generally understood to be about 1,000 yards or 3/5 of a mile; just under a kilometer.

^e Probably the same one that was used for the last Passover, since the Text has ‘the upper room’. Both Mark 14:15 and Luke 22:12 inform us that the room was ‘large’, as it would have to be to hold 120 people (see verse 15 below).

^f Since there was more than one James, Simon and Judas, the last three require an added description. The Text presents the names in pairs, and so have I.

^g The reference is to His half brothers, presumably including at least James and Jude.

^h A very small minority of the Greek manuscripts [3%], of inferior quality, read ‘brothers’ for ‘disciples’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The original Eleven are now called ‘apostles’ (verse 2), and the 120 who were there are called ‘disciples’.

ⁱ The term used here refers exclusively to males—so also in 1:21, 2:5, 2:14, 2:22, 2:29, 2:37 and 3:12.

^j Notice that Peter evidently held to a ‘dictation’ view of Inspiration, the Holy Spirit used David’s mouth.

^k Matthew 27:5 says that Judas hanged himself, and here it says he fell headlong—well, to fall headlong there has to be a cliff, and you would have to dive off. Putting the two accounts together we understand that there must have been a tree near the edge of the cliff, with a branch reaching out beyond the edge; Judas tied a cord around that branch and his neck and jumped—either the cord or the branch broke, and the impact was sufficient to split him open. Matthew also states that it was actually the chief

it became known to all who lived in Jerusalem, so that in their own language that field came to be called ‘*Akeldama*’, that is, ‘Field of Blood.’) ²⁰“Because it stands written in Book of Psalms:

‘Let his residence become desolate,
and may no one live in it’

and,

‘Let another take his office.’^a

²¹So then, of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us, of these one must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”^b

²³So they nominated two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴And praying they said: “You, Lord, Knower of all hearts, show which one of these two You have chosen^c ²⁵to receive the portion of this ministry and apostleship, out of which Judas turned aside to go into his own place.”^d ²⁶And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.

Pentecost

2 ¹When the day of Pentecost had come,^e they were all together with one purpose.^f ²And suddenly a roar came out of the sky, like the rushing of a violent wind,^g and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.^h ³Fiery tongues appeared and were distributed to them, and it [a tongue] landedⁱ on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages,^j as the Spirit was granting to them to speak out.^a

priests who bought the field, using the money that Judas had thrown on the temple floor; so Judas made the purchase posthumously.

^a See Psalms 69:25 and 109:8.

^b Notice that the crucial thing is the resurrection. ‘Let another take his office’ would appear to be the basis for Peter’s assertion.

^c Wait a minute! How do we, or Peter, know that holding that election was God’s idea? If it was not God’s idea then Matthias was not really God’s choice. (Perhaps Peter did like we so often do, bring our ideas to God and ask Him to bless them, although Peter’s idea was evidently based on Psalm 109:8.) In any case, this is the first and last time Matthias is mentioned in the New Testament. The original twelve were personally chosen by Jesus; the only other one so chosen was Saul/Paul.

^d Judas turned aside “out of” Jesus’ group, to go “into” his own place. Peter does not name the place, but the Lord Jesus had declared in their hearing that Judas was lost (John 17:12; see also Matthew 26:24).

^e This was no more than eight days after the Ascension. In John 14:18 the Lord had said, “I will not leave you orphans”—they only had to wait one week for the Holy Spirit; albeit on resurrection night Jesus had breathed on them at least a portion of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

^f See 1:14 above. What was that ‘purpose’? I assume that they were obeying the Lord’s command, they were waiting for ‘the promise of the Father’, the baptism with Holy Spirit.

^g Why the noise? Presumably to attract attention—God wanted to impact the whole city. Since everyone moved on foot, people would be arriving for a number of minutes, depending on where they started (the city was small in those days).

^h They were sitting, so presumably the ‘house’ wasn’t the temple; I imagine it was the ‘upper room’.

ⁱ I understand from the grammar that the tongue actually touched down on the person, there was contact.

^j These are human languages, spoken somewhere on earth, as the following context makes clear.

People from all over

⁵Now there were devout men, Jews, from every nation under heaven, dwelling in Jerusalem.^b ⁶So when that roar occurred, the crowd came together, and was bewildered, because each one was hearing them speaking to him in his own dialect.^c ⁷So they were amazed and marveled, saying to one another:^d “Hey, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸So how can each of us be hearing our own dialect in which we were born? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites; those dwelling in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene; and visitors from Rome—both Jews and proselytes—¹¹Cretans and Arabians; we hear them declaring the great works of God in our own languages.” ¹²Yes they were all amazed and perplexed, saying one to another, “Whatever is going on?” ¹³But different ones were jeering, saying, “They are full of sweet wine!”^e

Peter’s proclamation

¹⁴So Peter, standing with the eleven,^f raised his voice and proclaimed to them: “Men—Jews and all who are dwelling in Jerusalem—let this be known to you: indeed, listen to my speech! ¹⁵Because these are not drunk, as you suppose (since it is only the third hour of the day), ¹⁶but this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷It will be in the last days, says God:
I will pour out from my Spirit upon all flesh;

^a “Speak out” translates a different word than the “speak” in the middle of the verse; the idea is to proclaim or project the voice. Notice that the speaking was controlled by the Spirit. The Text is emphatic that they were all filled, but they did not all start spouting languages; the languages were directed to specific hearers, as the following context makes clear. As the crowd began to gather the Spirit presumably sent the disciples (probably the same 120, at least) out to mingle with the people, and the Spirit proclaimed ‘the great works of God’ to each one in his mother tongue, using the mouths of the disciples. But there would also need to be a miracle in the ear of each hearer, to filter his own language out from the welter of sound (many languages being proclaimed at the same time). I would imagine that this activity lasted at least 10 or 15 minutes.

^b If these were people who had come for a short time, they would not be tied to business activities, and might even be bored, so any promise of something different would be welcome. So the ‘foreigners’ probably outnumbered the local citizens in that crowd.

^c The word rendered ‘dialect’ is different from the word rendered ‘language’. What each one heard was what was spoken in his home town, complete with peculiarities—the only explanation for what was happening was supernatural activity.

^d I gather that the material within quotes represents a sampling from a variety of speakers.

^e In ‘sweet’ wine the fermentation process was just beginning, so the alcohol content was still low; but if you drank enough of it you got ‘happy’. So the mockers are saying that the disciples had tanked up and were feeling the effects. (On the other hand, 120 bellyfuls would represent a respectable quantity of liquid, much more than would normally be available, so the mockers’ hypothesis is not very plausible—and being drunk does not give you the ability to speak a different language [in fact, you don’t even speak your own correctly].) But as Peter points out in verse 15, it was 9:00 a.m., too early for anyone to be drunk.

^f Many versions render ‘standing up’, as if Peter and the others had been sitting in the house all this time (did the crowd invade the house?). The basic meaning of the verb here is more like ‘standing still’ (stopping)—I take it that the Eleven had been mingling with the crowd too, but Peter now gathers them to form a nucleus upon which the crowd can focus its attention.

your sons and your daughters will prophesy;
 your young men will see visions;
 your old men will dream a dream.^a

18In those days I will indeed pour out from my Spirit upon my male
 slaves and upon my female slaves,
 and they will prophesy.^b

19I will show wonders in the heaven above
 and signs on the earth below:
 blood and fire and smoke vapor.

20The sun will be turned into darkness
 and the moon into 'blood'
 before the great and glorious day of the LORD will come.

21And it will be: whoever calls on the name of the LORD^c
 will be saved!

22"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Natsorean,^d a man from
 God attested to you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in
 your midst, as you yourselves well know,^e **23**Him—being delivered up by the
 established purpose and foreknowledge of God—you murdered, having taken Him
 with lawless hands and crucified Him;^f **24**whom God raised up, ending the labor
 pains of death,^g because it was not possible that He should be held by it. **25**For
 David says concerning Him:

^a "Visions" is plural, but "dream" is singular, in the Text (albeit 15% of the Greek manuscripts do have 'dreams'). When I was young I had all sorts of 'visions' of what I thought I was going to achieve in my lifetime. Now that I am old I am pretty well reduced to one 'dream'. One's focus must accompany his energy level. (My personal experience is probably not the intended meaning of the Text, but I am not sure what it might be—do all old men have the same dream?)

^b As is typical in Hebrew, verse 18 repeats part of verse 17. Similarly, verse 20 complements verse 19. I take it that verses 19 and 20 will be fulfilled during the Great Tribulation, literally, so it was verses 17 and 18 that were immediately applicable to what was happening there. So why did Peter quote the material in 19 and 20? Perhaps he (and the others) thought that 'the day of the LORD' had already started—so much so that no one went home; the believers stayed on in Jerusalem until the persecution sent them running (Acts 8:1).

^c To call on the 'name' of the Lord is to call on Him. To 'call' on Him is to place yourself under His protection, which involves a recognition of His rulership.

^d 'Natsorean', not 'Nazarene'. The Text has 'the' Natsorean, the Branch-man (see Matthew 2:23 and Isaiah 11:1). In Acts 22:8 the glorified Jesus identifies Himself to Saul as 'the Natsorean', which Saul would understand as being the Messiah.

^e Peter here addresses specifically the Israelites, presumably residents of Jerusalem and Judea, since they had been eye-witnesses of what Jesus did.

^f "You took with lawless hands"—'take' and 'lawless' clearly give the idea that they were responsible for their actions. "Being delivered up by the established purpose and foreknowledge of God" is a clear statement of God's sovereignty in action. So here we have divine sovereignty and human responsibility side by side; they are both true, whether we understand it or not. (Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit 'having taken'.)

^g In Revelation 1:5 Jesus is called "the firstborn from among the dead". Death is pictured as a huge womb, pregnant with all the dead, and Jesus Christ was the first one out, literally the 'firstborn'. Resurrection is the process by which one is 'born' out of physical death. The figure of death as a womb is strong, but effective. That 'womb' had been holding people for thousands of years, but now finally 'gives birth'. (People like Lazarus who were returned to this life for a while had to die all over again; they have to wait for the resurrection like the rest of us.)

ACTS 2

I always saw the LORD before my face,
because He is at my right side so that I not be shaken.^a
26Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced.
Furthermore, even my flesh will repose upon hope,^b
27because You will not abandon my soul in Hades,^c
nor will You allow Your Holy One to see decay.
28You have made known to me roads of life;^d
with Your presence You make me full of gladness.^e

29“Men, brothers, be it permitted to speak to you plainly about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.^f **30**So then, he being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath that of the fruit, according to flesh,^g of his loins^h He would raise up the Messiahⁱ to sit on his throne, **31**he foreseeing this^j spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah, that His soul^k was not abandoned in Hades, nor did His flesh see decay.^l

32“This Jesus God raised, to which we all are witnesses. **33**Therefore, having been exalted to God’s right hand, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this that you now see and hear. **34**Further, David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says:

The LORD said to my Lord:^m
Sit at my right hand
35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’

^a Nothing like having God at your side, literally, to give you confidence, but nothing like the awareness that He is looking at you to keep you in line! The quote is from Psalm 16:8-11.

^b I take it that the emphasis here is upon the physical body; Jesus’ body was preserved from decay by divine intervention—there was no bad smell in the empty tomb. The resurrection accounts refer to the wrappings, but not to the 100 pounds of spices—I wonder what happened to them (you know, that much spice would be hard to ignore).

^c This is the other side of the coin: for the body not to see decay, it would have to be resurrected; but for resurrection to happen the soul must be reunited with the body, and therefore could not remain in Hades. David had no way of knowing that, so evidently wrote under divine inspiration.

^d Life, not death.

^e If you are a God-lover there is nothing like His presence to make you glad (on the other hand, for a God-hater that Presence is the worst thing in the universe [which is why a God-hater would rather be in hell than in heaven]).

^f David was buried in Jerusalem, and evidently his tomb could still be identified at that time.

^g Peter is being theologically precise here: David’s genes contributed only to the Messiah’s body, not to His soul and spirit.

^h The term rendered ‘loins’ when singular refers to the waist, where a belt is worn. When plural it was used to refer to the place of the reproductive organs—actually, the prostate gland is not all that far below the waist.

ⁱ The Text, being Greek, has ‘Christ’, but king David spoke Hebrew and to him it was ‘Messiah’ (and Peter was presumably speaking in Hebrew). Peter makes the overt connection to Jesus in verse 32. Two percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “according to flesh, He would raise up the Messiah” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j “He foreseeing this” is parallel to “he being a prophet” in verse 30.

^k Two percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “His soul” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The omission weakens the point of the argument.

^l Peter’s reasoning is impressive, a prime instance of illumination. (By ‘illumination’ we mean divine assistance in interpreting divinely inspired writing. ‘Inspiration’ attaches to the writing, ‘illumination’ attaches to the interpretation of inspired writing.)

^m Peter was there when Jesus used this text to silence the Pharisees (Matthew 22:41-46).

³⁶Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **you** crucified!”^a

The reaction

³⁷Now upon hearing this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter, and the rest of the Apostles, “Men, brothers, what shall we do?!” ³⁸So Peter said to them: “Repent and be baptized, each one of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ,^b for forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far away^c—as many, *that is*, as the Lord our God may call.” ⁴⁰With many different words he both testified and kept exhorting, saying, “Escape from this perverse generation!”^d

The beginning of the Church

⁴¹Then those who gladly^e received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added. ⁴²And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ teaching and in the fellowship, both in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers.^f ⁴³Fear came upon every soul—many wonders and signs were taking place through the Apostles.^g

All things in common

⁴⁴Now all who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they started selling both possessions and goods and were distributing to all according as anyone had need.^h ⁴⁶So day by day they continued steadfastly with one purpose in the templeⁱ and broke bread from house to house;^j they received their share of

^a Nothing like making sure your audience gets the point! But why “both Lord and Christ”? Perhaps there were a variety of ideas about the ‘Messiah’ out there and Peter nails down His identity as the Lord.

^b This is the first use of the title, Jesus Christ, after the Gospels; the Lord had Himself inaugurated the title fifty days before (John 17:3)—it affirms that Jesus is the Messiah. Anyone being baptized upon that name would be publicly declaring allegiance to Jesus **as the Messiah**. Notice that Peter promises forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit to any who enter into that commitment.

^c I assume that “all who are far away” is a reference to Gentiles, and the promise applies only to the ‘called’.

^d The ‘generation’ in question was the one that had crucified the Messiah. By being baptized upon the name of **Jesus Christ** they would be formally disassociating themselves from that generation, and the judgment that was coming upon it. The worst curse in all human history is recorded in Matthew 27:25, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’” Terrible, terrible, terrible—just terrible! (The persecutions later sent them scattering and probably very few were in Jerusalem when it was destroyed in AD 70.)

^e Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “gladly” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The word is significant and should not be omitted on such flimsy evidence. It emphasizes sincerity and commitment.

^f I take “the breaking of the bread” to refer to the Lord’s Supper, which with the “prayers” gives the content of the “fellowship”, but that fellowship cannot be disassociated from the Apostles’ teaching.

^g Evidently it was not just Peter; the others were also producing.

^h No one wanted to go home to his own area; they did not want to miss anything (it appears that they were expecting the Lord’s return at any moment). But what happens after all the goods and possessions have been sold? God sends persecution, and if there is nothing to leave behind it is easier to go somewhere else and start over.

ⁱ Since Jesus had formally abandoned the temple, Matthew 23:38-24:1, why were they still using it? It was probably the largest structure in town, and the only one that could hold their increasing number. It would also be strategic for evangelizing unconverted Jews. But it later became a snare, as illustrated by the episode that resulted in Paul’s imprisonment.

^j Here we have the regular meals.

ACTS 3

food with gladness and singleness of heart,^a **47**praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added^b to the Church^c those who were being saved.

A man lame from birth

3 ¹Now Peter and John were going up together into the temple at the hour (the ninth)^d of prayer.^e ²And a certain man, who had actually been lame from his mother's womb, was being carried (they would lay him daily at the temple gate, the one called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple), ³who, upon seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, began asking for alms.

Peter heals him

⁴So Peter, with John, fastening his gaze on him said, "Look at us." ⁵So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said: "I do not have silver and gold, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Natsorean, get up and walk!"^f ⁷And grasping him by his right hand he lifted him up;^g immediately his feet and ankles were strengthened. ⁸So jumping up he stood, and began to walk!^h And he entered the temple with them, walking and leapingⁱ and praising God. ⁹Well all the people saw him walking and praising God; ¹⁰and they recognized him—that he was the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, with a view to alms—and they were filled with wonder and amazement because of what had happened to him.

Peter preaches

¹¹Now as the lame man who had been healed held on^j to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico, the one called 'Solomon's', really wondering. ¹²So upon observing this Peter responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why are you marveling at this, or why are you staring at us as if we have made him walk by our own power or godliness?"^k ¹³The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up; and you repudiated Him to Pilate's face, when he was intending to

^a This sort of thing can work for a while, but tends to go sour; see 6:1 below. [Many years ago I observed a community in Ann Arbor, Michigan try this, but they had trouble with free loaders and moochers.]

^b Notice who does the adding, and He cannot be deceived.

^c Three percent of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "to the Church" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d If Luke is using Hebrew time, it was 3 p.m., if Roman, it was 9 a.m., both being Jewish times for prayer. But from 4:3 below, that says it was already evening, it appears that Luke uses Hebrew time here.

^e But why did they go to the temple to pray? Since God had abandoned that temple, they might just as well have prayed at home.

^f Alack! Many churches now have silver and gold, but can no longer say, "Get up and walk!"

^g This was an act of faith on Peter's part; if nothing happened the man would fall back down.

^h He had never learned to walk (lame from birth), so how could he just start walking, not to mention leaping? The miracle included his head, not just his limbs.

ⁱ Don't you know he had a bouncing good time!

^j I assume that he was literally hanging on to them, perhaps their clothes—for whatever reason he did not want to be separated from them. Some 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'the lame man who had been healed' (as in NIV [the beggar], NASB, LB, TEV [the man], etc.).

^k Well, what had happened was extraordinary, to say the least, and probably deserved a little staring.

release Him.^a **14**Yes you repudiated the holy and righteous One, and you asked that a **murderer** be granted to you,^b **15**while you killed the Originator of the Life,^c whom God raised from among the dead, to which we are witnesses. **16**Well His name, based on faith in His name,^d made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith that is through Him^e has given him this wholeness in the presence of you all.

17“So now, brothers, I know that you did it in ignorance, as also your rulers. **18**But the things that God foretold through the mouth of all His prophets, that the Messiah would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. **19**Repent therefore, and turn around, so that your sins may be erased, in order that times of refreshing may come from the Lord’s face^f **20**and that He may send Jesus, who had been ordained to be your Messiah,^g **21**whom Heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,^h of which *times*ⁱ God spoke long ago by the mouth of all His holy prophets.

22“For example, Moses said to the fathers:^j “The Lord our^k God will raise up for you a Prophet, like me, from among your brothers. You must listen to **Him**, in all that He may say to you. **23**It will be that every person who will not listen to that Prophet will be extirpated from among the people.”^l

24“Yes and all the prophets, from Samuel on down,^m as many as have spoken, have also foretoldⁿ these days. **25**You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘Yes, in your seed^o all the families^p of the earth will be blessed.’ **26**God, having raised up His

^a Comparing Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:2-19, Luke 23:3-25 and John 18:33-19:15 it becomes clear that Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus and tried hard to release Him. But they not only repudiated Jesus, they repudiated their claim to the Messiah, saying, “We have no king but Caesar”.

^b Peter does not mince words; he is emphatic about their guilt.

^c A curious expression! How could anyone kill the Originator of the Life? Well, it was certainly their intention to kill Jesus, and Peter declares their guilt, but Jesus gave up His own life, as John 10:17-18 makes clear.

^d A name represents the person, so it was faith in Jesus that produced the healing; but Peter put his faith into action.

^e If the Lord Jesus is not the actual source of the faith, it is mediated through Him.

^f Although the Lord’s return is still future, by His grace, and by walking in the Spirit, we have the privilege of experiencing our own little ‘times of refreshing’.

^g That is what the Text says. There was God’s side, ordaining, and there was their side, recognizing and receiving. If Jesus had been received as Messiah while He lived among them, presumably history would have been different. But now Jesus will only return when it is time to ‘restore all things’. But comparing the first clause of verse 19 with that of verse 20 it almost seems that Peter is saying that they could bring Jesus back right away.

^h I take this to be a reference to the Messianic Kingdom, the Millennium.

ⁱ The relative pronoun here is ambiguous as to the antecedent, it could refer to ‘things’ or ‘times’, but verse 24 below makes clear that it is ‘times’.

^j Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “to the fathers” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^k Instead of ‘our’, perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘your’.

^l See Deuteronomy 18:15-19. Peter is saying that those who did not listen to Jesus are under the sentence of an early death, and quite possibly with spiritual implications.

^m Samuel was a prophet.

ⁿ I follow the best line of transmission in reading “foretold”, rather than ‘proclaimed’, albeit representing only 25% of the Greek manuscripts, at this point.

^o “Seed” is singular. Paul runs with this in Galatians 3:16.

^p The reference is to patriarchal families, units much smaller than whole tribes or ethnic nations; God emphasizes the importance of the family, while Satan works to destroy it.

ACTS 4

Servant Jesus,^a sent Him to **you** first,^b to bless you by turning each of you away from your iniquities.”^c

Peter and John arrested

4 ¹Now as they were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came at them, ²being upset because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.^d ³And they laid hands on them and put them in custody until the next day, because it was already evening. ⁴(However, many of those who heard the message believed; the number of the men^e came to be about five thousand.) ⁵So the next day an assembly of their rulers, both elders and scribes, occurred in Jerusalem,^f ⁶along with Annas the high priest,^g and Caiaphas, John and Alexander, and as many as were of high-priestly descent. ⁷And having placed them in the middle [of the assembly] they started questioning: “By what power, or by what name did you do this?”^h

Peter's defense

⁸Then Peter, full of Holy Spirit,ⁱ said to them: “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel!^j ⁹If we are being examined today about a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Natsorean, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead,^k by **Him** this man stands here before you whole. ¹¹This is ‘the stone which was despised by you, the builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ ¹²Also, the salvation^l does not exist in anyone else, because there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.”

^a Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “Jesus” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). As is often the case, the eclectic text weakens the statement.

^b Wait a minute! When did this ‘sending’ take place? It was after the resurrection, but Jesus never showed Himself to the people at large during the forty days. I take it that God is doing the ‘sending’ through the Apostles, who started their ministry in Jerusalem (‘to you first’).

^c To be turned away from one’s iniquities is a major blessing, because of the consequences of those iniquities, both now and later.

^d The high priest and family were Sadducees; they did not believe in resurrection (for anybody). So they were doubly disturbed, because the Apostles were affirming that Jesus had already done it, and in consequence others would too.

^e The word used refers exclusively to males, so with women and children the total number of believers would have been several times larger. In 2:41 above it was 3,000 ‘souls’, which presumably included everybody. The total number has probably grown 4-5 times since Pentecost.

^f The impression one gets is that they were called in from surrounding areas.

^g Annas was the real high priest—once installed, the office was for life.

^h “This” suggests that the healed man was present, as verse 10 confirms.

ⁱ Again, no definite article.

^j Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “of Israel” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^k Peter is being neither cautious nor conciliatory! In affirming the resurrection he goes right to the sore point.

^l The Text has the definite article; there may be many ‘salvations’ in life, but this is a very specific one. Notice that Peter makes an absolute statement: Jesus is the only way.

Rulers impressed

¹³Now upon observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving that they were uneducated and unskilled men,^a they marveled; and they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴Further, seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. ¹⁵So ordering them to go out from the council they began to confer among themselves, ¹⁶saying: “What can we do to these men? Because, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.^b ¹⁷But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them to no longer speak to anyone in this name.”

They are forbidden to use the name ‘Jesus’

¹⁸So summoning them they commanded them absolutely not to speak or teach in the name of ‘Jesus’. ¹⁹But in answer Peter and John said to them: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves; ²⁰because we cannot help but speak the things we have seen and heard.”^c ²¹So threatening them some more they released them, not finding any way to punish them, because of the people, since they were all glorifying God over what had happened; ²²because the man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was over forty years old.^d

The reaction of the believers

²³So upon being released they went to their own *group* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴Well upon hearing it, with one mind they called out^e to God and said: “O Sovereign!^f You are God,^g the Maker of sky and earth and ocean, and all that is in them; ²⁵*You* who said through the mouth of Your servant David:^h

‘Why did nations snortⁱ and peoples plot vain things?

²⁶The kings of the earth took a stand,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the LORD and against His Messiah.’^j

^a The disciples had not received a theological education nor been trained in verbal skills (of course Peter was a skilled fisherman, but that is not the point here).

^b They knew that Jesus was the Messiah but had repudiated Him anyway. Here again the facts are clear, but they are determined to maintain their repudiation of Jesus, and to impose their view on the people. Having committed the unpardonable sin, they were under satanic control.

^c There are times when we must not obey those in authority; mainly when they demand that we deny God’s truth and His values.

^d He had been lame for over forty years.

^e The Text actually says ‘they lifted voice to God’ (since God is not deaf, there is no need to shout).

^f Our ‘despot’ is a transliteration of the Greek word here. The term is stronger than ‘master’ or ‘lord’. But ‘despot’ by itself has a negative connotation to us, so we sometimes say ‘benevolent despot’, but not as a form of direct address! Hence, ‘sovereign’.

^g Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts replace the opening clause with, “You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ One can ‘snort’ in anger or in disdain, or perhaps both. There is no definite article with either ‘nations’ or ‘peoples’ (and so in verse 27).

^j See Psalm 2:1-2.

²⁷Well, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with Gentiles and peoples of Israel, were gathered together^a against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, ²⁸to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel foreordained to happen.^b ²⁹As for the present, Lord, consider their threats, and grant to Your slaves to speak Your word with all boldness, ³⁰while You stretch out Your hand to heal and that signs and wonders may occur through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” ³¹Well when they had prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.^c

The young Church consolidates

³²Now the multitude of those who believed was of one heart and soul; indeed not one was saying that any of his belongings was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³(Also the Apostles were giving witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power.^d) Yes, great grace was on them all, ³⁴because there were not any needy among them—as many as were owners of lands or houses were selling them and bringing the proceeds of the sold items ³⁵and placing them at the Apostles’ feet, and they were distributed to each according as anyone had need.

³⁶So Joses, who was named Barnabas by the Apostles (which is, being translated, ‘Son of encouragement’), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having a field, sold it, brought the money and placed it at the Apostles’ feet.^e

Ananias and Sapphira

5 ¹Now a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession ²and kept back part of the price for himself, his wife also being party to it; bringing a certain part he placed it at the Apostles’ feet. ³So Peter said: “Ananias, on what basis^f has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the price of the land? ⁴While it remained *unsold* was it not yours, and once sold was it not in your power? How is it that you have conceived this thing in your heart? You did not lie to men but to God.”^g ⁵Well upon hearing these words Ananias fell down and expired! (Great fear came on all who

^a Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘in this city’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b They have a clear understanding that God’s Plan prevailed, while not denying human responsibility.

^c Their request was granted. Notice that the Holy Spirit’s filling is not once for all, and is not automatic. Notice further that they did not ask for a free ride. (Again, there is no definite article with Holy Spirit.) But where did they do the speaking? Presumably out among the people.

^d So how did that work? It was power in action, presumably signs and wonders (see 5:12 below), performed in the name of the resurrected Jesus—if He were rotting in a grave, what could He do?

^e Since many were doing it, one wonders why Luke singled out Barnabas; perhaps because he would be an important player later on.

^f The familiar ‘why’ is not adequate here; Satan needs no reason for attacking us. But by asking ‘because of what’ Peter is saying that Ananias gave Satan an entrance into his life (which evidently is not a very good idea). So what sort of thing gives Satan an entrance? One way is to harbor an attitude contrary to God’s will and character.

^g As the context makes clear, the problem was that Ananias lied. He wanted the credit for doing like the others, but he was hedging his bet. If he had honestly stated that it was only a part, he would have lived on. He evidently figured it was only a little ‘white’ lie that would not do anybody any harm (no victim)—it did not occur to him that he was really challenging God.

heard these things.) ⁶So the young men got up and wrapped him, and carrying him out they buried him.^a

⁷Now after an interval of some three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.^b ⁸So Peter addressed her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” So she said, “Yes, for so much.” ⁹Peter said to her: “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out!” ¹⁰So she immediately fell down at his feet and expired! So upon entering the young men found her dead, and carrying her out they buried her beside her husband.^c ¹¹So great fear came on the whole assembly and on all who heard these things.^d

The Apostles distinguish themselves

¹²Now many signs and wonders were being performed among the people by the hands of the Apostles; and they were all in Solomon’s Porch with one purpose.^e ¹³None of the rest dared to join them,^f but the people were magnifying them. ¹⁴Believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,^g ¹⁵to the point that they kept carrying the sick into the streets, placing them on cots and pallets, so that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them.^h ¹⁶Further, the multitude from the surrounding cities also kept coming into Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.ⁱ

Sadducees X Apostles

¹⁷Then the high priest rose up, and all those with him (being the sect of the Sadducees); they were filled with jealousy^j ¹⁸and laid their hands on the Apostles and put them in the common prison.¹⁹But, during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, and leading them out he said, ²⁰“Go, stand in the

^a Apparently they did not have a coroner. The two were buried without ceremony and without mourning. Was there no family?

^b She was probably looking for him, wondering why he had not come home.

^c There are times when ‘togetherness’ is not all that good an idea.

^d Really. Can you imagine if this sort of thing started happening in our churches today?

^e I take it that the primary reference is to the Apostles; they were holding court, as it were, in Solomon’s Porch where there was plenty of room.

^f The Eleven had a stature that set them apart; no one else was pretending to be an Apostle.

^g After Pentecost we find the expression ‘both men and women’—the participation of women in the Church is overtly stated.

^h Well now, the Lord Jesus recuperated Peter with a vengeance. This would appear to be one of the “greater things” of John 14:12, since we have no record of Jesus using His shadow. Evidently people kept getting healed in this way, and once healed their places would be taken by new arrivals. The local residents had the first chance, and if they were all healed it would be the ones from outlying areas that maintained the flow.

ⁱ This is reminiscent of the Lord’s ministry, when all who came were healed. Should we be able to do this today, or is this a ‘special occasion’ sort of thing? How about when we introduce the Gospel to a new area or culture? Would not overt demonstrations of God’s power speed up the process?

^j They were being upstaged, and how, and did not like it—the true merits of the case were beside the point.

temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.”^a ²¹So upon hearing it they entered the temple about daybreak^b and started to teach.

Then the high priest and those with him arrived and convened the Sanhedrin, even all the council of elders of the sons of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. ²²Well, upon arriving the operatives did not find them in the jail, so they returned and reported, ²³saying: “We certainly found the prison securely locked, and the guards standing in front of the doors, but upon opening them we found no one inside!” ²⁴Now when the high priest,^c the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these words, they were really perplexed as to what the implications might be.^d

²⁵But someone came and told them, “Hey, the men whom you put in the jail are standing in the temple and teaching the people!” ²⁶Then the captain went with the operatives and brought them without violence, because they were afraid that the people might stone them. ²⁷So bringing them they set them before the Sanhedrin; and the high priest addressed them ²⁸saying: “Did we not emphatically command you not to teach in this name? Just look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood on us!”^e

Apostles infuriate Sadducees

²⁹So in answer Peter and the Apostles said: “One must obey God rather than men. ³⁰The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹Him God has exalted to His right hand as Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.^f ³²And we are witnesses to these statements about Him, as also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those obeying Him.”^g

Gamaliel counsels Sadducees

³³Well upon hearing it they became infuriated and started plotting to kill them. ³⁴But someone in the council stood up^h (a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law respected by all the people) and commanded to put the Apostles out for a bit. ³⁵He then said to them: “Men, Israelites, take heed to yourselves concerning these men, as to what you are about to do. ³⁶For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody; with whom about four hundred men joined up;

^a That is what the Text says, “this Life”. To belong to Jesus not only means spiritual life in the place of spiritual death, but it means a way of life—a system of values, a set of presuppositions, a worldview.

^b From the prison they went ‘home’, for a little refreshment. During the night there would be no one to teach.

^c Some 9% of the Greek manuscripts omit “the high priest” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Come now, the only possible explanation was supernatural intervention. There is no one more blind than he who refuses to see.

^e Those very men had said, “His blood be upon us, and upon our children!” But of course, a good memory is not always convenient. However, in this case the priest was just being perverse. Well, actually, having committed the unpardonable sin he was under satanic control.

^f I was tempted to render, “to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel”, but the Text does not have that order (though it could have), perhaps so as not to limit the forgiveness of sins to Israel.

^g The Apostles are impressive—no fear, no apology, no toning down. “You murdered Him!” “God raised Him!” “He is Prince and Savior!” “The Holy Spirit exists!” All these affirmations were things they absolutely did not want to hear, as their reaction attests. Many in our day do not want to hear that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God.

^h I gather that Gamaliel just took over, and something about his demeanor made the high priest let him do it.

who was killed, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.
³⁷Later Judas the Galilean rose up, in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.
³⁸So now I say to you, keep away from these men and leave them alone; because if this counsel or this work should be of men, it will be abolished; ³⁹but if it is of God,^a you will not be able to overthrow it—lest you even be found to be fighting against God!”^b

Sadducees beat and threaten Apostles

⁴⁰Well they were persuaded by him,^c and summoned the Apostles; after beating them they commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹So they went out rejoicing^d from the presence of the council, in that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of the Christ.^e ⁴²And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.^f

Enter deacons

6 ¹Now in those days, as the disciples were multiplying, a complaint arose from the Hellenists against the Hebrews, because their widows^g were being overlooked in the daily distribution. ²So summoning the multitude of the disciples the twelve said: “It is not advantageous that we should forsake the Word of God to serve at tables. ³Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men^h of *good* reputation, full of Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this need. ⁴But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.”ⁱ

⁵The statement pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and Holy^j Spirit, and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon

^a The conditional clauses are not the same—the first is a condition of doubt, the second is a condition of fact. Gamaliel makes clear that he personally thinks it is of God.

^b Of course they were fighting against God, and presumably knew it, but Gamaliel gives them the benefit of the doubt.

^c Up to a point—they did not kill them, but still beat and threatened them. They had known all along that they were in fact fighting against God, but for some reason they decided to humor Gamaliel.

^d The impression I get is that they started rejoicing right there in the council. What do you suppose the effect was upon the members?

^e I here follow what I consider to be the best line of transmission, albeit making up only some 35% of the manuscripts, at this point. But the evidence is badly split: 35% have ‘of the Christ’, 14% have ‘of Jesus’, 10% have ‘of the Lord Jesus’, 20% have ‘his’, and 21% omit.

^f It bears repeating: the Apostles are impressive.

^g Wait a minute! Where did all those foreign widows come from? (There must have been a fair number, to have caused the problem.) Would a widow have traveled alone from Asia to Jerusalem to attend the Passover? Had their husbands died in Jerusalem? I would imagine more probably the latter, since time was passing and there were many thousands of believers: people would be dying, getting married, etc. as usual.

^h The term here refers only to males.

ⁱ Prayer and the ministry of the Word—how many pastors, missionaries, ‘apostles’ and such today would fit that description? Don’t you suppose we ought to start moving back in that direction?

^j Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “Holy” (as in NIV and NASB.).

and Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch,^a ⁶whom they set before the Apostles; and after praying they laid hands on them.

⁷Well the Word of God kept spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem kept multiplying at a great rate, and a large company of the priests were obeying the faith. ⁸While Stephen, full of faith^b and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.^c

Stephen in a kangaroo court

⁹Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. ¹⁰And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.

¹¹Then they instigated men to say, “We have heard him speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹²And they stirred up the people, and the elders and the scribes;^d and coming upon him they seized him, and brought him in to the Sanhedrin; ¹³and they put forward false witnesses who said: “This man never stops speaking blasphemous words against the holy place and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him saying that this Jesus the Natsorean will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses delivered to us.”^e ¹⁵All who sat in the council, looking intently at him, saw his face like the face of an angel.^f

Stephen’s discourse

7 ¹Then the high priest said, “Can these things be so?”^g ²So he said: “Men, brothers and fathers, listen:^h The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he resided in Haran, ³and said to him, ‘Leave your country and your relatives, and come into a land that I will show you.’ ⁴Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and resided in Haran.ⁱ From there, after his father died,^j *God* moved him to this land in which you now live;^k ⁵yet He did not give him an inheritance in it, not even a footstep. He promised to give it to

^a Nicholas is declared to be a foreigner, but some of the other names also sound foreign, so the plaintiffs were well represented. Here we see love and grace in action.

^b For ‘faith’ some 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘grace’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Would not signs and wonders already be miraculous, without being “great”? Stephen was something else! Please notice that Stephen was not an Apostle, so the doing of miracles was not limited to them. Stephen and Philip (chapter 8 below) were deacons.

^d What follows is obviously a put up job: the Sanhedrin is waiting for him.

^e Big deal! Those guys were really hard up.

^f I wonder how many of them had ever seen an angel, to know what one looked like. Perhaps his face had a supernatural shine. Something like that should have given them pause, but they were too far gone.

^g The man knows it is all a farce, but he pretends astonishment.

^h Stephen knows he is in a kangaroo court, so he wastes no time with the ridiculous charge: he delivers a prophetic, and condemnatory, sermon.

ⁱ But he took his father and a nephew along, and Haran was not that land. ‘Our father Abraham’—the Jews began their history with Abraham, who started out with incomplete obedience.

^j There went fifteen years of his life. And he took his nephew Lot along, who would be a **big** headache (he fathered the Moabites and the Ammonites—not good news—under circumstances that would not have happened had he been left in Haran).

^k Stephen ties his hearers into the story.

him for a possession, that is, to his seed after him, though he had no child.^a **6**Further, God spoke like this: that his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land—and that they would be enslaved and oppressed—four hundred years.^b **7**‘I will judge the nation to which they will be in bondage,’ said God,^c ‘and after that they will come out and serve Me in this place.’ **8**And He gave him a covenant of circumcision;^d and so he begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day;^e and Isaac did the same to Jacob, and Jacob to the twelve patriarchs.

Down to Egypt

9“The patriarchs, being envious, sold Joseph into Egypt; yet God was with him **10**and delivered him out of all his adversities, and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. **11**And a famine came upon all the land of Egypt and Canaan, even a great affliction, and our fathers could not find food. **12**But upon hearing that there was wheat in Egypt, Jacob first sent our fathers. **13**On the second *trip* Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family was presented to Pharaoh. **14**Joseph sent and summoned his father Jacob and all his relatives, seventy-five souls.^f **15**So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers; **16**and they were transferred to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor of Shechem.^g

^a Abraham was 100 when he begot Isaac, who was 60 when he begot Jacob and Esau. Abraham died at 175, so lived to see his two grandsons. But before Isaac there was Ishmael...

^b Stephen cites Genesis 15:13, which should be understood as a chiasmus, a frequent structure in the Bible:

- A. his offspring would be aliens in a foreign land
- B. and they would be enslaved
- B. and oppressed
- A. four hundred years.

A careful comparison of the relevant texts shows that the 400 years includes from the weaning of Isaac to the Exodus (1891 to 1491 BC); since Jacob moved to Egypt in 1706, Abraham’s descendants were aliens in Canaan for 185 years, then were aliens in Egypt, where they came to be enslaved, for 215 years (the Exodus was 144 years after Joseph’s death, so the period of slave labor was presumably somewhat less, perhaps around 100 years). (I owe the understanding given above to Dr. Floyd N. Jones.)

^c And He did, with a vengeance. By wiping out the Egyptian army God guaranteed that Egypt would not be a threat to the developing nation of Israel for hundreds of years.

^d Women whose husbands are circumcised do not get cervical cancer—the procedure is not a sadistic bit of gore; there is a medical reason for it.

^e Modern medicine has verified that on the eighth day of a male’s life his defenses against infection are at their peak—it is the best day in his whole life for minor surgery. Now then, 3900 years ago who but the Creator could know that?

^f Comparing this verse with Genesis 46:26-27 we get three numbers: 66, 70 and 75. The 66, being ‘out of his loins’, of course excludes Jacob himself and the wives (Joseph is already there). The 70 includes Jacob, Joseph and his two sons. The 75 excludes Jacob and Joseph, but includes nine wives; some had evidently already died in Canaan. For further discussion, please see the Appendix: “How many?”

^g The only record we have of someone buying from Hamor is Jacob (Genesis 33:19); Abraham bought from Ephron (Genesis 23:17)—Shechem and Hebron are presumably different places. Assuming that Stephen’s statement is correct (if he was full of the Spirit as he spoke, verse 55), then presumably Abraham actually bought both places, though Moses only records one, and Jacob was obliged to re-buy one or bought a larger area around it. A variety of historical records existed, made during OT times, that were not included in the Canon and of which we have no copies—but they were still available in Stephen’s day. (For instance, Jude [verse 14] cites Enoch—we have no Hebrew copy of Enoch’s prophecy today, but Jude must have had access to one.) In any case, notice that the Text says ‘they’ were

Enter Moses

¹⁷“Now as the time of the promise was approaching which God had sworn to Abraham, the people increased and were multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸until a different^a king arose who had not known Joseph. ¹⁹This man took advantage of our race and oppressed our fathers, making them expose their babies so that they would not stay alive.^b ²⁰At that time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; he was nurtured in his father’s house for three months. ²¹When he was exposed, Pharaoh’s daughter took him to herself and brought him up as her own son. ²²So Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; he was mighty in words and deeds. ²³Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel.^c ²⁴Well seeing one of them being wronged, he defended and avenged the one being oppressed, striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵Now he supposed that his brothers understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand,^d but they did not understand. ²⁶The next day he appeared to them as they were fighting and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong one another?’ ²⁷But the one who was wronging his neighbor pushed Moses away, saying: ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?’ ²⁸Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹Well Moses fled at that word, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begot two sons.^e

Moses commissioned

³⁰“And when *another* forty years had passed, Angel of the LORD^f appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai,^g in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹Well upon seeing it Moses was amazed at the sight, but as he approached for a closer look the voice of the LORD came to him: ³²I am the God of your fathers—the God of

taken to Shechem—this would refer to Jacob’s sons, since he himself was buried at Hebron. Going back to Genesis 34:29, after killing all the men of Shechem, Jacob’s sons kept the women, which is presumably where they got wives for so many men. They also got rich on the spoils of the town. So why not be buried there? For further discussion, please see the Appendix: “Who bought what from whom?”

^a The word here suggests a different kind: either a different dynasty or a different race.

^b My rendering here is round about because the Text is round about.

^c Comparing Hebrews 11:24-26, it appears that Moses had formally refused the status of being the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, with the political and other advantages pertaining to that status. This attitude probably did not sit well with Pharaoh, which is why he was prepared to kill Moses, when the opportunity presented itself.

^d This evaluation of Moses’ thinking is not in the O.T., at least not at this juncture. Did Moses really suppose that killing an Egyptian would make a difference, or that God would give deliverance in that way? When we see him in heaven we can ask him. But comparing this with verse 23 above we may conclude that it was God who put the idea of visiting his people in his heart.

^e I find Stephen’s selection of details to be curious. Moses’ two sons were not prominent in the history of Israel, so why mention them? Well, Moses’ failure to circumcise them almost cost him his life! See Exodus 4:24-26. Although Moses himself was certainly circumcised as a baby, he was brought up as an Egyptian, and the importance of the procedure had not been ingrained in him; his wife was not an Israelite and was against it. But how could Moses lead the covenant people while ignoring the sign of the covenant?

^f There is no definite article with “angel”. Comparing Exodus 3:2 and 4 it is clear that “the Angel of the LORD” was Jehovah Himself, presumably the Son. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘of the Lord’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Moses was in Midian, so the real Mount Sinai is in Midian, which is part of Arabia, not the peninsula between the ‘rabbit ears’ of the Red Sea. For a discussion of this, please see the Appendix: “Where is Mt. Sinai?”

Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.^a Moses started trembling and did not dare to look. **33**So the LORD said to him: ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. **34**I have definitely seen the mistreatment of my people in Egypt, and have heard their groaning; and I have come down^b to deliver them. So now come, I will send you to Egypt.’

35“This Moses whom they refused, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’—God sent him as leader and deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. **36**This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea, and for forty years in the wilderness.

Israel’s rebellion

37“This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD our^c God will raise up to you a Prophet from among your brothers, like me.’^d **38**This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness, who was with the Angel who spoke with him on Mount Sinai and was with our fathers,^e who received living oracles^f to give to us; **39**to whom our fathers did not want to be obedient; rather they rejected him and turned back in their heart to Egypt, **40**saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods that will go before us; because this Moses, who led us out of the land of Egypt—we do not know what has become of him.’^g **41**Well they made a calf in those days and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and started rejoicing in the works of their hands. **42**But God turned away and gave them over to serve the army of the heaven,^h just as it is written in Book of the Prophets:

‘House of Israel, did you offer me slaughtered animals
and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness?’

43Actually you took along the tent of Moloch,
and the star of your god, Rephan,
the images that you made to worship;
so I will relocate you beyond Babylon.ⁱ

^a See Exodus 3:6. The Lord Jesus made use of this passage to demonstrate the fact of resurrection (Matthew 22:32). Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “the God” before Isaac and Jacob (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b ‘Come down’ from where? From Heaven, presumably—I imagine that whenever God ‘comes down’ it is to intervene in human affairs.

^c Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “the Lord”, and they are joined by another 3% in omitting ‘our’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d I take it that here Stephen sets up the main thrust of his speech: God sent Moses, but his contemporaries rejected him; God sent the Prophet, but those present rejected Him. Both rejections resulted in judgment. Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘Him you shall hear’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^e I take it that Stephen is emphasizing that Moses was with both the Angel and the people; he was a mediator, as would be ‘the Prophet’—“like me” (verse 37).

^f What makes an oracle ‘living’? It continues to function, to be applicable.

^g See Exodus 32:1.

^h Presumably the reference is to Satan’s army of fallen angels, see Ephesians 2:2. Those who choose idolatry are really turning themselves over to Satan [even if they don’t believe in him]. If God gives you over, what are your chances?

ⁱ See Amos 5:25-27. Amos appears to be saying that the Israelites took these gods with them out of Egypt, kept them all the time in the wilderness, and even took them into the Promised Land!

A dwelling for God

44“The tent of the testimony, according to the pattern that Moses had seen, just as the One speaking to him had commanded to make it, was with our fathers in the wilderness; **45**which, having received it in turn, our fathers with Joshua brought into the possession of the nations, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, until the days of David; **46**who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God^a of Jacob, **47**but Solomon built Him a house. **48**However, the Most High does not dwell in handmade sanctuaries, just as the prophet says:

49Heaven is my throne,
while the earth is a footstool for my feet.
What kind of house will you build me,⁷ says the LORD,
'or what place for my rest?
50Did not my hand make all these things?^b

Stephen attacks

51“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always oppose the Holy Spirit;^c as your fathers did, so you do. **52**Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, of whom you have now become betrayers and murderers;^d **53**you who received the Law as ‘ordinances of angels’ and have not kept it!”

Stephen is martyred

54Well as they heard these things their hearts were being sawed in half,^e and they started gnashing their teeth at him. **55**But he, being full of Holy Spirit and looking intently into the heaven, he saw the glory of God and Jesus standing^f on God’s right, **56**and said, “Wow! I see the heavens opened and the Son of the Man standing at God’s right!” **57**Yelling at the top of their voice^g they covered their ears and rushed at him all at once, **58**and throwing him out of the city they stoned him!^h (The witnesses placed their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.) **59**Yes, they stoned Stephen as he called out and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60**Then kneeling down he called out at the top of his voice, “Lord, do

^a The same handful of early manuscripts of inferior quality that NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. usually follow have ‘house’ instead of ‘God’, but are abandoned by their usually faithful followers.

^b See Isaiah 66:1-2. This could be an oblique defense against their allegation that he had blasphemed the temple—if God does not dwell there (and in fact Jesus had formally abandoned it) [and Josephus says that the Ark was no longer there] it has lost its importance.

^c In fact, the Sadducees even refused to acknowledge His existence!

^d Stephen states plainly that they murdered the Messiah.

^e That is what the Text says. It is a graphic figure of speech. If you are sliced with a sharp object you may scarcely feel it at the moment, but if someone starts sawing on you... No wonder they were mad! (They had long since figured out that Stephen was not being conciliatory.)

^f There are several texts that have Jesus seated at the Father’s right, not standing. Apparently the Lord stood up to receive Stephen—he got a hero’s welcome.

^g They tried to drown out his voice, as well as covering their ears—they really did not want to hear any more! Not a few today do not want to hear the truth either.

^h They were beside themselves with rage, and forgot all about getting permission from the Roman authorities—typical mob action, but doubtless demonically inspired.

not hold this sin against them!” And upon saying this he fell asleep.^a (Saul was in full agreement with his murder.)

Under persecution the Church moves out

8 ¹At that time a major persecution arose against the church that was in Jerusalem, so all, except the Apostles, were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ²(Devout men had buried Stephen and made a great lamentation over him.) ³As for Saul, he was trying to destroy the Church; invading house after house and dragging away both men and women, he was putting them in prison. ⁴So on their part those who were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word.

Philip's ministry

⁵Now Philip, having gone down to a city of Samaria,^b was proclaiming the Christ to them; ⁶and the crowds gave heed with one accord to what Philip was saying, as they heard the words and saw the signs that he kept performing.^c ⁷Because unclean spirits came out screaming from many who had them, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸Yes, there was great joy in that city!^d

Simon, the sorcerer

⁹Now a certain man named Simon was in the city first, practicing sorcery and astounding the people of Samaria, affirming himself to be someone great, ¹⁰to whom they used to pay attention, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.”^e ¹¹They listened to him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹²But, when they believed Philip, as he proclaimed the good news concerning the Kingdom of God and the name, Jesus Christ,^f they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³Even Simon himself believed, and having been baptized he stayed right with Philip; observing miracles and signs occurring, he was amazed.^g

¹⁴Now when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵who upon coming down prayed about them, so that they might receive Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized into the name of Jesus, the Christ.^h ¹⁷Then they laid their hands upon them and they received Holy Spirit.

^a Sleep is frequently used as a figure for death in the Bible, especially with reference to believers. Stephen's death reminds me of the Lord's—both let out a shout, and then died. In the Lord's case we are explicitly told that He dismissed His spirit. I wonder if Stephen was somehow able to dismiss his (if he was able to shout he still had strength, and death by stoning took a while). Both also asked forgiveness for their murderers.

^b Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘the city’, instead of “a city”, to be followed by most versions, including AV and NKJV.

^c He did not just talk, he demonstrated God's power. So how about us—do we just talk?

^d Not bad, for a deacon.

^e That is what the Text says. I would expect ‘has’ the power or ‘shows’ it, or whatever, but the Text has ‘is’. Perhaps the Samaritans thought he was the Messiah. Around 9% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘is called’.

^f He was proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah.

^g Why? If he himself had really been producing miracles and signs, he could have said, “business as usual”. Presumably he had been faking it (or else doing it by demonic power), so when he saw the real thing, by God's power, he was genuinely impressed.

^h Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘Lord’ instead of ‘Christ’, as in most versions.

¹⁸Well, upon observing that the Holy^a Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, Simon offered them money ¹⁹saying, "Give this power to me also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive Holy Spirit." ²⁰But Peter said to him: "May your silver go with you into perdition,^b for thinking that the gift of God could be acquired with money! ²¹You have neither part nor portion in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. ²²Turn away therefore from this your wickedness and make petition to God,^c in case the intent of your heart may be forgiven you; ²³for I see you being into a gall of bitterness and a fetter of unrighteousness."^d ²⁴So in answer Simon said, "You^e make petition to the Lord on my behalf, so that nothing of what you have spoken may come upon me!"

²⁵So when they had both^f thoroughly testified and spoken the Word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem; they also evangelized many Samaritan villages.

The Ethiopian treasurer

²⁶Then an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza;^g it is desolate." ²⁷So he got up and went; and there, a man, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court-official of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasury, who had come worshipping to Jerusalem^h ²⁸—he was returning, sitting in his chariot and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go forward and join this chariot." ³⁰So running up Philip heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, "Do you really understand what you are reading?" ³¹So he said, "Well how can I, unless someone guides me?" And he urged Philip to come up and sit with him.ⁱ

^a 'Holy' is omitted by two (2) manuscripts (against over 600), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc. Those two are ancient, but of objectively inferior quality.

^b Peter is really upset and does not mince words; he evidently felt that the sin was so serious as to place Simon's eternal destiny in doubt (see verse 22, "in case"). Well, the Lord Jesus Himself had taught them that to blaspheme the Holy Spirit was unpardonable, and Peter evidently figured that Simon had come close.

^c Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read 'Lord' instead of 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The Text has 'into' not 'in', thereby emphasizing (I suppose) that this was a long-standing condition. Since gall is bitter, very, I take it that Peter is saying that Simon was controlled by a terrible bitterness. Isaiah 58:6 speaks of "fetters of wickedness", where the fetters have been placed on the victim(s) by wicked men (or angels), presumably [the LXX uses the word that Peter uses here, 'unrighteousness']. We don't know if Peter was thinking of this text, and since Simon was into sorcery/spiritism, the fetter could have been of his own forging. The inspired author says that Simon believed, so I take it that he really did. But the consequences to his soul of years spent in sorcery/spiritism were not immediately, miraculously obliterated. Those in our day who have discipleship converted out of Satanism/spiritism (especially mediums—witches, warlocks) know that those consequences can hang around for quite a while, and be difficult to eliminate.

^e The Text is emphatic. Simon is not being disrespectful; he doubts that his own pleading will do much good, so he begs them to do it for him (God is much more likely to listen to them).

^f This word goes with the verbs 'testify' and 'speak', not Peter and John. I suppose the 'thorough testifying' would be with reference to the Lord's ministry, teaching, death and resurrection (they were eye witnesses).

^g From Samaria to the Gaza road would be a walk of at least 60 miles, over accidented terrain. Notice that God removes Philip from a very successful ministry to reach one man (albeit a very strategic one).

^h So how did this man know about Jehovah, and why had he learned to read Hebrew (unless he was reading a Greek translation)? Although nearly a millennium had intervened, this could be a result of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon.

ⁱ The Holy Spirit was obviously in charge of this whole operation and moved upon the man to trust Philip.

³²Now the portion of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so He does not open His mouth.

³³In His humiliation His justice was removed,
and who will recount His generation?
Because His life is removed from the earth.”^a

³⁴So continuing the eunuch said to Philip, “I ask you, about whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵So opening his mouth and beginning from this Scripture, Philip preached Jesus to him.

³⁶Now as they were going down the road they came upon some water, and the eunuch said: “Look, water! What is keeping me from being baptized?”^b ³⁸So he ordered the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹Now when they came up out of the water, Spirit of the Lord^c snatched Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any more, because he went on his way rejoicing.^d

⁴⁰Philip was found at Azotus,^e and as he passed through he evangelized all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Saul of Tarsus

9 ¹Meanwhile Saul, still exhaling murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked for letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he should find any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Jesus chooses Saul

³So it happened, as he was going, that he got close to Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him; ⁴and falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” ⁵So he said, “Who are you, Lord?” So the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;”^f

^a See Isaiah 53:7-8.
^b The AV and NKJV have verse 37: Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” It is the sort of thing that makes us think, “If Philip did not say that, he should have”. And maybe he really did, but the question immediately before us is whether Luke wrote it. 88% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, do not have the verse—I imagine that the verse originated in the Latin tradition, during the second century. Philip doubtless recounted the event many times (his house in Caesarea received many visitors), and if the exchange recorded in verse 37 actually took place it would be part of the story that he told, and could easily have been added to the Text of Acts. (The addition appears in eighteen slightly different forms, which does not inspire confidence.)
^c Again there is no definite article with ‘Spirit’, nor with ‘Lord’—I would like to translate ‘Spirit of Jehovah’, but God’s personal name never occurs in the New Testament.
^d He did not stop to look for Philip or attempt any further contact with him; Ethiopia was a long way away and he just kept on going. He doubtless understood that Philip’s ‘visit’ was a supernatural present, and let it go at that.
^e The verb is in the passive voice, but I am tempted to translate, ‘found himself’. The Spirit put Philip down in a near-by town, perhaps 10-15 miles away. Caesarea was some 50 miles on up the coast; speaking of which, Philip evidently decided to settle there.
^f At this point AV and NKJV, following the TR, add: “It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” So he, trembling and astonished, said, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” Then the Lord said to him, “...” The addition comes from the Latin tradition; the Greek manuscripts do not have it. Some of the information may be found in the parallel accounts in Acts 22 and 26.

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⁶but get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the sound but seeing no one. ⁸Then Saul got up from the ground, and upon opening his eyes he saw no one; so leading him by the hand they brought him into Damascus. ⁹He was without sight for three days, and neither ate nor drank.^a

Ananias sent to Saul

¹⁰Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, “Ananias!” So he said, “Here I am, Lord.” ¹¹So the Lord said to him: “Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas inquire by name for Saul of Tarsus; because, you see, he is praying, ¹²and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and placing a hand on him, so that he might recover *his* sight.” ¹³But Ananias answered: “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how many evil things he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴Moreover here he has authority from the chief priests^b to bind all who are calling on Your name.” ¹⁵But the Lord said to him: “Get moving, because this man is a chosen vessel to me, to carry my name before nations and kings, also the children of Israel; ¹⁶for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” ¹⁷So Ananias went and entered the house, and placing his hands on him he said, “Brother^c Saul, the Lord,^d who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me so that you may recover your sight and be filled by Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he recovered his sight forthwith;^e and getting up he was baptized,^f ¹⁹and upon receiving food he was strengthened. So Saul was with the disciples in Damascus for a number of days.

Saul starts preaching

²⁰Immediately he started proclaiming Jesus^g in the synagogues, that He is the Son of the God. ²¹Well, all who heard him were astounded and started saying: “Isn’t this the one who tried to destroy, in Jerusalem, those who called on this name? Even here he had come with that purpose, that he might take them bound to the high priests.” ²²But Saul kept growing stronger and kept on confounding the Jews who lived in Damascus, proving that ‘This One is the Christ.’

^a Saul was in total shock; his world was being turned upside down.

^b I find it to be curious that the authority of the chief priests extended all the way to Damascus, but how did Ananias know about that? I suppose that Saul’s companions gave out that information.

^c That was a nice touch. At that moment it no doubt meant a lot to Saul to be called ‘brother’.

^d Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘Jesus’, to be followed by most versions.

^e Perhaps 70% of the Greek manuscripts do not have ‘forthwith’, and they are followed by printed editions of the Majority Text. However, the best line of transmission does have the word, as in AV and NKJV.

^f Any water in the house had to be carried there, so it is improbable that there could have been enough to immerse Saul.

^g ‘Jesus’ is read by Family 35 and the earliest MSS, albeit representing only some 20% of the Greek MSS here; the rest have ‘the Christ’. To teach that the Messiah was the Son of God would be ‘old hat’, no problem—but Saul was showing that Jesus was God’s Son. Notice the end of verse 22, “this One is the Christ”—what is the antecedent of “this”? To say that the Christ is the Christ would be stupid, which neither of the authors is.

Saul escapes death

²³Now when a good many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him; ²⁴but their plot became known to Saul. They started watching the gates day and night, so that they might kill him; ²⁵so the disciples^a took him by night and passed him through the wall, lowering him in a hamper.^b

Barnabas vouches for Saul

²⁶Now upon arriving in Jerusalem Saul kept trying to join himself to the disciples;^c but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him in tow and brought him to the apostles, and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken fearlessly in the name of the Lord Jesus.^d ²⁸So he was with them in Jerusalem, going in and out, and speaking fearlessly in the name of Jesus.^e ²⁹He kept on speaking and debating with the Hellenists, so they started trying to kill him.^f ³⁰Upon finding it out, the brothers brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

A brief respite

³¹So then the congregations^g throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria, had peace and were built up; and proceeding in the fear of the Lord and in the enabling of the Holy Spirit^h they were being multiplied.

Peter's ministry

³²Now it happened, as Peter went through all *those parts*, that he also went down to the saints who were living in Lydda.

Peter heals Aeneas

³³And there he found a certain man named Aeneas who was paralyzed—he had been lying on a pallet for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him: “Aeneas, Jesus the Messiahⁱ is healing you. Get up and make your bed!”^j And immediately he stood

^a Evidently Ananias was not the only disciple of Jesus in Damascus, but we are not told how many there may have been. Of course, Saul's preaching may have added to the number. In fact some 3% of the Greek manuscripts add 'his' [i.e. Saul's] (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b From Paul's mention of this in 2 Corinthians 11:32-3, I gather that he felt this to be humiliating.

^c I get the impression that he made repeated efforts; after all, he probably had a very good idea of where different groups could be found. Either he didn't know where the apostles were, or lacked the courage to approach them. It was probably after several efforts that Barnabas got wind of what was happening; however, the news doubtless spread through the community quite quickly.

^d How did Barnabas know all that? Perhaps he grilled Saul, before deciding he was on the up and up. I follow some 45% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading 'Lord Jesus'.

^e Some 67% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Lord Jesus'; I follow the best line of transmission (just 24% of the manuscripts here) in reading 'Jesus'; (another 8% have only 'Lord').

^f I imagine that it was at this juncture that Saul received the vision mentioned in Acts 22:17-21.

^g 8% of the Greek manuscripts have 'church', singular (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The true Text emphasizes that there were groups of believers scattered throughout that whole area.

^h Does the Holy Spirit enable those who do not fear the Lord? Probably not very often.

ⁱ The Text being in Greek has "the Christ", but Peter was probably speaking Hebrew, and he was declaring Jesus to be the Messiah. Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit the definite article (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j It had been eight years since the last time he could make a bed! You can believe that it gave him great pleasure.

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up! ³⁵All who were living in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned^a to the Lord.

Peter raises Dorcas

³⁶Now there was a certain disciple in Joppa named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds that she kept doing. ³⁷But it happened in those days that she took sick and died; so when they had washed her they placed her in the upper room.^b ³⁸Now Lydda was near Joppa; the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent to him imploring him not to delay in coming to them. ³⁹So Peter got up and went with them; upon arriving they took him up to the upper room; all the widows stood around him weeping and showing the coats and garments that Dorcas was making^c while she was with them. ⁴⁰So Peter put them all out,^d kneeled down and prayed. Turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, get up!” So she opened her eyes, and upon seeing Peter she sat up.^e ⁴¹Then he gave her a hand and lifted her up, and calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. ⁴²And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. ⁴³So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with a certain Simon, a tanner.

The case of Cornelius

10 ¹Now there was a certain man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²devout and fearing God with all his household, both giving alms generously to the people and praying to God about everything.^f ³About the ninth hour of the day,^g in a vision, he saw clearly an angel of God entering his presence and saying to him, “Cornelius!” ⁴Well, staring at him and being frightened he said, “What is it, Lord?” So he said to him: “Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter; ⁶he is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.”^h ⁷So when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who were faithful to him, ⁸and explaining everything to them he sent them to Joppa.

God prepares Peter

⁹Now on the next day, as they were traveling and drawing near to the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray at about noon.ⁱ ¹⁰Well he became hungry and wanted to eat; but while they were preparing, a trance fell on him, ¹¹and he saw the heaven opened and a container like a great sheet descending to him—it was tied at the four corners and was being let down to the earth—¹²in which were

^a The idea is of a change of direction in belief or course of conduct.

^b The upper room of her house; she was presumably reasonably well off.

^c That is what the Text says; I get the impression that Dorcas used a production line method, and left a variety of unfinished garments.

^d You could not hear yourself think in there; he had to do that so he could hear the Holy Spirit.

^e She had been dead for a number of hours.

^f How about us; do we pray to God about everything?

^g That would be 3 p.m. in Hebrew time, one of the Jewish hours of prayer.

^h The familiar “He will tell you what you must do” (as in AV and NKJV) comes from the TR, which is here based on a very few late Greek manuscripts plus part of the Latin tradition.

ⁱ The Text has “the sixth hour”.

all *kinds* of four-footed *animals* of the earth (both wild animals and reptiles) and birds of the sky.^a **13**Then a voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, slaughter and eat!” **14**But Peter said: “No way, Lord! Never have I eaten anything ‘common’^b or unclean!” **15**So the voice came to him a second time, “What (pl) God has made clean you must not call ‘common!’” **16**Well this happened three times, and then the object was taken back up into the sky.

The messengers arrive

17Now as Peter was really perplexed within himself as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, well the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having inquired and found Simon’s house, stood before the gate, **18**and calling out they inquired whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, was staying there as a guest. **19**So as Peter was pondering the vision the Spirit said to him: “Listen, some men are looking for you; **20**so get up and go downstairs; and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them.” **21**So going down to the men^c Peter said: “Yes, I am the one you are looking for. For what reason have you come?” **22**So they said: “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man, well spoken of by all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by an angel^d to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.” **23**So he invited them in and put them up.

On to Caesarea

The next day Peter set out with them, also some of the brothers from Joppa went with him; **24**and the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them,^e having called together his relatives and close friends. **25**So when Peter actually arrived, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet and worshipped. **26**But Peter lifted him up, saying: “Stand up! I myself am also a man.” **27**And conversing with him he went in and found many gathered *there*. **28**Then he said to them: “You know how it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with or to ap-

^a What the Text actually says, literally, is: “all the four-footed of the earth, and the wild animals, and the reptiles, and the birds of the sky”—a re-run of Noah’s ark! Well, if the sheet were large enough... However, from Peter’s response it appears that no ‘clean’ animals or birds were included. I am tempted to translate: “all the four-footed of the earth—that is, the wild animals and the reptiles—and the birds of the sky” wherein the ‘birds of the sky’ are carrion fowl (songbirds and game birds generally stay close to the ground).

^b That is, something ritually or ceremonially impure (and therefore not to be eaten).

^c Some 35% of the Greek manuscripts add “who had been sent to him from Cornelius”, as in AV and NKJV.

^d I follow the best line of transmission in not adding ‘holy’, although here representing only 20% of the manuscripts. To be giving divine instruction the angel was evidently from God.

^e Let us try to get the ‘feel’ of this watershed event. Cornelius is a Gentile, but he REALLY wants to know God; yet he ‘knows’ that Jehovah has a thing with the Jews and is not too big on Gentiles. But he is convinced that Jehovah is the true God and is doing his very best to please Him. So one day God gives him a special dispensation of grace; He sends an angel! Was Cornelius excited, or was he excited!! Like, **wow**. So he sends his messengers hotfooting it to Joppa (some 60 km), and they do it in less than 24 hours. So what does Cornelius do while he waits? He prays and **fasts**. Surely, he was already a man of prayer (verse 2) so how is he going to show his appreciation to God for the special favor? He fasts—now that he has God’s attention, marvel of marvels, he wants to stay tuned in so as not to miss anything. And after allowing for the minimum time necessary for the roundtrip, he is at the door looking down the road—well, being a military commander he doubtless had lookouts and probably had someone on duty to tell him when the group came into view. Enter Peter. He lays on the bit about Jews not contaminating themselves with Gentiles, but God told him to come, and so what does Cornelius want. Now it is his turn—he is looking at a Jew who is not exactly oozing enthusiasm at being there, but he is Jehovah’s messenger and the centurion understands about rank and authority; so he plays the only cards he has: his own sincerity and seriousness and God’s revealed will. (See the second note down.)

proach a different race; but God has shown me that I should not call any man 'common' or unclean. ²⁹Therefore also I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. So I ask, for what reason did you send for me?"

³⁰So Cornelius said: "I have been fasting^a during four days until this very hour; yes, *it was* the ninth hour,^b I was praying in my house when wow, a man stood before me in shining clothing ³¹and said: 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms are remembered before God. ³²Send therefore to Joppa and summon Simon, who is surnamed Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea; upon arriving he will speak to you.'^c ³³So I sent to you at once, and you did well to come. Now then, we are all present before God to hear all the things commanded you by God."^d

Peter preaches

³⁴So opening his mouth Peter said: "Really, I comprehend that God is not One to show partiality, ³⁵but in every ethnic nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is acceptable to Him.^e ³⁶The word that He sent to the sons^f of Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—³⁷that spoken word you know, that was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John preached:^g ³⁸Jesus of Natsareth, how God anointed Him with Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and

^a Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit the 'fasting' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b "I have been fasting during four days until this very hour" (the first card) and "the ninth hour..." (the second card). About the sequence, we observe the following:

verse 3—1st day: Cornelius sees angel, about 3 p.m., and sends messengers forthwith;

verse 9—2nd day: Peter has vision, after 12 noon, and messengers arrive (& are lodged for the night);

verse 23—3rd day: Peter and company leave Joppa;

verse 24—4th day: they enter Caesarea (probably before noon).

So, by western reckoning we have not quite three full days, but by Hebrew and Brazilian reckoning we have a situation that involves four days.

The messengers, under urgent orders, did the 60 km in under 24 hours (whether they went all night, we do not know, but they were probably obviously tired when they showed up at Peter's gate). Peter was not about to be stampeded into action; he had to eat, sort things out in his mind, talk it over with the others—since they decided to send a committee, preparations had to be made. So they set out the next day, but they are dignified Jews and are not going to run—they set a steady pace and probably make some 45 km before stopping for the night. The remaining 15 km they knock off before noon the next day. So, the "this very hour" refers to the time of Peter's arrival.

^c Less than 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "upon arriving he will speak to you" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Cornelius does not beat around the bush, he wants to hear from **God**. Instead of 'God' some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e This statement of Peter's does not fit in very well with the doctrine of salvation (soteriology) as taught in many schools and churches. God deals with people where they are, within the context that they are. Surely, because He cannot deal with people where they are not.

^f 'Sons' is often translated 'children' when referring to the descendents of Jacob—Peter is referring to the current generation, the one that received the revelation of 'Jesus Christ'.

^g As soon as John was put in prison, which was the end of his preaching and baptizing, Jesus moved out of Judea into Galilee—He spent over a year there before returning to Judea. Peter is assuming that Cornelius would have followed the career of Jesus with interest. He gives a very brief, almost disjointed, review of some salient points.

healing all those being oppressed by the devil,^a because God was with Him ³⁹—yes, we are witnesses of all that He did, both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem—whom they also killed, hanging Him on a tree. ⁴⁰**Him** God raised on the third day, and gave Him to become visible, ⁴¹not to all the people but to witnesses who had been chosen beforehand by God, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose out from the dead.^b ⁴²And He ordered us to proclaim to the people, that is, to testify that He is the One who has been ordained by God as Judge of living and dead. ⁴³To **Him** all the prophets bear witness^c that through His name^d everyone who believes into Him will receive forgiveness of sins.”^e

The Holy Spirit falls

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were hearing the message.^f ⁴⁵Well the believers of the circumcision [Jews] who had come with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had also been poured out on the Gentiles, ⁴⁶in that they heard them speaking languages^g and magnifying God. Then Peter responded: ⁴⁷“Surely no one can forbid the water, can he, that these should not be baptized^h who received the Holy Spirit just like we did?” ⁴⁸So he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.ⁱ Then they asked him to stay a few days.

^a The devil is Satan. Did Peter mean that every time Jesus saw an oppressed person He healed them, or did he mean that everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, or both? The episode at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-13) would appear to eliminate the first option, that every time He saw an oppressed person He healed them, because there was a “great multitude” of oppressed people there, and Jesus obviously saw them, but He did nothing to help them. This leaves us with the clear conclusion that it is the second meaning that is correct, everyone whom Jesus healed was oppressed, which means that Satan is involved in all maladies. [With reference to John 5:2-13, less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit the last clause of verse 3 and all of verse 4 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, [TEV], etc.). But obviously all those people would not stay there (in discomfort) day in and day out, year in and year out, if nothing was happening. Obviously people got healed, and verse 7 makes clear that it had to do with the stirring of the water—so why did not those manuscripts omit verse 7 as well? The UBS editions do us a considerable disservice by following a very small minority of manuscripts and making the angel “of the Lord”. Since angels can be good or fallen, it seems most likely to me that the angel involved was fallen. A capricious, occasional healing condemned all those people to added suffering (being at the pool instead of the comfort of home), including the frustration and despair of those who never made it (like the man Jesus healed). A sadistic procedure is just like Satan.]

^b Here we have an interesting bit of information not recorded elsewhere. Jesus ate and drank with some of them after His resurrection.

^c Presumably the prophets all bear witness to the Messiah in some way.

^d I take “through His name” to mean something like ‘because of His identity’ as Messiah and Jehovah the Son.

^e This was the crucial bit of information they were waiting for, what they had to do to be saved. The minute Peter said, “believe into Jesus”, they did! And the Holy Spirit came upon them! Believe “into” not “in”—a change of location is involved, from being outside to being inside, which requires commitment.

^f If anyone present was not ‘hearing’ they would neither believe nor receive.

^g The term often rendered ‘tongue’ is the ordinary word for ‘language’—these were presumably real languages, though unknown to the hearers (and speakers). What happened here went against the Jews’ worldview.

^h Baptism followed immediately upon conversion (not after weeks of instruction and observation). I believe they were formally severing any and all connection with Satan and the world controlled by him, and placing themselves under the protection of the Lord Jesus. The sooner a new convert does that the better. Did the centurion have a swimming pool in his house? Would there have been enough water there to immerse all those people?

ⁱ The Greek manuscripts are divided among three main variants here (‘the Lord Jesus’ [35%], ‘the Lord’ [57%], ‘Jesus Christ’ [8%]); I have followed what I understand to be the best line of transmission.

Peter has to explain

11 ¹Now the Apostles and the brothers throughout Judea^a heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ²When Peter went up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision *party* started contending with him, ³saying, “You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!”^b

⁴So Peter began by explaining it to them in order, saying: ⁵“I was in the town of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision: a certain object like a great sheet coming down out of the sky, being lowered by its four corners; and it came to me. ⁶Upon peering into it I observed and distinguished the quadrupeds of the earth—both the wild animals and the reptiles—and the birds of the sky. ⁷Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter, slaughter and eat!’ ⁸So I said: ‘No way, Lord! Never has anything ‘common’ or unclean entered my mouth!’ ⁹But the voice answered me, a second time, from heaven, ‘Things that God has made clean you must not call ‘common.’’ ¹⁰Well this was done three times, and it was all pulled back up into the sky. ¹¹At that very moment three men stopped in front of the house where I was, having been sent from Caesarea to me. ¹²The Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. These six brothers also went with me,^c and we entered the man’s house. ¹³He then related to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying to him, ‘Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, ¹⁴who will speak words to you by which you and all your household will be saved.’ ¹⁵Well as I began to speak,^d the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with Holy Spirit.’^e ¹⁷So if God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed upon the Lord Jesus,^f who was I to be able to withstand God?” ¹⁸Upon hearing these things they acquiesced and started glorifying God, saying, “So then, God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance into life!”^g

Enter Barnabas

¹⁹Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that came about in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews only.^h ²⁰But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who upon entering Antioch started speaking to the Greek-

^a Talk about news spreading like wildfire; well this news was really ‘hot’!

^b In Matthew 28 the resurrected Jesus had commanded that disciples be made among all ethnic nations—so how can you disciple someone without talking to him or associating with him? In fact, the ‘Great Commission’ imposed a significant shift in worldview upon Jesus’ Jewish followers. The transition was not easy, and many never made it.

^c Peter presumably knew he would be called on the carpet, so he took his witnesses along.

^d Peter was set to give a proper discourse, but the Spirit intervened.

^e See Acts 1:5. This was spoken by the Lord Jesus just before His ascension.

^f Notice that there is no mention of keeping the Law, being circumcised, or following Jewish customs. Peter is saying that what God did indicates that the key to salvation is believing upon the Lord Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile. I follow the best line of transmission that reads ‘the Lord Jesus’; some 75% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘Christ’.

^g Their religious culture had twisted the OT Scriptures so as to exclude Gentiles. So now they are surprised.

^h This was before the Cornelius episode.

speakers,^a preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. ²¹And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. ²²Well the report concerning them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³Upon arriving and seeing the grace of God, he was glad, and he kept encouraging them all to remain true to the Lord with purpose of heart^b ²⁴(for he was a good man, full of Holy Spirit and of faith). And a considerable crowd was added to the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶and upon finding him he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they met with the congregation and taught a great many people. The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Enter Agabus

²⁷Now in these days, prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that a great famine was about to come upon the whole world (this indeed happened while Claudius was Caesar). ²⁹Then the disciples, to the extent that any had plenty, each of them determined to send relief to the brothers who lived in Judea; ³⁰which they also did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Enter Herod

12 ¹Now about that time, Herod the king laid hands on some from the church to mistreat them. ²James, the brother of John, he put to death by sword.^c ³When he saw that it was pleasing to the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter as well (it was during the days of the unleavened loaves) ⁴—upon seizing him he put him in prison, turning him over to sixteen soldiers^d to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover.

Enter angel

⁵Well Peter was being held in the prison all right, but the congregation was making earnest prayer to God on his behalf. ⁶So when Herod was about to bring him out,^e that night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, with guards protecting the prison in front of the doors. ⁷Suddenly, an angel of the Lord was there, and a light shone in the cell; striking Peter on the side he roused him saying, “Quick, get up!” and the chains fell away from his wrists. ⁸Then the angel said to him, “Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.” So he did. Then he said to him, “Put on your cloak and follow me.” ⁹So he went out and started following him, not realizing that what the angel was doing was real; he supposed he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰Passing through the first and second guard

^a In verse 19, those who spoke to Jews only, presumably used Hebrew, which would not be understood by outsiders. In verse 20, by preaching in Greek, the whole populace could understand, even if Greek-speaking Jews were the main target. Verse 21 implies that the number of believers exceeded the number of Jews, so Gentiles also were believing.

^b Barnabas gives us a good example to follow.

^c So far as we know, James was the first of the Apostles to die (discounting the Iscariot), and he was martyred.

^d Why so many? Had he heard about Peter's spiritual power?

^e 'Bring him out' means to execute him.

posts, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, that opened for them by itself;^a upon exiting they advanced one block, and suddenly the angel left him.

Enter Rhoda

¹¹When Peter had come to himself he said, “Now I know for certain that the Lord sent His angel and delivered me out of Herod’s hand and from all the expectation of the Jewish people.” ¹²Upon reflection he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John (the one called Mark), where a considerable number had gathered and were praying. ¹³When Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴Upon recognizing Peter’s voice, she was so glad she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing before the gate! ¹⁵But they said to her, “You’re crazy!” but she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, “It is his angel.” ¹⁶But Peter kept on knocking; so when they opened the door and saw him, they were astounded.^b ¹⁷Motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he related to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. Then he said, “Tell these things to James^c and the brothers.” And going out he went off to a different place.^d

Poor guards!

¹⁸Now as soon as it was day, there was no small commotion among the soldiers about what had become of Peter! ¹⁹Well after searching for him and not finding him, Herod examined the guards and ordered that they be executed. Going down from Judea to Caesarea, he stayed there.^e

Herod gets his ‘comeuppance’

²⁰Now Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; so they came with one accord to him, and having won over Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food from the king’s.^f ²¹So on an appointed day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on the throne and started to deliver an address to them. ²²But the crowd started calling out, “The voice of a god and not of a man!” ²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give glory to God, and being eaten by worms, he died.^g

²⁴And the Word of God kept growing and multiplying.^h

^a The angel used supernatural power; and if we ever learn how to do it, we can too—Ephesians 3:20.

^b They evidently did not expect their prayer to be answered. After all, they had probably prayed for James first, and he was killed anyway. When we pray about a difficult situation, we should start out by asking what the Father is doing—John 5:19.

^c This James is the Lord’s half-brother; he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

^d Presumably this means that he left Jerusalem; it was prudent to disappear for a while.

^e He had doubtless told the Jews that he had Peter, and when he couldn’t produce him he lost face. But the circumstances probably left him uncomfortable as well, so he decided to get away for awhile—none of which saved the poor guards. The guards were part of an evil system, and presumably would never have converted (although, if Peter had preached to them, some may have believed before the execution).

^f The famine mentioned in chapter eleven may have made them especially dependent.

^g The worms, of unusual size and impressive number, would come out of the corpse, indicating the cause of death—really gross!

^h Growing in influence and multiplying its effects.

The Gentile Church

²⁵Now Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch,^a having fulfilled their mission, also taking with them John, the one called Mark.

Missionary journey I—Barnabas and Saul→Paul

13 ¹Now in the congregation that was in Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (the one called Niger), Lucius the Cyrenian, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch), and Saul. ²As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart to me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them!” ³Then, having fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them off.

1st stop—Cyprus

⁴So, having been sent out by the Holy Spirit,^b they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.^c ⁵And upon arriving in Salamis, they started proclaiming the Word of God in the synagogues of the Jews (also they had John as assistant). ⁶Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew named Bar-Jesus, ⁷who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul, really wanting to hear the Word of God. ⁸But the sorcerer Elymas (for so his name is translated) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

⁹Then Saul, also called Paul,^d filled with Holy Spirit and looking intently at him, ¹⁰said: “O full of all deceit and all trickery, son of a devil, enemy of all righteousness!^e Will you not stop perverting the straight ways of the Lord? ¹¹Well now, the Lord’s hand is against you and you will be blind, not seeing the sun until *next* season!” Immediately mist and darkness engulfed him, and he started going around looking for someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²Then the proconsul believed, when he saw^f what had happened, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

On to Pisidian Antioch

¹³Then Paul and his party set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphilia (here John left them and returned to Jerusalem).^g ¹⁴Going on from Perga they arrived in Antioch of Pisidia; and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath day, they sat down. ¹⁵After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the

^a We have here an important set of variant readings, wherein the evidence is rather badly divided. The discussion is quite complicated and extensive, so I refer the interested reader to the Appendix: “Where to place a Comma—Acts 12:25”.

^b Note the emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s agency.

^c Recall that Barnabas was a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36); he was doubtless eager to evangelize his own country, and would also know his way around.

^d It is at this point that Luke starts using ‘Paul’ instead of ‘Saul’.

^e To be an ‘enemy of all righteousness’ one would have to be pretty bad! If ‘son of a devil’ is literal, Elymas was a humanoid, and would indeed be completely evil.

^f Demonstrated supernatural power has a way of lending credence to the spoken word.

^g When the party arrived in Cyprus, Barnabas was the leader; when it left, Paul had taken over. Barnabas was John’s uncle, and quite possibly John did not like the change.

synagogue leaders sent to them, saying, “Men, brothers, if you have a word of encouragement^a for the people, do speak.”

Paul expounds the Gospel

¹⁶So standing up and motioning with his hand, Paul said: “Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. ¹⁷The God of this people chose our fathers, and prospered the people during their sojourn in the land of Egypt, and brought them out of it with an uplifted arm. ¹⁸For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness. ¹⁹And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He gave them possession of their land. ²⁰After these things, He gave judges for about four hundred and fifty^b years, until Samuel the prophet.^c ²¹And then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, a son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.^d ²²And removing him He raised up for them David as king, about whom He gave witness and said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ ²³God, from this man’s seed, according to promise, has brought^e Salvation^f to Israel, ²⁴John having heralded beforehand, in advance of His coming, a baptism of repentance to Israel.^g ²⁵Well, as John was fulfilling his course, he said: ‘Whom do you suppose me to be? No I am not—but indeed He comes after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.’^h

²⁶“Men, brothers, sons of the stock of Abraham, and those among you who fear God: to youⁱ the word of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷The Jerusalem dwellers and their rulers, understanding neither Him nor the voices of the prophets that are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. ²⁸Though they found no cause for death, they asked Pilate to have Him executed. ²⁹When they had fulfilled all things that were written about Him, they took Him down from the cross^j and placed Him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised Him from the dead; ³¹and for many days He was seen by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are^k His witnesses to the people.

³²“Yes we proclaim to you the good news: the promise that was made to the fathers, ³³God has fulfilled the same to us, their children, when He raised up Jesus;^l as also it stands written in the second Psalm:

‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’^m

^a Or ‘exhortation’.

^b The events recorded in the book of Judges, plus Eli’s 40 years, equal 450.

^c Along with his other functions, Samuel was a prophet.

^d Saul reigned for forty years—a considerable period of time.

^e Instead of ‘brought’, some 25% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘raised up’, as in AV and NKJV.

^f Instead of ‘Salvation’, some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘a Savior, Jesus’, as in most versions.

^g Instead of ‘to Israel’, some 20% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘to all the people of Israel’, as in most versions.

^h At first people speculated that John the baptizer might be the Messiah, but John was quick to deny it.

ⁱ Instead of ‘to you’, perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘to us’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). How was that word sent? By Paul and Barnabas.

^j Literally ‘tree’. Note that Paul emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy.

^k Paul says ‘are’—evidently many/most of the original Apostles were still alive.

^l The “raised up” here presumably refers to the incarnation; the resurrection comes in verse 34.

^m See Psalm 2:7.

³⁴And that He raised Him from the dead,^a no longer to return to corruption,^b He has spoken thus,

‘I will give you the holy things guaranteed to David.’^c

³⁵Further, it is stated elsewhere,

‘You will not allow your Holy One to see decay.’^d

³⁶Now David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw decay; ³⁷but the One whom God raised up did not see decay.^e ³⁸Therefore, let it be known to you, men, brothers, that through this One forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; ³⁹and by Him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the Law of Moses.^f ⁴⁰So take care, lest there come upon you that which has been spoken in the prophets:

⁴¹‘Look you despisers, marvel and perish!
For I am working a work in your days
to which you will not give credence,
even if someone were to explain it in detail to you.’^g

The reaction

⁴²Now as the Jews were going out of the synagogue, the Gentiles implored repeatedly^h that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. ⁴³The

^a The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is crucial; without it we have no Gospel.

^b People like Lazarus who were returned to life, had to die again (and decompose); with Jesus it was different: His resurrection was definitive, and involved a glorified body.

^c See Isaiah 55:3.

^d See Psalm 16:10.

^e Only supernatural intervention could forestall decay after physical death.

^f The Law as a means of justification was sadly deficient; the resurrected Jesus is marvelously efficient.

^g See Habakkuk 1:5. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, to those who reject the love of the truth God Himself sends active delusion, so they will believe the lie. The ‘despisers’ are rendered incapable of understanding the explanation.

^h We have here an important set of variant readings, wherein the evidence is rather badly divided. I have decided to give the Greek, for those who can handle it, but will here give a literal rendering of the four variants, for those who can’t. However, the discussion includes ‘the Gentiles’, as being part of the puzzle: 1) now as the Jews were going out of the synagogue; 2) now as they were going out; 3) now as they were going out of the synagogue of the Jews; 4) now as they were going out of the synagogue.

1) <i>εξιοντων δε εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων</i>	Ⓕ ⁸⁵ (60.2%) HF,RP,TR
2) <i>εξιοντων δε αυτων</i>	ⒶA,B,C,D (16.2%) NU
3) <i>εξιοντων δε αυτων εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων</i>	(20.8%) OC,CP
4) <i>εξιοντων δε αυτων εκ της συναγωγης</i>	(2.3%)
(two other readings)	(0.4%)

I believe this variant set must be considered along with the presence of *τα εθνη* after *παρεκαλουν*, but *TuT* does not include the second set. However, from UBS³ it appears that virtually the same roster of witnesses, including the three ancient versions (!), read variant 2) and omit “the Gentiles”. Where then is the Subject of the main verb *παρεκαλουν*? Presumably for those witnesses it would be the Jews and proselytes who had just heard Paul and wanted to hear it all over again the next Sabbath. So why are they (Jews and proselytes) mentioned overtly again in verse 43? And on what basis would the whole city show up the next week (verse 44)? But to go back to verse 42, why would the first hearers want to hear the same thing (*τα ρηματα ταυτα*) again anyway? The really interested ones stuck with Paul and Barnabas to learn more (verse 43), just as we would expect.

synagogue service having been dismissed, many of the Jews and the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who started addressing them, urging them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴Well the next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered to hear the Word of God.^a ⁴⁵But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with envy^b and started speaking against the things said by Paul, contradicting and^c blaspheming.

⁴⁶But Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly said: “It was necessary that God’s Word should be spoken to you first.^d But since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,^e now we are being turned to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷Because that is just how the Lord has commanded us:

‘I have set you to be a light for ethnic nations,
that you should be for salvation
up to the last place on earth.’^f

⁴⁸Now upon hearing this, the Gentiles rejoiced and glorified the Word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.^g

⁴⁹Well the Word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.^h ⁵⁰But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent womenⁱ and the chief men of the city, and raised up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their borders. ⁵¹So they shook off the dust from their feet against

The witnesses to variants 1) and 3) join in support of “the Gentiles”, giving us a strong majority (over 80%). So the Subject of *παρακαλουν τα εθνη*—**they** want a chance to hear the Gospel too, and the whole city turns out. It fits the context perfectly. So, variant 3) appears to be a conflation and the basic reading is variant 1). The witnesses to variant 3), because they have “the Gentiles”, are really on the side of variant 1), not 2), so presumably 1) may be viewed as having 80% attestation. For the witnesses to variant 1) the antecedent or referent of *εξιοντων* must be Paul’s group, since the Gentiles would presumably address their request to the teacher.

In variant 2) *αυτων* presumably serves as Subject of both the participle and the main verb, but in that event the main verb should take precedence and the pronoun should be nominative, not genitive. However one might explain the motivation for such a change—from 1) to 2) and deleting “the Gentiles”—variant 2) is evidently wrong, even though attested by the three ancient versions. Perhaps someone faced with variant 1) took “of the Jews” to be the referent of the participle instead of modifying “synagogue” (like NKJV), and thought it should be Subject of the main verb as well—then, of course, “the Gentiles” were in the way and were deleted. Then 1) might have been shortened to 2) for ‘clarity’.

I take it that the original text had: *εξιοντων δε εκ της συναγωγης των ιουδαιων παρακαλουν τα εθνη* etc.

^a Instead of ‘God’ perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘the Lord’ (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Isn’t human nature wonderful?

^c Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts omit “contradicting and” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Note the “it was necessary”. The apostles had a clear conviction that the Jews should be given the first chance.

^e This sounds a little bit like sarcasm to me.

^f See Isaiah 49:6. The prophecy refers to the Messiah, but Paul and Barnabas are representing Him.

^g Here God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are placed side by side—God appoints, but we have to believe.

^h This presumably means that a fair number of local congregations sprang up there.

ⁱ When the women get stirred up, watch out!

them,^a and went to Iconium. ⁵²But the disciples were filled with joy and with Holy Spirit.^b

Iconium

14 ¹Now it happened in Iconium that they went together into the synagogue of the Jews, and they spoke to such effect that a large number of both Jews and Greeks believed. ²But the disobedient Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³Even so they stayed there a considerable time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, giving signs and wonders to take place by their hands.^c ⁴Well the population of the city became divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles. ⁵But when a plot was hatched by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat and stone them, ⁶they became aware of it and escaped to the cities of Lycaonia—Lystra, Derbe and the surrounding area—⁷where they continued to preach the Gospel.

Lystra

⁸Well in Lystra a certain man with helpless feet was sitting (lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked). ⁹This man was listening to Paul speaking; who looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And the man jumped up and began to walk!^d ¹¹Now when the crowd saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" ¹²And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought bulls and garlands to the gates, intending to make a sacrifice, along with the crowd.^e

¹⁴But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed into the crowd, crying out ¹⁵and saying: "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, giving you good news, telling you to turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them; ¹⁶who in the former generations allowed all the ethnic nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, doing good, giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."^f ¹⁸Even saying these things, they barely stopped the crowd from sacrificing to them.

^a They were following an instruction given by the Lord Himself (Matthew 10:14-15, Luke 9:5), and that He illustrated by example (Matthew 11:23-24), although He spoke the curse. I believe that history records that Pisidian Antioch entered into decline at that point.

^b The apostles went on their way, but they left Life and joy behind them.

^c As stated in this verse, the signs and wonders were the result of God's initiative.

^d As in chapter 3, the miracle included his head, not just his limbs, since he had never learned to walk.

^e Within their belief system this was the appropriate thing to do.

^f Now there you have an extemporaneous speech! It was a totally unexpected situation, and they had no prepared sermon. They emphasize the Creator God.

Paul stoned

¹⁹Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came, and having persuaded the crowd and having stoned Paul,^a they dragged him out of the city,^b supposing him to have died. ²⁰But as the disciples stood around him,^c he got up and entered the city. The next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

The return to Antioch

²¹When they had evangelized that city and discipled a good number, they returned to Lystra^d and Iconium and Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”^e ²³When they had appointed elders for them in every congregation,^f having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord into whom they had believed.^g ²⁴After going through Pisidia, they came to Pamphilia. ²⁵When they had declared the Word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶From there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. ²⁷So upon arriving and gathering the congregation, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸And they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

The Jerusalem Council

The conflict

15 ¹Then some men came down from Judea and started teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²Well this provoked serious dissension and argument between Paul and Barnabas and them, so Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with certain others of them, to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. ³So being sent on their way by the congregation, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brothers. ⁴Upon arriving in Jerusalem, they were received by the congregation and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses.”^h

^a Crowds can be fickle, and the apostles had called their religion “useless”. Several days had elapsed, presumably, which gave them time to mull things over. There was probably some demonic involvement as well.

^b He was probably dragged by the feet, like an animal.

^c I suppose that the attack was sudden and unexpected (planned that way), so the disciples did not have time to try to defend him. Paul certainly looked dead, but as the disciples were standing there trying to assimilate what had happened, he got up! His recovery was such that he could set out the next day on foot.

^d One might suppose that they would avoid Lystra, but no. Perhaps upon reflection the locals were ashamed of what they had done; besides, what do you do to a man you have already killed?!

^e Is that what they preach in your church? Does that sound like ‘easy street’?

^f The congregations needed some sort of leadership.

^g People need to learn to walk with God on their own.

^h In essence they were demanding that the Gentiles become Jewish proselytes, as a prior condition. Those Pharisees did not understand salvation by faith.

The Council

⁶So the apostles and the elders came together to consider this matter. ⁷When there had been plenty of discussion, Peter got up and said to them: “Men, brothers, you know that a good while ago God made a choice among you,^a that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the message of the Gospel and believe. ⁸And the heart-knowing God acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us; ⁹and He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹Rather, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,^b in the same manner as they.”^c

¹²Then the whole assembly kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul reporting what signs and wonders God had done among the ethnic nations through them. ¹³Now when they finished, James reacted saying: “Men, brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has described how God first intervened to extract from the Gentiles a people for His name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

¹⁶After these things I will return,
and I will rebuild David’s tent, the fallen one;
yes, I will rebuild its ruins and restore it;

¹⁷so that the remnant of mankind may seek the LORD,
even all the Gentiles—the ones, that is, upon whom my name has been
called—says the LORD who does all these things.^d

¹⁸All His works are known to God from eternity.^e

¹⁹Therefore I judge that we should not create difficulty for those who are turning to God from among the ethnic nations,^f ²⁰but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled, and from blood. ²¹For from ancient generations Moses has in every city those who preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

The edict

²²Then it pleased the apostles and the elders, with the whole congregation, to send chosen men from among them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: Judas (the one called Barsabas) and Silas, leading men among the brothers. ²³They wrote by their hand the following:

^a I follow the best line of transmission in reading ‘you’; some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘us’, as in AV and NKJV.

^b Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘Christ’, as in AV and NKJV.

^c Peter states the crucial point: salvation comes through grace and faith, for everyone, not by keeping the Law. Legalism is out.

^d See Amos 9:11-12.

^e God had not changed: it was always His purpose to include the Gentiles. Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “all His works are known to God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f This way of stating it leaves an opening for making a distinction between Gentile and Jewish believers. By chapter 21 this had become a serious problem. James begins the verse saying, “I judge”, emphasizing the pronoun, and his position was a bit of a compromise: this in spite of Peter’s plain statement in verse 11. In verse 23 the edict is addressed to the “Gentile brothers” (the distinction between Jew and Gentile is maintained).

“The apostles and the elders and the^a brothers, to the Gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia:

Greetings.

²⁴Since we have heard that some who went out from among us have disturbed you with words, unsettling your souls, saying that you must be circumcised and keep the Law^b—to whom we gave no such authorization—²⁵it seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the sake of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷So we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also confirm these things by word of mouth.^c ²⁸It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us,^d to place no greater burden upon you than these necessary things: ²⁹to abstain from things offered to idols,^e from ‘blood’, from anything strangled and from fornication;^f it will be in your own best interest to keep away from these things.

Farewell.”

Good results

³⁰So when they were sent off they came to Antioch, and gathering the crowd they delivered the letter. ³¹When they had read it, they rejoiced over the encouragement. ³²Both Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. ³³After some time, they were released with peace from the brothers to the apostles.^g ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord, with many others also.

Missionary journey II—Paul and Silas

Paul and Barnabas separate

³⁶Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return now and visit our brothers in each city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, to see how they are doing.” ³⁷Now Barnabas resolved to take John (the one called Mark) along as

^a Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “and the” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). This changes the meaning; the three groups are reduced to two.

^b Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘saying that you must be circumcised and keep the law’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c The Law required at least two witnesses.

^d James affirms divine approval for the decision.

^e The idols represented demons, and to deliberately worship an idol would give its demon a ‘legal’ basis for working in the worshipper.

^f In the Greek Text each item in the list is a single word; such brevity could give rise to ambiguity. However, items 1 and 4 seem clear enough. Item 3 presumably harks back to Genesis 9:4, where ingesting blood is forbidden. So item 2, ‘blood’, must mean something else. In the Bible ‘blood’ is repeatedly used to refer to violent death and the responsibility for it. This harks back to Genesis 9:5-6. The prohibition against fornication is implied in Genesis 2:24. That God did not accept Cain’s offering (Genesis 4:3-5) implies that He had given instruction on the subject, which would presumably include idolatry. So the four items in the list are all far older than the Law of Moses and are independent of it.

^g Verse 34, as in the AV, is to be found in about 30% of the Greek manuscripts, but contradicts verse 33, that seems to require that Silas returned to Jerusalem: “they were sent back...to the apostles”, and “they” refers to Judas and Silas. The ‘problem’ is that in verse 40 Paul chooses Silas to accompany him, so he had to be in Antioch, not Jerusalem. Accordingly the longer reading was created to solve the ‘problem’. The “some days” of verse 36 could well have been a month or two. From Antioch to Jerusalem would be a trip of less than 400 miles. Silas had time to go to Jerusalem and get back to Antioch.

well. ³⁸But Paul insisted on not taking someone who had deserted them in Pamphilia and not gone with them to the work. ³⁹Well the contention became so sharp that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;^a ⁴⁰while Paul chose Silas and set out, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of God.^b ⁴¹He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the congregations.

Paul finds Timothy

16 ¹So he came to Derbe and Lystra. Well now, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was a Greek; ²he was well spoken of by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium. ³Paul wanted to have him go on with him, so he took and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, because they all knew that his father was a Greek.^c ⁴As they were going through the cities they were delivering the dogmas to them, to keep—the ones that had been determined by the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem.^d ⁵So the congregations kept on being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.^e

The ‘Macedonian call’

⁶Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, ⁷they approached Mysia and tried to go to Bythia, but the Spirit^f did not permit them. ⁸So they bypassed Mysia and went down to Troas.^g

⁹A vision appeared to Paul during the night: a man of Macedonia was standing, appealing to him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰So when he saw the vision, we^h immediately prepared to go over to Macedonia, concluding that the Lordⁱ had called us to evangelize them.

Philippi

¹¹So setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis; ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony.^j We stayed some days in that city. ¹³On the Sab-

^a This is the last we hear of Barnabas, but not of Mark. Barnabas was an encourager. He had seen the potential in Saul of Tarsus and helped him along on at least two occasions. Now he sees the potential in Mark and invests in him, to such good effect that Paul himself later recognizes Mark’s value (2 Timothy 4:11). Peter had taken Mark under his wing and helped him write the second Gospel.

^b Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Lord’ instead of ‘God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Paul had been stoned at Lystra, at the instigation of the Jews, so why is he concerned to please them? And after he joined Paul how much time was Timothy going to spend in his home town? A curious proceeding.

^d One of the dogmas was that circumcision was not necessary, so was Paul hedging?

^e Evidently they were enthusiastically sharing the Good News. There must have come to be hundreds of congregations throughout Asia Minor.

^f Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘of Jesus’ (as in NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Paul and Silas were sufficiently in tune with the Holy Spirit that He could lead them. The areas mentioned were basically unevangelized, so their attempt was a ‘natural’, but those areas would be reached later as the News radiated out from Ephesus to all Asia. God wanted to get the Church started in Europe, and in particular the area where Greek was the mother tongue.

^h At this point Luke joined the party.

ⁱ Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘God’ instead of ‘Lord’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j A Roman colony—this conferred status and some privileges.

bath day we went outside the city by a river, where prayer was customarily made,^a and sitting down we started speaking to the assembled women.^b **14**A certain woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, really listened, whose heart the Lord opened to give heed to the things spoken by Paul. **15**When she and her household were baptized, she appealed saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

Prison

16Now it happened, as we were going to prayer, that a certain slave girl having a spirit of divination met us, who brought considerable profit to her owners by divination. **17**Following Paul and Silas^c this girl kept calling out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to us the way of salvation!”^d **18**She kept this up for many days!^e So Paul, becoming increasingly annoyed,^f turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!” And it came out that very hour.

19But when her owners saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place to the rulers,^g **20**and bringing them before the magistrates they said, “These men, being Jews, are agitating our city, **21**and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or do.” **22**The crowd joined in the attack against them, and the magistrates tore the clothes off of them and ordered a beating with rods. **23**When they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them securely; **24**who, having received such a charge, threw them into the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.^h

The jailer converts

25Well about midnight Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God in prayer; and the *other* prisoners were listening to them. **26**Suddenly there was a great earthquake, enough to shake the foundations of the prison; immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed.ⁱ **27**But the jailer, awaking

^a Instead of “where prayer was customarily made”, perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘where we supposed a place of prayer to be’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Evidently there was no synagogue in Philippi. Prayer meetings usually have more women than men.

^c I follow the best line of transmission in reading ‘Silas’; some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘us’, as in most versions. Luke, who was there, is focusing the account on the two who were put in prison.

^d I find it to be curious that what the demon said was precisely true! So why did that truth not result in many conversions? Presumably because the Holy Spirit did not apply it, coming from a demon. Instead of “to us”, perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘to you’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Did the demon have the girl include herself, or not?

^e The ‘hour of prayer’ was observed every day by God-fearing Jews. So the apostles would pass at a predictable time each day.

^f But Paul, she was giving you free advertising! Evidently he didn’t want advertising from the enemy, and in this he followed the Lord’s example (Mark 3:11-12).

^g This was a put up job. It would take a day or two to make clear that the girl was now useless. The magistrates had probably been getting a ‘cut’. Some rabble had been mobilized to join in—the whole proceeding had been organized in advance. They figured they could beat up on two Jews with impunity.

^h Their backs are bleeding from ‘many stripes’ and their feet are in stocks (you try to sit up so as not to lie on your wounded back; all of which gets pretty ‘old’ pretty fast)—a great time for a praise meeting!

ⁱ A proper earthquake could shake the doors open, but not unlock chains (unless it was their anchors that came loose from the walls).

from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew sword, intending to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.^a

²⁸But Paul shouted out, “Don’t harm yourself, because we are all here!”^b ²⁹So calling for a light he ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰He then brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”^c ³¹So they said, “Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ^d and you will be saved, you and your household.” ³²Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³In that same hour of the night he took them aside and washed their wounds, and thereupon he and all his family were baptized.^e ³⁴Then he brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he was really rejoicing, having believed in God with his whole family.

Magistrates rebuked

³⁵Now when it was day the magistrates sent the officers saying, “Let those men go.” ³⁶So the jailer reported these words to Paul, “The magistrates have sent to release you; so now you can leave and go in peace.” ³⁷But Paul said to them:^f “After severely beating us in public, although we were uncondemned Romans, they threw us into prison, and now do they toss us out on the sly? No way! Rather, let them come themselves and escort us out!” ³⁸So the officers reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans; ³⁹and they came and appealed to them, and leading them out they asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰So exiting the prison they entered Lydia’s place, and upon seeing the brothers they encouraged them and departed.

Thessalonica

17 ¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²So Paul, as was his custom, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and demonstrating that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that “this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Messiah.” ⁴Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of devout Greeks and not a few of the prominent women.

⁵But the disobedient Jews^g rounded up some wicked men from the marketplace, and forming a mob they created an uproar in the city; and attacking the

^a Better a quick death than the humiliation that would follow (culminating in a slow death).

^b For the prisoners to be free and not run was really supernatural! The jailor understands that he is in the presence of a higher power.

^c Philippi was not all that large, and the members of his household would be information gatherers. He was doubtless aware of the slave girl’s ‘advertising’, etc.

^d Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Very appropriate—he washed their wounds and restored their dignity, so they could baptize him. Note again that baptism followed immediately. (Would there have been enough water there to dunk them? Probably not.) Note that everyone in the family was baptized, which would put them under Christ’s protection, but that procedure was imposed by the head of the household, whether or not there was personal commitment to Jesus on the part of each one.

^f The officers were still there. Paul decided to give the magistrates a much-needed lesson, but then acquiesced in leaving the city without further fuss.

^g They were fundamentally disobedient to God, and so fell in with Satan’s agenda. (Some 20% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘becoming envious’, but they do so in a variety of ways—the confusion is reflected in the versions.)

house of Jason, they wanted to bring them out to the crowd. ⁶But not finding them they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials vociferating: “These who have upset the whole world^a have come here too, ⁷to whom Jason has given lodging. These all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus.” ⁸Well they agitated the crowd and the city officials when they heard these things. ⁹Then they took a security bond from Jason and the rest and let them go.

Berea

¹⁰Immediately, during the night, the brothers sent both Paul and Silas away to Berea; on arriving they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all good-will, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things might be so.^b ¹²Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. ¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the Word of God was also being proclaimed by Paul in Berea, they came too, agitating the crowds. ¹⁴So then, without delay, the brothers sent Paul away, as if to go by sea, while both Silas and Timothy remained there. ¹⁵But those who were conducting Paul actually took him all the way to Athens;^c and receiving a command to Silas and Timothy that they should come to him as quickly as possible, they started back.

Athens

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was increasingly aroused within him as he observed that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned both in the synagogue with the Jews and devout persons, and in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Then certain philosophers, both Epicureans and Stoics, encountered him. Some said, “What might this idea-scavenger^d want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign deities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹So taking him in tow they led him to the Areopagus and said: “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰Because you are bringing some strange things to our ears, and we would like to know what they might mean.”^e ²¹(Now all Athenians and resident foreigners spent their time in nothing else but to tell, or else to hear, some novelty.)

Paul’s Areopagus address

²²So standing in the middle of the Areopagus Paul said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³because as I went along and scrutinized the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO UNKNOWN GOD. Now then, the one you worship as ‘unknown’, this is the One I proclaim to you: ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples built by

^a Of course this was not intended as a compliment, but I personally wouldn’t mind having this epithet/epitaph on my tombstone (if I ever have one).

^b So I wonder why Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and not to the Bereans.

^c They started toward the sea, to mislead any pursuers, but actually went overland to Athens; his escort stayed with him all the way.

^d They were not trying to be nice.

^e Here they are reasonably polite.

hands, ²⁵neither is He cared for by men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself has always given life and breath to all.^a ²⁶And from one blood^b He made every ethnic nation of men to dwell on all the surface of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,^c ²⁷so that they should seek the Lord,^d if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸because in Him we live and move and have our being.^e As also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'^f ²⁹Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divinity is like gold or silver or stone—something shaped by human skill and imagination.^g ³⁰Such times of ignorance God did indeed overlook, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because He has appointed a day in which He will judge the inhabited world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained; He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."^h

³²Well when they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some started scoffing,ⁱ while others said, "We will hear you again about this."^j ³³And with that Paul went out from among them.^k ³⁴However some men believed and joined him, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, also a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Consolidation of the Gentile Church

Corinth

18 ¹Now after these things Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ²And encountering a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to depart from Rome), he joined them; ³and because he practiced the same trade, he stayed on with them and worked (their trade was tentmaker).^l

⁴Every Sabbath in the synagogue he would reason with both Jews and Greeks, trying to persuade them. ⁵But when Silas and Timothy came down from

^a I would say that Paul illustrates the best strategy to use with an audience that has no biblical background—start with the Sovereign Creator. Note that Paul affirms that everyone owes his life to Him.

^b Modern medicine has discovered this to be true: blood transfusions across racial boundaries are perfectly possible. Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit 'blood' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c God is involved in human history. Paul may have been thinking of Deuteronomy 32:8.

^d Instead of 'the Lord', some 45% of the Greek manuscripts read 'God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Here is a fundamental truth, whether people recognize it or not. All God has to do is deprive you of oxygen for a few minutes and you die.

^f Paul demonstrated a knowledge of their literature.

^g If we are God's offspring He must have all the capabilities we have, only bigger and better; and we are not metal or stone.

^h The resurrection of Jesus is central to our Faith for several reasons. Here Paul says it guarantees that we will be judged, righteously.

ⁱ Satan hates the resurrection, and people controlled by him almost always react adversely to it (as Festus will do in chapter 26).

^j Evidently they never got another chance. People who try to impose their agenda on God usually do not do very well.

^k Corinth became the hub of the Church for Greece, not Athens (see 18:11 below).

^l Paul supported himself.

Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Spirit,^a solemnly insisting to the Jews: Jesus is the Christ.^b ⁶But since they kept contradicting and blaspheming, he shook his clothes^c and said to them: “Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

The house of Justus becomes the base

⁷So he moved from there into the house of a man named Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household; and as they were hearing, many of the Corinthians were believing and being baptized. ⁹Now the Lord said to Paul by a vision at night: “Do not be afraid; rather speak and do not keep silent, ¹⁰because I am with you and no one will attack you to harm you,^d because I have many people in this city.” ¹¹So he stayed on for a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them.^e

Gallio

¹²Now while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³saying, “This fellow persuades the people to worship God contrary to the law.” ¹⁴But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews: “If there really was some misdeed or wicked crime, O Jews, there would be reason for me to bear with you; ¹⁵but since it is an issue over a word and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; because I refuse to be a judge of such matters.” ¹⁶And he drove them from the judgment seat. ¹⁷Then all the Greeks^f took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue,^g and beat him in front of the judgment seat. But none of this was a delay to Gallio.^h

To Ephesus and Antioch

¹⁸Paul still remained there a good while, then took leave of the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila (he had shaved his head in Cenchrea, because he had a vow).ⁱ ¹⁹He came to Ephesus and left them there (after having entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews). ²⁰When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent; ²¹rather he took

^a Instead of ‘Spirit’, some 6% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘word’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.)

^b Paul could now turn physical details over to Silas and Timothy (who evidently did not get to Athens before Paul left there) and concentrate on the spiritual. The Holy Spirit has him really bear down on the Jews, obliging them to make a choice. Paul then turned his full attention to the Gentile population.

^c The idea was presumably to get rid of any dust; this was far less serious than shaking the dust off the feet, but he was clearly severing ‘diplomatic relations’ with them.

^d He had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra, and been severely beaten in Philippi, so this was doubtless an encouraging word.

^e They got a reasonably good theological education, which, however, did not exempt them from problems. It is not enough to know the truth; it must be lived, it must be applied.

^f Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘the Greeks’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Since Crispus had ‘defected’ to Christianity, he was replaced as ruler of the synagogue by Sosthenes.

^h Instead of ‘delay’, some 15% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘concern’, as in most versions. Gallio was doubtless a busy man, with his own plans, and did not want to be detained.

ⁱ Apparently such a vow could only be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in the temple at Jerusalem. I take it that this was a leftover from his Jewish religion.

leave of them saying, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem;^a but I will return again to you, God willing.”^b Then he set sail from Ephesus.

²²When he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church [in Jerusalem],^c he returned to Antioch. ²³After spending some time there, he departed and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Apollos

²⁴Now a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures, arrived in Ephesus. ²⁵This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the Spirit he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus,^d although he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

²⁷When he decided to go across into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to receive him;^e upon arriving he was a great help to those who had believed through the Grace; ²⁸because he kept refuting the Jews vigorously, publicly, demonstrating Jesus to be the Christ, from the Scriptures.^f

Back to Ephesus

19 ¹Now it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper country, came to Ephesus.

Disciples of John

And finding certain disciples ²he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “But we have not so much as heard that there is a Holy Spirit!” ³So he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”^g ⁴So Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe into the One who would come after him, that is, into Jesus, the Christ.”^h ⁵So upon hearing this they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And as Paul laid his hands on them the Holy Spirit came upon them,ⁱ and they started speaking languages and prophesying. ⁷There were about twelve men in all.

^a Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b In fact, God did will it.

^c Because Jerusalem was at a higher elevation than most of the rest of the country, travel to and from there is almost always described as ‘up to’ and ‘down from’.

^d I follow the best line of transmission in reading ‘Jesus’; some 65% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘the Lord’, as in AV and NKJV.

^e Letters of introduction are a good safeguard against opportunists.

^f Since he explained the Scriptures the same way that Paul did, it was no longer just one man’s interpretation.

^g Perhaps they were the result of some of Apollos’ early ministry. Paul evidently sensed that there was something lacking in them.

^h Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘the Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ This was an important confirmation that Paul’s clarification was correct.

The school of Tyrannus becomes the base

⁸During three months Paul kept going to the synagogue and speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the Kingdom of God. ⁹But when some became hardened and disobedient, maligning the Way before the crowd, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of a certain Tyrannus.^a ¹⁰Now this continued for two years, so that all who lived in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the Word of the Lord Jesus.^b

¹¹Further, God kept working unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹²so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that he touched were applied to the sick, and the diseases left them and the wicked spirits went out from them.^c

Some fake exorcists

¹³Well some among the itinerant Jewish exorcists attempted to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had wicked spirits saying, “We adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” ¹⁴In fact there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who were doing this. ¹⁵But a particular wicked spirit reacted and said, “Jesus I know, and I am acquainted with Paul, but who are you?” ¹⁶And the man in whom the wicked spirit was jumped on them and overpowered them; he was so much stronger that they ran out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷Now this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was being exalted.

¹⁸And many of those who had believed started coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. ¹⁹In fact, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them up, in front of everybody^d (they had calculated their value and it totaled fifty thousand *pieces* of silver). ²⁰With power like that it was that the word of the Lord kept growing and prevailing.

²¹Now after these things were accomplished, Paul resolved in his spirit to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”^e ²²So he sent two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, on to Macedonia, while he himself stayed on in Asia for a time.

Demetrius

²³Now it was during that time that a serious disturbance concerning the Way occurred. ²⁴A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, habitually brought in plenty of business for the artisans; ²⁵he called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: “Men, you know that our prosperity depends on this trade. ²⁶And you observe and hear that not only in Ephesus but throughout almost all Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that hand-made things are not gods. ²⁷So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute,^f but also the tem-

^a Paul had already done this sort of thing in Corinth; it was a good strategy.

^b Perhaps 13% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘Jesus’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c This sort of thing is definitely ‘news’, and it would spread far and wide.

^d When people start doing this, you know their faith is real, and to do it in public would really have an impact on the populace (that was a lot of money!).

^e His apostolic spirit wanted not only Rome, but Spain (Romans 15:28).

^f The crucial point was the threat to their finances, not that to Diana’s reputation!

ple of the great goddess Artemis may be discredited, and even her own majesty be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.”

²⁸Now upon hearing this they were filled with anger and began shouting, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” ²⁹So the whole city was filled with confusion, and they rushed into the theater with one accord (they had seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul’s traveling companions). ³⁰When Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not let him. ³¹Even some of the officials of Asia, being his friends, sent word to him and urged him not to venture into the theater.^a ³²The assembly was in confusion: some were shouting one thing and some another; most of them did not know why they had come together. ³³Then the Jews pushed Alexander forward,^b out from the crowd. So Alexander motioned with his hand and would have made a defense to the people. ³⁴But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours,^c “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

³⁵When the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Artemis and of what fell from Zeus?^d ³⁶Therefore, since these things are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. ³⁷You have arrested these men who are neither temple thieves nor blasphemers of your goddess. ³⁸Now if Demetrius and his fellow artisans have a complaint against anyone, courts are available, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges against one another. ³⁹But if you want to debate any other matter, it will be settled in the legal assembly. ⁴⁰Indeed, we are in danger of being charged with a riot, because of today, there being no reason at all that we can give to account for this commotion.” ⁴¹And having said these things he dismissed the assembly.

Paul makes his own plans

Greece

20 ¹Now after the uproar had ended, Paul summoned the disciples, took leave of them, and set out for Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those parts and encouraged them with many words, he came into Greece. ³When he had stayed three months, as he was about to set sail for Syria, the Jews made a plot against him, so he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴Now Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia were going to accompany him as far as Asia;^e ⁵so having gone on ahead, these men were waiting for us^f in Troas. ⁶But it was after the Days of Unleavened Bread that we sailed from Philippi, and in five days we joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

^a After two years of fruitful ministry, some of the city officials would have converted, or at least appreciate the healing and deliverance he had brought.

^b I wonder whether those Jews were friends or foes, and what they hoped to achieve.

^c How could their voices last for two hours? And what animated them to keep on going for so long? I suspect there was a little demonic participation.

^d They had an image that reputedly had fallen intact from the sky.

^e Just 1.1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘as far as Asia’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f At this point Luke joins Paul again, and will stay with him until he gets to Rome, several years later.

Troas

⁷Now on the first day of the week,^a the disciples being assembled to break bread, Paul started addressing them, and because he intended to leave the next day he continued his message until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we^b were assembled. ⁹Well a certain young man named Eutychus sat in a window and was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul kept on talking; when he was overcome by the sleep he fell down from the third story and was picked up dead. ¹⁰So Paul went down, threw himself on him and embracing him said, “Do not be distressed, because his life is in him!” ¹¹Then he went back up and broke bread, ate, and kept on speaking until daybreak—that is how he left! ¹²(On their part, they led the boy away alive, and were greatly comforted.)^c

¹³As for us, we went to the ship and set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul on board there—so it had been arranged, he himself intending to go on foot.^d ¹⁴When he met us at Assos we took him aboard and went on to Mityline. ¹⁵Sailing from there, the next day we arrived opposite Chios, and the day after we crossed over to Samos and stopped in Trogylium;^e the following day we came to Miletus. ¹⁶(Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, to avoid being detained in Asia, because he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, if he possibly could.)

Miletus

¹⁷From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and summoned the elders of the congregation.^f ¹⁸So when they had come to him he said to them: “You yourselves know, from the first day that I arrived in Asia, how I lived the whole time I was with you, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility, and with many tears and trials, the ones that happened to me by the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹solemnly proclaiming to both Jews and Greeks the repentance toward God and the faith into our Lord Jesus.^g ²²Now then, I am going to Jerusalem bound in my spirit,^h not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit keeps warning me in every city, saying that fetters and afflictions are just waiting for me. ²⁴However none of this moves me, nor do I regard my life as valuable to myself,ⁱ just so that I may complete my course with

^a Note that the disciples are meeting on Sunday.

^b Instead of “we”, perhaps 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘they’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^c One gets the impression that Paul simply imposed his will on the local congregation (he had already taken the bit in his teeth and was doing things his own way). They let him do it, but were probably relieved when he left. Apparently they walked Eutychus back to his home.

^d His baggage went on the boat, so he walked without a load—good exercise.

^e Samos is an island, so Trogylium was presumably a settlement on that island (though we are no longer sure just where it was). Some 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘and stopped in Trogylium’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f The distance was some 30 miles, as the crow flies, and the elders had not received advance warning, so at least two days would have elapsed before they arrived (even if the messenger ran, the elders would not).

^g Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘Christ’, as in AV and NKJV.

^h This was his own spirit, not the Holy Spirit. I have a hard time trying to understand what happened to Paul. The Holy Spirit kept telling him not to go to Jerusalem, but he is bound and determined to go anyway, only to spend years of his life in chains. Why did he do it?

ⁱ Paul’s statement is a *non sequitur*. When the Holy Spirit gives repeated warnings, He is telling us to STOP!

joy,^a even the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to solemnly proclaim the Good News of the grace of God.

²⁵“Furthermore, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the Kingdom of God^b will ever see my face again.^c ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all; ²⁷because I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.^d ²⁸So take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers, to shepherd the congregation of the Lord and God^e which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹Because I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Yes, men will rise up from among you yourselves, speaking distorted things, to draw away the disciples after them.^f ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that during three years, night and day,^g I never stopped admonishing each one, with tears.

³²“And so now, brothers, I entrust you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who have been sanctified.^h ³³I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands have supplied my own needs, and of those who were with me.ⁱ ³⁵In every way I showed you that working hard like this it is necessary to help the weak, and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”^j

³⁶When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷Then they all wept freely, and falling on Paul’s neck kept kissing him, ³⁸sorrowing most of all because of the word that he had spoken, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Paul is warned—again

21 ¹So after disengaging ourselves from them we were able to set sail, and running a straight course we came to Cos, and the next day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. ²We found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, went on board and set sail. ³When we had sighted Cyprus we passed it on the left, sailed on to Syria and landed at Tyre, because it was there that the ship was to unload the cargo. ⁴Upon finding disciples we stayed there seven days; these, through the

^a How can you complete your course with joy if you are disobedient? He is not thinking clearly. Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘with joy’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘of God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^c How did he know this?

^d The congregation in Ephesus had been very well grounded indeed, but even so they lost their ‘lamp-stand’ (Revelation 2:5).

^e The sheep belong to the Lord, not to the elders. Some 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘the Lord and’, as in most versions. “The Lord and God” refers to Jesus.

^f Whenever you see someone trying to create his own group of followers, beware!

^g I suppose Paul is saying he was always available.

^h Yes. When we receive God’s Word as having objective authority over us, and interpret it honestly under the Holy Spirit’s direction (without preconceived doctrinal ‘packages’), we will indeed grow in understanding and sanctification.

ⁱ He did receive offerings from time to time, but material gain was never an objective.

^j This precise statement is not recorded in the Gospels, but Paul got it from one of those who actually heard it. It is an important truth. (Compare Luke 14:12-14.)

ACTS 21

Spirit, told Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.^a **5**But when our time was up, as we left to go on our way, they all, including women and children,^b accompanied us out of the city, and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed. **6**After we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship and they returned to their homes.

7Now upon arriving in Ptolemais, the voyage from Tyre ended; so greeting the brothers we stayed with them one day. **8**Leaving the next day, we^c came to Caesarea; and entering the house of Philip the evangelist (being of ‘the Seven’), we stayed with him. **9**(This man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.)^d

Agabus, again

10Now as we stayed there a number of days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. **11**Joining us he took Paul’s belt, bound his feet and hands, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit: ‘In this way, in Jerusalem, the Jews will bind the man who owns this belt, and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” **12**Well, when we heard these things, both we and the local residents, we pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. **13**But Paul answered: “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die^e in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” **14**When he would not be dissuaded, we stopped, saying, “Let the will of the Lord be done.”^f

Jerusalem

15So after those days we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. **16**Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us, bringing us to a certain Mnason, of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. **17**And when we arrived in Jerusalem the brothers received us gladly. **18**The next day Paul, with us, went to see James, and all the elders were present.^g **19**After greeting them he reported one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Paul submits to a false agenda

20But after listening they ‘glorified’ the Lord^h by saying to him:ⁱ “You see, brother, how many tens of thousands are the Jews who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; **21**but they have been informed about you that you

^a After repeated warnings, God plainly tells Paul not to go! What sort of mental block might Paul have had that would cause him to disobey a plain command?

^b Luke makes a point of recording that even the children went along—interesting. Evidently those families actively involved their children in their practice of the Christian Faith. Now that is an excellent example!

^c AV and NKJV have ‘we who were Paul’s companions’, based on some 13% of the Greek manuscripts. Some 46% have ‘those who were Paul’s companions’. I follow the best line of transmission, with some 39% here, in reading “we”.

^d What does this information contribute to the account? Why are we told that they were virgins? Is it risky to marry a prophetess?

^e His being willing to suffer and die was totally beside the point—God told him not to go!

^f What else could they do, short of tying Paul up? However, they were asking the Lord to overrule.

^g This was obviously a put up job. They were ready and waiting for him.

^h Instead of ‘the Lord’, some 30% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ They listened politely, but had a different agenda. What follows is an obvious ‘put down’. There probably were not ‘tens of thousands’ of believing Jews, and if they were genuine followers of Jesus Christ, they should not have been so bound to Jewish customs. Besides ‘putting Paul in his place’ they were imposing a false legalism on him, to which he should not have capitulated. But he was disobeying God anyway, just by being there.

teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to our customs.^a **22**What then? The assembly will certainly gather,^b since they will hear that you have come. **23**So do this that we say to you: There are four men with us who have taken a vow. **24**Take them and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that there is nothing to the things that they have been informed about you; rather that you yourself are in line, keeping the law. **25**But concerning the Gentiles who believe we have written, having judged that they need observe no such thing, except^c that they should keep themselves from that offered to idols, from the blood, from anything strangled, and from fornication.”^d

Paul arrested

26Then Paul took the men and purified himself with them; the next day he entered the temple to give notice of the completion of the days of purification, when the offering would be made for each one of them. **27**Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, having seen him in the temple, mobilized a whole crowd and seized him, **28**shouting: “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place. Not only that, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place!” **29**(They had seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.)

30The whole city was aroused and a mob of people formed. So having seized Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut. **31**As they were trying to kill him,^e news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. **32**He immediately took soldiers and centurions and ran down among them, and when they saw the commander and the soldiers they stopped beating Paul. **33**Then the commander came up and took hold of him,^f commanded that he be bound with two chains, and started inquiring who he was and what he had done. **34**Well some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another; so when he could not ascertain the truth, because of the uproar, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. **35**When he reached the stairs, he

^a I suspect that this was a false charge.

^b Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘the assembly will gather’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘that they need observe no such thing except’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d What happened here was exceedingly serious: to James there were two classes of Christian, Jew and non-Jew. He still sees the Jew as superior to the Gentile, which is contrary to the doctrine of the Church as expounded in Paul’s letters, that we believe to be inspired. To James it was not enough for a Jew to believe into Jesus; he still had to obey the Law of Moses **and** the Jewish customs. This was evidently the prevailing view in Jerusalem and environs. Such a view actually represented rebellion against God. Then came judgment: Jerusalem was destroyed, which included its church, and the Aegean area became the heartland of the Church. For centuries Judea was no more than a backwater on the fringes of the Christian river.

^e Why didn’t they succeed? Maybe they got in each other’s way.

^f I like this commander; he did not hide behind his men. This was a *chiliarch*, who commanded up to a thousand men.

had to be carried by the soldiers, because of the violence of the mob.^a ³⁶Because the crowd kept following and shouting, “Away with him!”^b

³⁷As Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “May I speak to you?” So he said: “Do you know Greek? ³⁸Aren’t you the Egyptian who some time ago started a revolt and led the four thousand men of ‘the Assassins’ out into the wilderness?” ³⁹But Paul said, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of a not insignificant city; but I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.” ⁴⁰So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned to the people with his hand. When there was a great silence, he addressed them in the Hebrew language, saying:

Paul addresses the mob

22 ¹“Men, brothers and fathers, listen to my defense before you now.” ²When they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they were even more quiet, and he said: ³“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵as also the high priest and all the council of elders can bear me witness. I even obtained letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, to bring those also who were there bound to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶Now it happened, as I was going and approaching Damascus, about noon, suddenly a strong light from heaven shone around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ ⁸So I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Natsorean, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid,^c but they did not understand the voice of the One speaking to me. ¹⁰So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about all that has been appointed to you to do.’ ¹¹And since I could not see, because of the brightness of that light, I entered Damascus being led by the hand of those who were with me.^d ¹²Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived in Damascus,^e ¹³came to me, and standing by me said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I looked up at him. ¹⁴Then he said: ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear words from His mouth.’^f ¹⁵For you shall be a witness for Him to all men of the things that you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now, why hesitate? Get up, be baptized and wash away your sins, invoking the name of the Lord.’^g

^a But since they had really been trying to kill him, he was doubtless wounded and weak.

^b But really, why should they be so stirred up? Presumably there was supernatural participation.

^c Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘and were afraid’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d But they too had been in that light, so the blindness was a judgment applied specifically to Paul (Saul).

^e Paul is establishing the credibility of Ananias as a witness, since he will attest that it was ‘the God of our fathers’ who was dealing with Paul (Saul). Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘in Damascus’, as in most versions.

^f Jesus had identified Himself as ‘Jesus’ on the road, and was obviously supernatural. Here Ananias confirms that Saul saw the Messiah (‘the Natsorean’), and adds that all is under the Father’s direction. Saul was chosen to be a world-wide witness; indeed, through his letters he continues to be one!

^g By invoking the Lord he was placing himself under His direction and protection, which was what took care of his sins, not the baptism. There probably was not enough water in the house for a complete

¹⁷“Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I came to be in a trance ¹⁸and saw Him saying to me,^a ‘Hurry up and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not receive your testimony concerning me.’ ¹⁹So I said: ‘Lord, they know that I used to imprison and beat those believing into you,^b from one synagogue to another; ²⁰and when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing there and agreeing to his murder,^c even guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’ ²¹And He said to me, ‘Get going, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

A Roman citizen

²²Well they kept listening to him until this statement, and then they raised their voice and shouted, “Rid the earth of this fellow, for it isn’t fitting for him to live!” ²³As they were shouting, tearing off clothes and throwing dust into the air, ²⁴the commander ordered him to be taken into the barracks, directing that he be interrogated with lashes, in order to learn for what crime they kept shouting against him like that.^d ²⁵But as they stretched him out with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?” ²⁶Well when the centurion heard that, he went and reported to the commander saying, “Consider^e what you are about to do, because this man is a Roman!” ²⁷So the commander went and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman?” So he said, “Yes.” ²⁸The commander replied, “I acquired this citizenship at considerable cost.”^f And Paul said, “But I was so born.” ²⁹So those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately; and even the commander was apprehensive when he realized that he had put chains on a Roman.^g

The Sanhedrin

³⁰But the next day, desiring to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he freed him from the bonds^h and ordered the chief priests and all their council to come, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

23 ¹Then Paul, looking intently at the council, said, “Men, brothers, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” ²So the high priest Ananias commanded those standing by him to strike his mouth. ³Then Paul said

bath, in any case, so the baptism was by aspersion (as it was in the house of Cornelius, the house of the Philippian jailor, etc. etc.). Instead of ‘of the Lord’, some 6% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘his’ (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^a This is the only record we have of this encounter. Perhaps Paul is reinforcing that his going to the Gentiles was at God’s insistence. I wonder if Luke wasn’t in that crowd, and close enough to hear what went on.

^b I follow the best line of transmission in reading “into”, albeit with only 20% of the Greek manuscripts here. Almost all versions follow the 80% in reading ‘upon’.

^c Some 2.3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit ‘to his murder’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^d Poor commander! He presumably did not understand Hebrew, so Paul’s speech meant nothing to him. But he saw that the mob listened quietly, and then suddenly erupted! He had already tried to get an answer from the mob, without success. He doubtless did not understand the Jewish mindset either, so by Roman logic Paul must have done something pretty awful to provoke such a violent reaction. So by proper Roman procedure, he orders a flogging.

^e Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Consider” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f He was not just making conversation; he was trying to be sure that Paul was not lying.

^g Perhaps the reference is to the ‘when’ and ‘how’ they were first used, since chains became part of Paul’s life.

^h Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘from the bonds’ (as in NIV and NASB).

to him: “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!^a You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you command me to be struck contrary to the law!” ⁴So those standing by said, “Do you reproach God’s high priest?” ⁵Then Paul said, “I did not know, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”^b

⁶Now when Paul perceived that one part were Pharisees and the other Sadducees,^c he called out in the council, “Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee; I am being judged concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead!” ⁷When he had said this, an argument started between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.^d ⁸(Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel or spirit, but Pharisees confess both.)^e ⁹There was a great clamor, and the scribes of the Pharisee party stood up and started arguing vigorously, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; but if a spirit or angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God!”^f ¹⁰Well the dissension became such that the commander, fearing that Paul might be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and snatch him out of their midst and bring him into the barracks.

A plot exposed

¹¹Now the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Take courage, Paul, because as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”^g ¹²And when it was day, some of the Jews formed a conspiracy by binding themselves with a curse neither to eat nor to drink until they had destroyed Paul.^h ¹³Now there were more than forty who formed this plot. ¹⁴They came to the chief priests and the elders and said: “We have bound ourselves with a terrible curse not to taste anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵Now you, therefore, together with the council, explain to the commander that he should bring him down to you tomorrow, as though you are going to determine more accurately the facts in his case; but we are ready to destroy him before he comes near.”

¹⁶But when Paul’s sister’s son heard about the ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷So Paul called one of the centurions and said, “Take this young man to the commander, because he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called

^a One is reminded of the Lord’s calling the Pharisees ‘whitewashed tombs’ (Matthew 23:27); what Paul said was probably not as bad, but definitely not a compliment!

^b See Exodus 22:28. Ananias was presumably the true high priest, but someone else was probably the political ‘high priest’ that year, and the political one would be wearing the priestly attire; presumably that is why Paul did not recognize the real high priest. Note that he sort of apologizes, but he does not revoke the curse!

^c I follow the best line of transmission in putting ‘Pharisees’ first; 80% of the Greek manuscripts reverse the order, as in most versions.

^d That was presumably Paul’s intention, only the situation got out of hand!

^e The Greek term here means precisely ‘both’: angel and spirit are treated as a single category.

^f Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘let us not fight against God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Paul is in Jerusalem in disobedience against a clear divine prohibition, and things definitely are not going well. God appears to Paul and assures him that he will indeed get to Rome [although he is not going to enjoy the trip!].

^h When the plot failed, they presumably did eat and drink and resume normal life, but I wonder if they suffered any consequences of the curse.

me over and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.” ¹⁹So taking him by the hand,^a the commander went aside and asked privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?” ²⁰So he said: “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow as though intending to inquire somewhat more accurately concerning him. ²¹But you should not believe them, because more than forty of their men are lying in wait for him, who have bound themselves with a curse neither to eat nor to drink until they have destroyed him; even now they are ready, looking for your promise.” ²²Then the commander dismissed the young man commanding, “Don’t tell anyone that you have revealed these things to me!”

Paul sent to Felix

²³Summoning two of the centurions he said: “Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen^b to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night;^c ²⁴and provide mounts to set Paul on so as to deliver him safely^d to Felix, the governor.” ²⁵He wrote a letter with this content:

²⁶“Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix:
Greetings.

²⁷This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them; but I came with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he is a Roman.^e ²⁸And wanting to know the reason they were accusing him, I took him down to their council. ²⁹I found that he was being accused about questions of their law, but there was no accusation worthy of death or bonds. ³⁰When I was told that the Jews^f were about to execute a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also directing his accusers to state the charges against him before you.

Farewell.”

³¹So the soldiers, according to their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. ³²The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him and returned to the barracks.^g ³³When they entered Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴When the governor read it, he asked what province he was from; learning that it was Cilicia, ³⁵he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers also arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s Praetorium.^h

^a This is cute! The commander has a sense of humor.

^b A centurion commanded 100 men, so there were probably at least five centurions that set out with Paul.

^c Earlier in the book, referring to the Jewish hour of prayer, Hebrew time is used, and on that basis this would be 9 p.m. But I find it scarcely credible that a Roman commander (not a Jew) addressing his troops (none of whom were Jews) would use Hebrew time; I would expect him to use Roman time, which would make it 3 a.m. (People would still be awake at 9 p.m., but not at 3 a.m.)

^d Why more than one horse for Paul? Was he allowing for the chance that they might have to run for it? Well, the nature of the curse implied some level of desperation, and 40+ desperate men could cause unforeseen complications.

^e Nothing like stretching the truth to make yourself look good.

^f Perhaps 11% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘the Jews’ and ‘about to’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^g Horsemen could move faster without the footmen, and presumably the greatest danger had been in and near Jerusalem.

^h The quarters would be reasonably decent, not a dungeon.

Caesarea

Felix

24 ¹Now after five days the high priest Ananias went down with the elders and a certain orator, Tertullus, and they informed the governor against Paul.^a ²So when he had been called in, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: “Seeing that by you we enjoy much peace, and your foresight has brought prosperity to this nation, ³we recognize this, most noble Felix, with full gratitude, always and everywhere. ⁴But so as not to detain you unduly, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. ⁵We have found this man to be a plague, a creator of discord among all the Jews throughout the world,^b a ringleader of the Natsorean sect, ⁶and he even tried to profane the temple; so we arrested him.^c ⁸By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him.” ⁹And the Jews also joined in the attack, affirming that these things were so.

^a This effort represented a considerable inconvenience. They were really determined.

^b Wow! They are giving Paul a reputation!

^c We have here a bothersome set of variants, and the only way to do justice to the situation is to give the evidence in Greek. Even those who do not read Greek can get some notion as to the high level of confusion. The translation of the addition (more or less) may be had from AV or NKJV.

1) (without the long addition) **95** אA,B (58.9%) HF,RP,NU

2) - 36): 7 και κατα τον ημετερον νομον ηθελησαμεν κριναι παρελθον δε λυσιας ο χιλιαρχος μετα πολλης θιας εκ την χειρων ημων αρηγαγεν κελευσας τους κατηγορους αυτου ερχεσθαι επι σε. The five principle variations hinge on the three underlined words; they are:

2) κριναι ... επι σε (9.7%) [6 variants]

8) κριναι ... επι σου (10.5%) [14 variants]

22) κριναι ... προς σε (5.3%) [8 variants]

30) κρινειν ... επι σου (4.4%) [4 variants]

34) κρινειν ... επι σε (1.7%) OC,TR [3 variants]
[OC is in small print]

37) replaces *απηγαγεν* with five words, plus two other changes:

κριναι ... επι σου (3.2%) [2 variants]

39) completely rewrites the material:

κριναι ... προς σε (3.4%) CP [6 variants]

(eight further variants) (2.9%) [8 variants].

Variant 2) presumably has the best claim to be the standard form of the addition: *κριναι* clearly bests *κρινειν*, *επι* clearly bests *προς*, *σε* barely bests *σου*. [Although variant 8) appears to be slightly stronger than 2) numerically, the 14 internal variants, compared to 6, effectively diminish its credibility. The main variant in 2) is far stronger than that of 8).] It is also attested by syr and lat^{pl}. However, although some form of the addition commands 41.1% of the MSS, there are no less than 51 variants!

What about the context? The addition makes good sense, and it fits nicely. But, it is not really necessary; that information Felix already knew. The text reads quite well without the addition also. I conclude that the short form was judged to be abrupt or incomplete, giving rise to the addition; presumably the Autograph did not contain it. Since Tertullus was an orator he may well have actually said what is in the addition, plus a good deal more besides, but did Luke write it? (The incidents recorded in Acts were well known by many contemporaries, and there were many written accounts in circulation [Luke 1:1], so it was entirely predictable that a variety of historically correct material would be added, here and there, to Luke’s account.)

The external evidence, though divided, is adequate to resolve this case: 58.9% against a severely fragmented 41.1%. The ancient versions, being divided, do not help us much this time. Although 59% is not a strong majority, by any means, still, the severe fragmentation of the 41% sort of leaves variant 1) without a worthy opponent. Variant 1) wins in “Antiquity”, “Number”, “Variety” and “Continuity”, so I have no doubt that it is original. [The reading of the TR, variant 34), really has little to commend it.]

¹⁰When the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul answered: “Knowing, as I do, that you have been an equitable^a judge of this nation for many years, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, ¹¹because you can ascertain that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹²They did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd—not in the temple, not in the synagogues, not around the city. ¹³Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. ¹⁴But I do profess this to you, that according to the Way that they call a sect, that is how I worship the ancestral God, believing all things that stand written throughout the Law and the Prophets, ¹⁵having hope in God, which these themselves also look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead,^b both the just and unjust.^c ¹⁶And this is why I apply myself to always have a clear conscience before both God and men. ¹⁷Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, ¹⁸in the midst of which certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, with neither crowd nor confusion. ¹⁹They are the ones that had to be here before you and make accusation, if they had anything against me.^d ²⁰Or let these themselves say what wrong they found in me, when I stood before the council, ²¹unless it be for this one statement that I called out, standing among them, ‘Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you today.’”

²²Upon hearing these things Felix, having an accurate knowledge of the things concerning the Way, adjourned the proceedings and said, “When Lysias the commander comes down I will decide your case.” ²³And he ordered the centurion that Paul should be kept in custody but have some freedom, and not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or to visit him.^e

²⁴Now after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith into Christ Jesus.^f ²⁵But as he expounded on righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix became afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have occasion I will summon you.”^g ²⁶At the same time he was also hoping that Paul would give him money, that he might release him; so he frequently summoned and conversed with him.

²⁷But after two years, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; so Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul in prison.^h

^a I follow the best line of transmission in reading “equitable”, albeit with only 25% of the Greek manuscripts here. Almost all versions follow the 75% in omitting the word.

^b Some 6.6% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘of the dead’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^c Everyone will be resurrected, but the two resurrections are very different—which is why Paul applied himself.

^d According to Roman law, the accusers had to be there.

^e Both Lysias and Felix knew that Paul was not really guilty; and the Jews had figured out that they were not going to get what they wanted from either of them. Felix should have released Paul, but it was not part of the Plan.

^f Some 45% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘Jesus’, as in AV and NKJV.

^g To believe into Jesus would require changes that Felix was not prepared to make.

^h During those two years Paul had been eating at the empire’s expense, but apparently this did not represent a problem to Felix. But why did Felix want to do the Jews a favor? Perhaps the Jews could influence the choice of governor.

25 ¹Now upon assuming the province, after three days Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. ²Then the chief priests^a and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul and started importuning him, ³begging a favor from him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—preparing an ambush to kill him along the way.^b ⁴However Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, he himself being about to go there shortly. ⁵He said, “So let those who are competent among you go down with me; if there is anything against this man, let them accuse him.” ⁶When he had stayed among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea; the next day he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. ⁷When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem made a circle,^c bringing against Paul many serious charges that they could not prove, ⁸while he defended himself, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar did I commit any sin.” ⁹But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor,^d answered Paul by saying, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to be judged by me there concerning these things?” ¹⁰So Paul said: “I am standing before Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as even you know very well.^e ¹¹Now if I really am in the wrong and have perpetrated anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if there is nothing to the things of which these are accusing me, no one has the right to give me to them.^f I appeal to Caesar!” ¹²Then Festus, when he had conferred with his counsel, answered: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go!”^g

¹³Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to congratulate Festus. ¹⁴Since they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix; ¹⁵about whom, when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, asking for punishment against him; ¹⁶to whom I answered that it is not a custom with Romans to deliver any man to destruction^h before the accused has his accusers face to face and has opportunity for defense against the accusation.ⁱ ¹⁷So when they had assembled here, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought. ¹⁸When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge against him of such things

^a Some 60% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘high priest’, as in AV and NKJV.

^b Those guys were really good haters!

^c This was presumably a tactic to intimidate, and to form a decent circle would require a number of people. Paul was not impressed, but Festus may have been.

^d I wonder if those Jews had been involved in the decision to replace Felix (who didn’t play ball with them) with Festus. If so, and if Festus was aware that he owed them a favor, that would account for his attitude here.

^e Paul could tell that Festus was not on the ‘up and up’.

^f Paul knew, and Festus knew, what the Jews had in mind.

^g I suspect that this took Festus by surprise; and it put him in a bad light—on what basis is he going to send an innocent man to the Emperor? Presumably he could have just released Paul, but that would have turned the Jews against him. And then there was the Plan.

^h Some 7.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘to destruction’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ I wonder if he really said that.

as I supposed, ¹⁹but had certain issues against him about their religion, and about a certain dead Jesus whom Paul affirmed to be living. ²⁰And since I was at a loss how to investigate such matters,^a I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and be judged there concerning these things. ²¹But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded him to be kept until I can send him to Caesar.”

²²Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I myself would also like to hear the man.” So he said, “Tomorrow you shall hear him.” ²³So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp and entered the auditorium, with the commanding officers and the more prominent men of the city, at Festus’ command Paul was brought in. ²⁴And Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all you men who are here with us: consider this man,^b about whom the whole Jewish community petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, vociferating that it was not fitting for him to live any longer. ²⁵But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death,^c besides he himself having appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him. ²⁶But I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination I may have something to write. ²⁷Because it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”^d

Paul’s defense

26 ¹Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defense: ²“I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in that I am to make my defense before you this day concerning the things of which I am accused by the Jews, ³especially because you are expert in all the Jewish customs and issues; therefore I beg you to hear me patiently. ⁴Really, the Jews all know my way of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation in Jerusalem, ⁵since they have known me for a long time, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee. ⁶And now I stand here being judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷to which our twelve tribes, earnestly serving *God* night and day, hope to attain. It is because of this hope that I am accused by the Jews, King Agrippa. ⁸Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?^e

How he persecuted Christians

⁹“However, I myself thought that I had to perpetrate many things in opposition to the name of Jesus the Natsorean; ¹⁰I actually did this in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹Yes, I punished them often in every synagogue, trying to force them to blaspheme; I was so excessively enraged against them that I persecuted them even to foreign cities.^f

^a This would likely be true, whether or not it was his motivation at the time.

^b Festus is not being complimentary.

^c Festus declares Paul’s innocence.

^d Precisely. Festus is in a pickle (of his own making).

^e The resurrection was the sticking point.

^f Paul states his blame very plainly.

¹²“It was on one of those journeys, as I was going to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests, ¹³at midday, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven brighter than the sun, blazing around me and those traveling with me. ¹⁴Well we all fell to the ground and I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language:^a ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵So I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And He said: ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶Now get up and stand on your feet; because I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and a witness both of the things you have seen and of the things I will reveal to you, ¹⁷delivering you from ‘the people’ and the ethnic nations, to which I am sending you: ¹⁸to open their eyes, so as to bring them back from darkness into light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified, by faith into me.’^b ¹⁹Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly

^a A conversation between two Jews would naturally be in Hebrew.

^b Of specific interest to us here is the missionary commission that Paul (he was still Saul) received. Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, John 20:21 and Acts 1:8 took place between the resurrection and the ascension, but to commission Paul Jesus returned from Heaven! One other detail deserves special notice—the responsibility that Paul received was primarily concerned with the ethnic nations (“Gentiles” is a translation of the same word that in Matthew 28:19 is rendered “nations”). For these reasons it seems to me that this missionary commission takes on a special importance for us, and the more so for whoever is going to do transcultural work. So let us consider this commission in more detail.

Paul is sent to the nations (defined ethnically), “to open their eyes so as to bring them back from darkness into light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified, by faith in Me.”

I rendered the second verb as ‘bring back’ rather than ‘turn’ or ‘convert’ because I take that to be the correct nuance of the Text. It gives the impression that someone is in the wrong place or situation and needs to be brought to the correct one. And now for the main point: the purpose clause introduced by the conjunction ‘that’ is subordinated to the verbal phrase dominated by the verb “bring back”. In other words, before someone can receive forgiveness of sins, even, he must be freed from the power of Satan! Before a person can be saved someone must do something about Satan’s influence upon him.

The Lord Jesus had already said the same thing in different words during His earthly ministry. We find it in Mark 3:27. “No one can plunder the strong man’s goods, invading his house, unless he first bind the strong man; then he may plunder his house.” I have used the definite article with the first occurrence of ‘strong man’ because the Greek text has it, the point being that this particular strong man has already been introduced in the immediate context. ‘The strong man’ here is Satan. (The Jewish leaders tried to explain Jesus’ authority over the demons by saying that He expelled them by the power of Beelzebul, prince of the demons. In His retort Jesus does not waste time with that name but uses the enemy’s proper name, Satan.)

So then, the Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan’s goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of ‘no one’ it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those ‘goods’ be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the ‘goods’ are people who are subject to Satan’s power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan’s power over a person so that he or she can be saved! But what does Satan do to people that makes it necessary to ‘bind’ him?

We find the answer in 2 Corinthians 4:4. Let’s begin with verse 3. “If our gospel is veiled it is veiled to them who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine in them.” The Text clearly states that Satan, ‘the god of this world’, is in the business of blinding the minds of unbelievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he has the power or ability to invade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning. The Lord Jesus had already declared this truth previously, when He explained the para-

vision ²⁰—first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem, then to all the region of Judea and to the ethnic nations, I still preach: ‘repent and turn back to God, doing works worthy of repentance.’ ²¹That is why the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²So then, having experienced the help that is from God, I stand to this day testifying to both small and great, saying nothing beyond what both the prophets and Moses said would happen ²³—that the Messiah would suffer; that as the first to rise from the dead^a He would proclaim light to both ‘the people’ and the ethnic nations.”^b

Festus interrupts

²⁴Well as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice: “Paul, you are crazy! Your great learning is driving you insane!”^c ²⁵So he said: “I am not crazy, most excellent Festus; rather I pronounce words of truth and reasonableness. ²⁶For the king knows about these things, before whom I speak freely; for I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, since it was not done in a corner. ²⁷King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”^d ²⁸So Agrippa said to Paul, “You will soon persuade me to become a Christian!” ²⁹So Paul said, “Whether sooner or later, I would to God that not only you but also all who are hearing me this day may become such as I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰Upon his saying this, the king stood up, along with the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them; ³¹and when they had withdrawn they started talking among themselves, saying, “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains.” ³²And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free, if he had not appealed to Caesar.”^e

Paul sent to Rome

27 ¹Now when it was decided that we^f should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, of the imperial cohort. ²So we embarked in a ship of Atramyntium, being about to sail to points along the Asian coast, and we put to sea; Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us. ³The next day we landed at Sidon; Julius treated Paul kindly and permitted him to go to his friends and receive care. ⁴Putting to sea

ble of the sower. “These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the word that was planted in their hearts” (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: “lest they believe and be saved”. Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and ‘takes away’ that word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it.

It seems obvious to me that whoever does not take this truth into account will be condemning himself to produce little effect in the spiritual realm, to work hard and achieve little.

^a Yes, Jesus was the first one out, but only the first!

^b How did Jesus do this after His resurrection? Presumably He did it, and continues to do so, through His followers.

^c Festus is not happy. Paul is talking to Agrippa, not to him. As a ‘son of the disobedience’ (Ephesians 2:2) he was open to demonic interference, and Satan does not like the resurrection. So Paul’s mention of Jesus’ resurrection is Festus’ clue to interrupt, which he does in rather insulting terms.

^d Paul knows that the hearing is over, but he likes Agrippa and nudges him to believe.

^e Of course, but now it is too late.

^f I take it that Luke has been around all the time.

from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. ⁵And when we had sailed across the sea that is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. ⁶There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board. ⁷When we had sailed slowly many days and scarcely arrived opposite Cnidus, the wind did not allow us to go forward, so we sailed for the lee of Crete^a by way of Salmone; ⁸sailing along it with difficulty we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea.

A difference of opinion

⁹Much time had been lost and sailing was already dangerous, because even the Fast had already taken place; Paul repeatedly warned them ¹⁰saying, “Men, I perceive that the voyage is about to be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but even of our lives.” ¹¹But the centurion^b was persuaded by the pilot and ship owner rather than by what Paul said. ¹²And since the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised sailing on, to see if they could get to Phoenix in order to winter, it being a harbor of Crete facing southwest and northwest.^c

The storm

¹³So when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to shore. ¹⁴But not long after, a cyclonic wind blasted down from the land (it is called Euroclydon). ¹⁵Well the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, so we gave up and were driven along.^d ¹⁶Running under the lee of a small island called Clauda, we barely managed to secure the skiff; ¹⁷when they had hoisted it aboard, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing that they might fall into the Syrtis,^e they lowered the sea anchor and so were driven along. ¹⁸We were being so violently battered by the storm that the next day they began to jettison things, ¹⁹and on the third we threw off the ship’s tackle with our own hands. ²⁰When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and a major storm was still pounding us, all hope that we would be saved was now taken away.

²¹Now after long abstinence from food, Paul stood up in the midst of them and said: “Well men, it would have been better to take my advice and not sail from Crete, only to ‘gain’ this damage and loss.^f ²²But now I urge you to take heart, because there will be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. ²³This night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood by me ²⁴and said: ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. Furthermore, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ ²⁵So take courage, men, because I believe

^a They had been sailing west along the coast of Asia Minor and now turn south to Crete.

^b It appears that the centurion had the last word.

^c I suppose the point to be that it was completely open to the west; there is such a spot on the present coastline of Crete, though the name ‘phoenix’ has disappeared.

^d The blast of wind was sudden and they were too close to the shore to have much room to maneuver. To remain broadside to the wind was to be swamped, so they turned tail and the wind drove them out to the open Mediterranean. I imagine that a little supernatural activity was involved.

^e By the time they finished undergirding the ship they were probably about a fifth of the way across the Mediterranean (the wind was driving them south, in a hurry). The Syrtis evidently referred to two shallow bays on the African coast that had shifting sand bars and liked to snare boats. The sea anchor was presumably dropped off the stern to provide drag and slow their progress.

^f Paul’s ‘I told you so’ is really quite bland, and is followed by good news.

in God that it will be just as it was told me. ²⁶Also, we must run aground on a certain island.”

²⁷Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven here and there in the Adriatic,^a about midnight the sailors sensed that they were nearing some land. ²⁸They took a sounding and found twenty fathoms; going on a little they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. ²⁹So fearing that we might be driven into a rocky area, they dropped four anchors from the stern and started praying for day to come. ³⁰Now under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, the sailors lowered the skiff into the sea, intending to flee from the ship; ³¹so Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, “Unless these stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.” ³²Then the soldiers severed the ropes of the skiff and let it fall away.^b

³³While the day was coming on, Paul started urging them all to receive food, saying: “Today is the fourteenth day of waiting—you continue without eating, having taken nothing. ³⁴Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, because this is for our survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.” ³⁵Upon saying this he picked up some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all; then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶So they all were encouraged and took food themselves. ³⁷(In all, we were two hundred seventy-six souls on the ship.) ³⁸So when they had eaten enough, they started lightening the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

³⁹When it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship, if possible. ⁴⁰Casting off the anchors they left them in the sea, at the same time untying the rudder ropes; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. ⁴¹But they fell into a place where two seas met and ran the vessel aground; the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the violence of the waves.

⁴²Now the plan of the soldiers was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. ⁴³But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, stopped them from doing it and ordered those who could swim to jump in first and go toward the land, ⁴⁴followed by the rest, some on planks and some on things from the ship. And in this way they all escaped safely to the land.

Malta

28 ¹Following the rescue, they learned that the island was called Malta. ²Now the natives showed us unusual kindness, in that they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. ³But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and placed them on the fire, because of the heat a viper came out and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴So when the natives saw the beast hanging from his hand, they started saying to each other, “This man must be a murderer, whom Justice has not allowed to live, even though rescued from the sea.” ⁵But he just shook the beast off into the fire and suffered no harm. ⁶Well they were expecting him to swell up, or suddenly fall down dead; but after waiting for quite a while and seeing nothing unusual happening to him, they changed their mind and started saying he was a god.

^a This term presumably took in a larger area than it does today.

^b This seems a pity, since a skiff would have been useful in getting people to land later. But in any case, the centurion believed him!

⁷Now in that region there were properties belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and in a friendly manner took care of us for three days.^a ⁸Well it happened that the father of Publius was sick in bed with fever and dysentery; Paul went in to him, prayed, and laying his hands on him, healed him. ⁹So, when this had happened, the rest of those on the island who had diseases started coming and being healed; ¹⁰who also honored us in many ways, and when we put to sea they provided the necessary things.^b

Rome

¹¹Now after three months we put to sea in an Alexandrian ship that had wintered in the island, whose figurehead was ‘the Twin Brothers’. ¹²We put in at Syracuse and stayed there three days; ¹³from there we tacked back and forth^c and arrived at Rhegium. After one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴where we found brothers who urged us to stay there seven days^d—that was how we went toward Rome. ¹⁵And the brothers there, when they heard about our circumstances, came out to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them he thanked God and took courage.

¹⁶Now when we entered Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the commander;^e but Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.^f

Paul and the Jews

¹⁷It happened that after three days Paul called together the leaders of the Jews; and when they had assembled he said to them: “Men, brothers, though I had done nothing against ‘the people’ or the ancestral customs, still I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, ¹⁸who, when they had examined me, were intending to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. ¹⁹But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar; not that I had anything about which to accuse my nation. ²⁰For this reason therefore I asked to see you and speak with you: it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.” ²¹So they said to him: “We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brothers who came reported or spoken any evil about you.^g ²²But we desire to hear from you what you think; because as for this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.”

²³So arranging a day with him, even more people came to him at his lodging, to whom he kept expounding from morning until evening; solemnly testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them concerning Jesus, from

^a To feed 276 people for three days would be a considerable expense—and they were hungry!

^b Paul proved to be a valuable person to have along, the more so since they were there for three months.

^c Since Luke makes a point of saying that at Rhegium they got a south wind, between Syracuse and Rhegium the wind was not favorable and they had to tack. Most versions miss the point here.

^d The seven days gave them time to send news on ahead so there would be a welcoming committee at Three Inns. The centurion evidently cooperated.

^e Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit ‘the centurion delivered the prisoners to the commander’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f This was surely an unusual proceeding; I assume it was a privilege granted in recognition of services rendered.

^g When Paul appealed to Caesar, his enemies evidently gave up, knowing they did not have a valid case.

both the Law of Moses and the Prophets. ²⁴Well some were persuaded by what had been said, and some kept refusing to believe.

²⁵So being in disagreement among themselves they started to leave, after Paul had said this one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke correctly to our^a fathers through Isaiah the prophet, ²⁶saying:

‘Go to this people and say,
 “You will keep on hearing, but never understand;
 you will keep on seeing, but never perceive”;
²⁷because the heart of this people has become sluggish,
 and their ears are hard of hearing,
 and their eyes they have closed;
 in order that they not see with their eyes,
 nor hear with their ears,
 nor understand with their heart,
 nor turn back, so I could heal them.’^b

²⁸Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen!” ²⁹And when he had said these things the Jews went their way, having a great dispute among themselves.^c

Two tranquil years

³⁰Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to see him, ³¹proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness, without hindrance.^d

^a Instead of “our”, some 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘your’ (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^b See Isaiah 6:9-10. Here we have a chiasmic structure: heart, ears, eyes; eyes, ears, heart.

^c Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 29 entire (as in NIV, NASB and LB, but all three have a footnote saying that “some manuscripts” add the verse—their way of referring to 95%! Will not the uninformed reader be misled?).

^d It has often been observed that the book seems to lack a proper conclusion. If we consider that the book is actually about God working through people, then of course that work has been in operation throughout the intervening centuries and continues in our day—even through us.

The Epistle of Paul to the

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Salutation

1 ¹Paul, a slave^a of Jesus Christ, a called apostle,^b having been set apart to the Gospel of God, ²which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures:^c ³concerning His Son, who became a physical descendant of David,^d ⁴who was established to be God's powerful Son (in accordance with Spirit of holiness^e) by resurrection from the dead^f—Jesus Christ our Lord—⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to promote obedience of faith among all ethnic nations concerning His name^g ⁶(among these you also are called by Jesus Christ); ⁷to all the called saints^h who are in Rome, beloved of God: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.ⁱ

To Gentiles*Paul has been hindered from visiting Rome*

⁸First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.^j ⁹Further, the God whom I serve with my spirit^k in the Gospel of His Son is my witness, how without ceasing I always remember you in my prayers, ¹⁰begging that perhaps now, at last, I may be prospered by the will of God to come to you.^l ¹¹For I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established ¹²—that is, that I may be encouraged among you by our mutual faith,^m both yours and mine.

^a All human beings are slaves—we are born that way, live that way, die that way. As the Lord Jesus said, “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin... if the Son makes you free you will be free indeed” (John 8:34,36). Sovereign Jesus offers us a choice of owner: the only way to escape slavery to sin is to become a slave of Jesus Christ.

^b Apostles are not ordained by man: they are designated by God, who has a reason for doing so. In the case of Paul, it was “to promote obedience of faith among all ethnic nations” (verse 5).

^c The promise begins in Genesis 3:15, and reappears in passages like Genesis 12:3, 28:14, 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7. The “Holy Scriptures” here refer to the Old Testament.

^d Literally, ‘of the seed of David according to the flesh’. Jesus’ body contained genes from David that came through His mother Mary, a descendant of David’s son, Nathan (Luke 3:31) (and presumably still does, at the Father’s right hand). Isaiah 9:7 makes clear that the Messiah will occupy the throne of David: see also 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 11:10 and Micah 5:2.

^e Since there is no article with ‘spirit’, I take it as a title, so all three persons of the Trinity are in this verse.

^f A ‘mere’ human cannot decide to rise from the dead: Jesus had this authority, as He affirms in John 10:17-18—“My Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” The cross did not kill Jesus: He dismissed His spirit.

^g One’s name represents his person—the obedience of faith is to be directed toward the person of Jesus Christ.

^h They were called to be saints.

ⁱ Where ‘Lord’ occurs without the definite article, as here, I usually render ‘Sovereign’; with either ‘the’ or ‘our’ I usually render ‘Lord’. This text clearly presents the Father and the Son as distinct persons.

^j Not bad.

^k See Romans 7:14-25.

^l What we think we want is not always what God wants.

^m To see someone established in the mutual faith is a genuine encouragement.

¹³I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), in order that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the rest of the Gentiles.^a ¹⁴I am a debtor^b both to Greeks and to non-Greeks, both to wise and to foolish. ¹⁵So, for my part, I am eager to preach the Gospel to you who are in Rome as well.

Faith

¹⁶I am not ashamed^c of the Gospel of Christ,^d because it is the power of God for the salvation of each one who believes^e (for the Jew first, then the Greek); ¹⁷because in it God's righteousness is revealed, from faith to faith; just as it is written: "The righteous one will live by faith."^f

Unrighteousness

¹⁸Now the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of the people who suppress the truth by unrighteousness,^g ¹⁹precisely because what may be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰Because His invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood from what has been made, so that they are inexcusable;^h

^a 'Gentiles' and 'ethnic nations' are renderings of the same Greek noun; the choice is governed by the context, but that choice is often difficult. The reader should keep the two options in mind.

^b Why was Paul a debtor to people he had never seen? He had the cure for their ills, and a command from God.

^c Where did Paul get the idea of 'shame'? A world controlled by Satan does all it can to cow any who dare to proclaim the Truth.

^d Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "of Christ", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^e The Gospel is the power for the salvation. As the Lord Jesus said in John 14:6—"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." There are not many ways, only one.

^f See Habakkuk 2:4. To 'live by faith' you must move from one exercise of faith to another.

^g To 'suppress the truth' is a deliberate act, an evil choice that invites God's wrath. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, to reject the love of the truth brings God's judgment. To hear a sermon about 'the love of God' is easy enough, but how many have you heard (or preached) about 'the wrath of God'? "God hates sin but loves the sinner" is standard fare, but consider Psalm 5:4-6—"For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in your sight; You **hate** all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the LORD **abhors** the bloodthirsty and deceitful man." This is not an isolated text; there are a fair number of others in the same vein. Someone who deliberately chooses to be and promote evil thereby makes God his enemy. In John 6:44 Sovereign Jesus said: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Do you suppose that the Father will 'draw' someone He hates? Perhaps we should do more preaching on the wrath of God (although that will probably send people scurrying to other churches).

^h All scientific experiment and true human knowledge is based on the principle of cause and effect—we observe an effect and try to isolate its cause. As a logical corollary, the cause must be as great or greater than the effect, otherwise it could not produce it. Any human being who is both honest and intelligent, confronted with the observable universe, with its incredible order and complexity, must conclude that there has to be a CAUSE who is both incredibly intelligent and powerful—to refuse to do so is perverse. Since we have personality, He must as well. So Paul's argument is precisely correct.

The science of physics tells us that the entire known universe, taking only what is inorganic (not part of any living system), can be described using up to 350 bits of information. To describe the smallest protein molecule (unable to live alone, but part of a living system) requires some 1,500 bits of information (the e-coli bacterium some 7 million; one human cell some 20 billion). Now just where could chance plus nothing find 1,150 bits of **new** information (to produce the simplest protein), if in the whole universe there was only 350? The evolutionary hypothesis as an explanation for the origin of life is ridiculously, stupidly impossible!

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²¹precisely because, knowing God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks;^a so their reasonings became worthless and their senseless hearts were darkened.^b ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools,^c ²³and exchanged for themselves the glory of the incorruptible God for an image resembling a perishable man^d—even birds and quadrupeds and reptiles!

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up, through the cravings of their hearts for vileness, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves ²⁵—they had exchanged the truth of God for the lie,^e and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

The science of genetics, with its genome projects, has discovered that a change of just 3 nucleotides is usually fatal to the organism. The genetic difference between a human being and a chimpanzee (closest relative) is at least 1.6%—this represents a gap of some 48 million nucleotide differences. Since a random change of only 3 nucleotides is fatal to an animal, and a dead animal cannot reproduce, there is no possible way that a chimp could evolve into a human. Each individual species had to be assembled separately, just like Genesis says. The 'geologic column' is a fiction, since there are multistrata tree fossils. Symbiotic plants and insects could not possibly evolve. And so on.

^a To turn against the Creator, to deny His existence, is a deliberate, culpable choice, since it goes against the observable scientific evidence.

^b When you deliberately turn out the light, you condemn yourself to grope about in darkness, and you cannot see what is attacking you. 'Were darkened' is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by what or by whom? Ephesians 2:2 refers to Satan as "the spirit who now works in the sons of the disobedience". When someone rejects the Creator he also rejects His protection; by choosing to become a 'son of the disobedience', a person invites Satan into his mind, and Satan brings darkness.

I am reminded of our Lord's words in Matthew 6:22-23. "The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has "eye" in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real 'eye')—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. "Evil" here has the idea of malignant—aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to everything he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. Cf. Titus 1:15.

^c 'Modern man' struts about, thinking that he is smarter than former generations. Anyone who embraces materialistic, relativistic humanism is a true fool.

^d Any god you create will be smaller than you are—totally worthless!

^e Note that they turned their backs on God first; His giving them up was a consequence of their choice. All the evil in the world is a consequence of men's evil choices—God should not be blamed. That said, however, any time a person chooses evil he invites Satan into his mind, and Satan will push the person toward ever lower levels of depravity. I believe that Hebrews 2:7 is relevant here: "You made him [man, verse 6] lower than the angels, for a little while" (quoting Psalm 8:5). The human being is superior to the angelic being in essence; we bear the Creator's image and they do not, and once glorified that superiority will be obvious, but only for the redeemed. Those who serve Satan subordinate themselves to him, and thus can never rise above him. If Lucifer's rebellion was provoked, as I suppose, by the creation of a being superior to himself, he is doing very well at getting his 'revenge', by depriving the vast majority of humanity of that superiority [and so Hebrews 2:8 would not apply to them]. Satan is now controlled by spite; he was demoted. Since he is unable to create, he gets his satisfaction by degrading and destroying. His greatest 'pleasure' must be to drag the image of the Creator through the mire, and for that purpose anal sex is just the ticket. Since it is a man's seed that transmits the 'image' (see Hebrews 7:10, etc.), anal sex mixes the image of God with feces—a monstrous insult! The practice of anal sex is the equivalent of spitting in the face of the Creator; it is an extremely serious offense (worse than a buck private spitting in the face of a four star general). So then, as soon as God removes His hand, Satan pushes men toward anal sex, thereby making it increasingly difficult for them to ever be saved (as verses 26-32 below make clear).

Depravity

²⁶For this reason God gave them up^a to degrading passions; in fact even their females exchanged the natural sexual function for that against nature; ²⁷likewise also the males, abandoning the natural use of the female, were inflamed^b in their lust toward one another, males committing the disgraceful act^c with males, and receiving in themselves the due penalty^d for their error.

²⁸So precisely because they determined not to retain God in their knowledge,^e God gave them up to a debased mind, to do wrong things: ²⁹having been filled^f with all unrighteousness, fornication,^g wickedness, greed, depravity; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, braggarts, contrivers of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹senseless, faithless, hardhearted, intransigent,^h unmerciful; ³²who, knowing full well God's just sentence, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do them but also approve of other practitioners.ⁱ

Judgment

2 ¹Now then, you there, whoever you are who judges someone else for things you practice yourself—you condemn yourself and are inexcusable. ²Further, we know that God's judgment against those who practice such things^j is according to truth. ³So then, you there, you who judge those who practice such things while doing the same, do you really imagine that you will escape God's judgment?^k ⁴Or do you scorn the riches of His kindness, tolerance and longsuffering, not recognizing that the goodness of God is leading you toward repentance?^l ⁵Rather, due to your hardness and unrepentant heart, you are treasuring up wrath for yourself in the day of God's wrath and revelation and righteous judgment,^m ⁶who

^a If God gives you up, you are in a bad way! Most people today live in cultures controlled by Satan; if they do not resist their culture, they have very little chance of salvation.

^b The verb is in the passive voice, so the necessary question is, by whom? The answer has already been given in the note above. I doubt that anyone performs anal sex without a demon present.

^c The noun here is singular and with the definite article, 'the act'. The seriousness of this has been explained above.

^d Whatever this 'penalty' is, why would any sane person want it?

^e It needs to be emphasized that this is a deliberate choice.

^f The passive voice again; God gives them up and Satan takes over.

^g Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "fornication", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding, being a simple case of 'like ending'.

^h Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "intransigent", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an inferior proceeding, being another simple case of 'like ending'.

ⁱ Is this not a perfect picture of 'modern man'? (Of course things were at least that bad before the Flood.) Note "are deserving of death"; the verb is in the present tense, and Paul wrote this years after Pentecost, and consequently within the age of Grace. Through Moses the Creator articulated the death penalty for certain practices. Paul's use of 'are' indicates that the penalty has not been revoked or annulled.

^j The 'such things' refers back to the content of 1:29-31.

^k What sort of blindness could this be, for such a person to imagine that he will escape judgment?

^l Just because God is good, kind, tolerant and longsuffering, people imagine that He is weak, or even non-existent (!)—how wrong they are!

^m The full revelation of God's wrath and righteous judgment is going to take a lot of people by surprise. To 'treasure up' such wrath is incredibly stupid, if not insane.

ROMANS 2

will repay each one according to his works:^a ⁷to those who seek for glory, honor and incorruption, by persevering in doing good—eternal life;^b ⁸but to those who, due to self-seeking,^c are actually disobeying the truth (while obeying the unrighteousness)—fury and wrath, ⁹tribulation and anguish, upon every human soul who works at the evil,^d whether Jew (first) or Greek; ¹⁰but glory, honor and peace to everyone who works the good, whether Jew (first) or Greek.^e

¹¹Now there is no favoritism with God. ¹²For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law; while as many as have sinned with law will be judged by law.^f ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.^g ¹⁴(indeed, whenever the ethnic nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law, these, although not having law, are a law to themselves; ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness,^h and their reasonings among themselves accusing or even excusing) ¹⁶in the day when God, according to my Gospel, will judge people's secrets by Jesus Christ.ⁱ

To Jews

Law

¹⁷Look, you declare yourself a Jew, and rest on the Law, and boast in God, ¹⁸and know the Will, and approve the superior things, being instructed out of the Law. ¹⁹Further, you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth.^j ²¹You then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach not to steal, do you steal? ²²You who say not to commit adultery, do you adulterate? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, do you dishonor God through the transgression of the Law? ²⁴For, just as it is written: “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”^k

^a See Psalm 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12. Each one of us must give an accounting, based on what we did (not on what we said we believed).

^b One is reminded of Cornelius as a case in point (Acts 10).

^c The essence of sin is self. It is our egocentricity that destroys us spiritually. All babies are self-centered, as they must be in order to survive physically in this world. But as they grow they need to be taught a better way.

^d I suppose that God is wrathful because of the damage that such people inflict upon others, at least in part.

^e Working good looks to be a better deal than working evil!

^f God is just, and His judgment takes into account the amount of light that a person had, but all will be judged. Our Lord's words in Luke 12:47-48 spell this out.

^g Over and over the Text makes clear that we have to do.

^h Everyone is born with a conscience, and with intelligence to see that some things produce a good result while others produce a bad result.

ⁱ In John 5:22 the Lord Jesus stated plainly that the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, developing the theme in verses 23-29; see also Acts 17:31 and Revelation 19:15. That there are no 'secrets' unknown to God is made clear in passages like Psalm 139:1-16 and Hebrews 4:12-13. That the Day of God involves judging is clear in the O.T., but it is only from the N.T. that we learn of the role that Jesus will play in that judging.

^j “The embodiment of knowledge and truth” is an excellent description of the Scriptures.

^k See Isaiah 52:5 and Ezekiel 36:22. The problem of not practicing what one preaches has been around for quite a while.

Circumcision

²⁵Now circumcision does have value if you keep the Law, but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷And will not the physically uncircumcised who fulfills the law judge you, complete with written code and circumcision, who are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸Because a person is not a [true] Jew who is *only* one outwardly, nor is [true] circumcision something outward in the flesh; ²⁹but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in spirit, not letter—whose praise is not from men but from God.^a

Advantage

3 ¹So what advantage does the Jew have, or what is the profit of circumcision? ²Much in every way!^b First of all, because they were entrusted with the oracles of God.^c ³So, what if some did not believe? Their unbelief will not nullify God’s faithfulness, will it? ⁴Of course not! Rather, let God be found true, but every man a liar; just as it is written:

“That you may be justified in your words,
and may overcome when you are judged.”^d

A conundrum

⁵Now if our unrighteousness highlights God’s righteousness, what shall we say? God is not unrighteous for inflicting His wrath, is He? (I speak as a man.) ⁶Of course not! Otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷Still, if the truth of God abounded to His glory by my falsehood, just why am I still judged as a sinner?^e ⁸However, we must not say, “Let us do evil so that good may come” (as some people slanderously claim that we do)—their condemnation is well deserved!^f

All are under sin

⁹What then? Are we any better? Not at all! For we have already charged both Jews and Greeks^g that they are all under sin. ¹⁰Just as it is written:

“No one is righteous, not even one;
¹¹there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

^a God looks on the heart. Those who worship Him must do so ‘in spirit and in truth’ (John 4:23-24). We do not choose who will procreate us, nor does a baby boy choose to be circumcised, so such factors cannot guarantee God’s acceptance.

^b For a fuller list of the advantages, see Romans 9:1-5. To be born into a culture that has been blessed with God’s Light is certainly an advantage.

^c Job was written by a pre-Jew, but all the rest of the Old Testament, which is what Paul is referring to, was written by Jews. For that matter, all the books of the New Testament were also written by Jews (with the possible exception of Luke). “The oracles of God” are God’s written Revelation to the human race.

^d See Psalm 51:4. “If we are faithless, He remains faithful—He is incapable of denying Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13).

^e If I choose falsehood, it is an evil choice, and I deserve to be punished, quite apart from any highlighting of God’s righteousness. Any ‘highlighting’ does not alter the nature of my choice.

^f I suppose that part of the point is that all evil has consequences in this life and in this world, and any eventual ‘good’ does not undo those consequences, and neither does it compensate for them.

^g Paul uses ‘Greeks’ as a cover term for all non-Jews.

ROMANS 3

¹²All have turned aside, together they have been made useless;
there is no one who shows kindness,
no, not so much as one.”^a

¹³“Their throat is an opened grave;
they habitually deceive with their tongues.”^b

“Viper’s venom is under their lips”;^c

¹⁴“whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”^d

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ruin and wretchedness are in their paths,

¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known.”^e

¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”^f

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world become accountable to God. ²⁰It follows that no flesh will be justified in His sight by the works of the law, because through the law comes the real knowledge of sin.^g

Righteousness by faith

²¹But now, apart from law, a righteousness from God has been revealed, being attested by the Law and the Prophets, ²²namely, a righteousness from God through faith in Jesus Christ, into all and upon all^h those who believe. There is no difference: ²³all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,ⁱ ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵whom God has openly made available as a propitiation through the faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness because of the passing over, in God’s forbearance, of the previously committed sins;^j ²⁶to demonstrate His righteousness at this pres-

^a See Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1-3; Ecclesiastes 7:20.

^b See Psalm 5:9.

^c See Psalm 140:3.

^d See Psalm 10:7.

^e See Isaiah 59:7-8.

^f See Psalm 36:1. The picture painted in verses 10-18 is not pretty! The description includes both Jews and Gentiles. Since the Creator is the only one who is competent to dictate moral values, someone who denies His authority (or worse, His existence) will not be bound by such values. We have already commented on what Satan does with a ‘son of the disobedience’; the result is ‘ruin and wretchedness’. Why would any sane person want that?

^g The final accounting is based on our works, what we did—but no one will be justified on that basis. Our justification comes through the shed blood of God’s Lamb.

^h That righteousness is available to all, but is only applied to those who believe. Perhaps 7% of the Greek MSS omit “and upon all”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding (it is an easy case of ‘similar ending’—the eye of the copyist skipped from one ‘all’ to the next).

ⁱ What do you think ‘the glory of God’ refers to? In this context it can scarcely be brilliance or effulgence. I suggest that God’s true glory is what He Himself **is**. His essence—truth, holiness, justice, love, among others. Although pristine Adam presumably reflected that essence quite well, the Fall resulted in a barrier that man cannot cross, apart from divine assistance. I suspect that modern man is but a poor reflection of what pristine Adam once was (due to accumulated congenital weaknesses). Alas, we fall far short!

^j “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13, 22-23). “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). 1 Peter 1:18-20 states that the Lamb, with His blood shed, was so foreknown before the foundation of the world. All the animal blood shed in the Old Testament only covered sin; it did not pay for it. All those sacrifices looked forward to Christ’s perfect sacrifice. But all of that was only validated by the

ent time, so as to be just, Himself, and the justifier of him who is of the Faith of Jesus.^a

²⁷Where then is the boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law, that of works? No, but by a law of faith. ²⁸Therefore we conclude that a person is justified by faith apart from works of law. ²⁹Or is God for Jews only? Is He not also for Gentiles? Yes, also for Gentiles, ³⁰since indeed there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through the Faith.^b ³¹Do we then nullify law through the Faith? Of course not! Rather, we uphold law.^c

Abraham

4 ¹What then shall we say that our father Abraham discovered, as a man? ²If Abraham was really justified by works, he has a boast—but not before God. ³So what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”^d ⁴Now to him who works, the pay is not counted as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵But to him who does not work^e but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.

⁶Just as David speaks of the blessing of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

⁷“Blessed are they whose lawless deeds have been forgiven,
and whose sins have been covered up.

⁸Blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute sin!”^f

Before circumcision

⁹Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? Since we say that faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness, ¹⁰how then was it credited? After he was circumcised or while still uncircumcised? Not circumcised, but uncircumcised! ¹¹And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness from his faith while still uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all those who believe while uncircumcised, in order that this righteousness may be credited to them also,^g ¹²and the father of the circumcised—not only those who are circumcised, but especially those who follow in the footsteps of the faith of our father Abraham while still uncircumcised.^h

death of God’s Lamb. So as verse 25 here states, the true propitiation is now available “through the faith in His blood”. This propitiation also benefits the Old Testament saints.

^a I take the reference to be to the Faith that revolves around the person and work of Jesus.

^b How could a ritual performed on a baby justify that baby? A circumcised person had to demonstrate faith in God by shedding animal blood to cover his sin; this before the perfect Sacrifice. Now justification comes through the Faith.

^c The proper function of the law is recognized within the Faith.

^d See Genesis 15:6.

^e We work because we have been justified, not in order to be justified (Ephesians 2:10). See further James 2:21-23—a living faith does things.

^f See Psalm 32:1-2. The negative is emphasized.

^g We non-Jews may wonder why Paul is spending so much time on the subject of circumcision, but to the Jews of that day it was BIG.

^h The point is that physical circumcision is not enough; one must believe.

The promise

¹³Now the promise that he would be the heir of the world^a was not to Abraham, or his seed, through law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if those who are of law are heirs, the faith is made empty and the promise has been invalidated; ¹⁵because the law produces wrath, since where there is no law neither is there transgression.^b ¹⁶For this reason it is of faith so that it may be according to grace, in order that the promise be guaranteed to all the seed—not only to those of law, but also to those of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all; ¹⁷just as it is written: “I have made you a father of many ethnic nations”^c—in the presence of Him whom he believed: God, who gives life to the dead and calls the non-existent things as though they did exist.^d ¹⁸Contrary to hope, Abraham in hope believed, so as to become a father of many ethnic nations, according to what had been spoken: “So shall your seed be.”^e ¹⁹And not being weak in faith, he did not^f consider his own body, already dead^g (being about a hundred years old), or the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰He did not waver at God’s promise in unbelief; rather, he was strengthened by the faith, giving glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform^h ²²—that is why it was credited to him as righteousness.

²³Now it was not only for his sake that it was written that it was credited to him, ²⁴but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited, we who believe on Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.ⁱ

To believers*Peace with God*

5 ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, let us be at^j peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have had the access,

^a Now what might ‘heir of the world’ mean? “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). Galatians 3:16 makes clear that the Seed, singular, refers to the Christ (Genesis 12:7 and 24:7). Psalm 2:7-8 also clearly refers to the Christ: “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.’” It might be argued that in some sense this is happening through the Church, Christ’s body—in Matthew 5:13-14 the Christ called His disciples “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”. Paul states, “all things are yours... and you are Christ’s... and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). But during the millennial Messianic Kingdom the whole world will obey the Christ, who will rule the nations with ‘a rod of iron’ (Revelation 19:15).

^b How can you cross a line that is not there? So until someone draws a line (law) there is no transgression.

^c See Genesis 17:5.

^d God can create just by speaking: if He says, “Let there be...”, there is.

^e See Genesis 15:5.

^f Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) omit “not”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^g Paul declares that Abraham had become impotent before begetting Isaac. That means that he had started slowing down long before, and no one would be more aware of that than Sarah. That may explain why she offered Hagar—she was aware of the Promise and Abraham needed a descendent.

^h “Being fully convinced” is a basic ingredient in true faith.

ⁱ The grammatical construction is the same in both clauses: ‘because’, ‘because’. The resurrection was the proof that the Father had accepted the price paid for our justification. Thank you, Jesus!

^j The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between the Indicative and the Subjunctive form of the verb (the difference is between two similar sounding vowels). Most versions follow the Indicative,

by the Faith, into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we should also rejoice^a in the sufferings, knowing that the suffering produces perseverance; ⁴and the perseverance, proven character; and the proven character, hope; ⁵and the hope does not humiliate, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.^b

Reconciliation

⁶Now then, when we were incapacitated, even so Christ died for the ungodly, at the right moment. ⁷Now scarcely even for a righteous person will someone *offer to die* (although on behalf of a good man someone might dare even to die), ⁸but God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us! ⁹So now that we have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from the wrath through Him! ¹⁰Because since we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, while we were enemies, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life!^c

¹¹No wonder we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation!^d

Death X Life

¹²Now then, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, just so death spread to all men, because all sinned^e ¹³—sin was in the world before the law, to be sure, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam's transgression^f (he is a type of the coming one).^g

¹⁵Now the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one, how much more did God's grace and the bounty by the grace of the one

but the best line of transmission has the Subjunctive, and I follow it. Remember the 'from faith to faith' in Romans 1:17.

^a The form of the verb is ambiguous between Indicative and Subjunctive; I take it that the Subjunctive is intended. The same ambiguity attaches to the same verb in verse two, where I chose the Indicative, since the thought is reinforced in verse 11 below.

^b A hope based on the person and work of the Holy Spirit within us in not a false hope.

^c As it says in 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness", so once we are reconciled we have every reason to succeed! But it is a process, and the result is not automatic.

^d Yes! Amen! Praise God!

^e The structure here is a 'chiasmus': AB,BA.

^f Well dear me, how does that work? If sin is not 'imputed', why is there death? The verb 'imputed' refers to an account made up of a list of specific items. If I run up a bill at a local store, when I meet the owner on the street we both know I'm in debt, even without an itemized bill in hand. The debt affects our relationship, and may affect my standing in the community, and that of my family, etc.—the consequences derive from the fact, not the itemized list. So "death reigned from Adam to Moses" based on the fact of sin, not on an itemized list.

"The wages of sin is death", so since we are sinners by inclination (birth) and choice, death reigns. Although there is no explicit instruction about animal sacrifice in the first chapters of Genesis, it is implied. For God to accept Abel's sacrifice and reject Cain's, there must have been instruction about such things (Genesis 4:3-5). Indeed, God had given the example by killing an animal to cover the nakedness of the fallen pair (Genesis 3:21). In Genesis 8:20-21 the implication is clear that Noah knew what he was supposed to do. And Job, who lived before Abraham (presumably), knew about sacrifice for sin (Job 1:5).

^g As a transgressor, Adam is not a type of Christ, so I take the reference to be to 'the man of sin'. Just as Adam's sin affected the whole world, so the Antichrist's 'abomination' will affect the whole world, both in a bad way.

ROMANS 6

man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many! ¹⁶Again, the gift is not like what came from one man's having sinned: because the judgment into condemnation followed one offense, while the gracious gift into justification followed many offenses.^a ¹⁷Further, if by the offense of the one man death reigned through that man, much more will those who receive the abundance of the grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.^b

¹⁸So then, as through one offense there is condemnation for everyone, so also through one righteous act there is life-giving justification for everyone.^c ¹⁹For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners,^d so also through the obedience of the One the many^e will be constituted righteous. ²⁰However, law came on the scene so that the offense might abound; but where the sin abounded, the grace superabounded, ²¹so that just as sin reigned in the death,^f so also the grace might reign through righteousness into eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Newness of life

6 ¹So what shall we say? Shall we continue in the sin so that the grace may abound? ²Of course not! How can we who died to sin keep on living in it? ³Or are you unaware that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?^g ⁴Therefore, we were buried with Him by means of that baptism into that death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by means of the Father's glory, we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵Now if we have become united with Him in His death, we will certainly be in His resurrection as well; ⁶knowing this, that our old self^h was crucified with Him in order that the body of the sinⁱ might be set aside, so that we no longer be enslaved to that sin—⁷because he who has died has been released from that sin.^j

^a I do not find Paul's reasoning here to be transparent. Perhaps the contrast is heightened in that the gift overcame many offenses.

^b The first Adam lost the Life; the second/last Adam gives it back.

^c The comparison is interesting, but there is a fundamental difference—we are born condemned, but not justified! There is a way to escape the condemnation, but you have to take it, or remain condemned. The life-giving justification is available, but you have to believe into Jesus to get it.

^d Because of Adam's rebellious choice, sin became part of the genetic pool that defines a human being. Alas!

^e The phrase 'the many' occurs twice in this verse, but the roster of included people is presumably not the same—the second roster is smaller.

^f The death refers to the world controlled by Satan, where sin reigns; to be separated from God is spiritual death.

^g In Paul's day (at least) there were those who thought that the physical rite of circumcision was a passport to heaven. We have already seen in Romans 2:25-29 that Paul rejects that notion—God looks on the heart. In our day there are those who think that the physical rite of water baptism is a similar passport, but we probably all know individuals who had their 'bath' and are now living for Satan—God looks on the heart. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 explains that it is the Holy Spirit who baptizes us into Christ: "...so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." If we become part of Christ's body, then whatever happens to that body happens to us. If that body died, we did. If it was buried, so were we. If it was raised from the dead, we will be too. Correction—we already have new life in Christ, and are to live on that basis.

^h Literally 'man'. The reference is to the old, or fallen, nature, with which we are all born. Only those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit acquire a new one.

ⁱ That is, the body that resulted from 'the sin' (Adam's); that is, a fallen body, whose natural inclination is not toward holiness.

^j Presumably a dead person does not do much sinning.

⁸Now since we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him, ⁹knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, cannot die again:^a death can no longer master Him ¹⁰—the death He died He died to sin once for all, while the life He lives He lives to God. ¹¹Thus you also, consider yourselves to be dead indeed to the sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.^b

Down with sin!

¹²Therefore do not let the sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey it with the body's evil desires ¹³—do not present any part^c of your body to sin as an implement for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your body parts to God as implements for righteousness. ¹⁴Really, sin must not rule over you, because you are not under law but under grace.

Grace, not license

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Of course not! ¹⁶Do you not know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey them as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether of sin into death, or of obedience into righteousness? ¹⁷But thanks be to God that although you used to be the slaves of the sin you wholeheartedly obeyed that pattern of doctrine into which you were delivered. ¹⁸So having been emancipated from the sin, you became enslaved to the righteousness.^d

¹⁹I continue to speak on a human level because of the weakness of your flesh. Now just as you used to present your body parts as slaves to uncleanness, and to ever increasing lawlessness,^e so now present your body parts as slaves to righteousness with a view to sanctification. ²⁰For when you were slaves to the sin, you were 'free' from the righteousness. ²¹So what 'fruit' did you have at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? The end of those things is death!^f ²²But now, having been emancipated from the sin, and having become enslaved to God, you have your 'fruit' into sanctification—and the end is eternal life! ²³Because the wages of sin is death,^g but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^a No one kills Jesus twice. Consider Hebrews 6:4-6: "Because, it is impossible to bring back into repentance those who were once for all enlightened, who have partaken of the heavenly gift and were made sharers in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have experienced God's good event and capabilities of the coming age, 6 and yet have fallen away—they would be crucifying the Son of God all over again, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt." No amount of theological shifting and squirming can nullify the plain meaning of verse 6. The only way to crucify Jesus **again** is if you have already done so once before. No one is going to kill Jesus twice; if the first time was not good enough for you, you have had it! As He Himself said in John 10:17-18: "Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He laid it down once, freely, but that is all.

^b Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "our Lord", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^c Literally, 'the members'.

^d Recall the note about slaves at Romans 1:1.

^e Sin, and mere gratification of physical desire, obey the law of diminishing returns. To maintain the same 'kick' from any drug, you have to keep increasing the dose—this is a slavery that keeps on dragging you down to ever lower levels.

^f Yea, verily!

^g Sin results in two deaths, physical and spiritual. The spiritual one is by far the more important since it lasts for eternity. Belonging to Jesus does not exempt us from physical death, but it does from the spi-

More about law

7 ¹Do you not know, brothers (for I am speaking to those who know law), that the law has authority over someone only as long as he lives? ²For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if the man should die, she is released from the law about the husband. ³So then, if she should ‘marry’ another man while her husband is living, she will be labeled an adulteress; but if the husband should die, she is free from that law, not being an adulteress if she marries another man.

⁴Therefore, my brothers, you also were put to death to the law through the body^a of the Christ so as to belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—so that we should produce fruit to God. ⁵Because when we were in the flesh,^b the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our body parts to produce fruit to death. ⁶But now we have been released from the law, having died to what was gripping us, so as to slave in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.^c

Law and sin

⁷So what shall we say then? Is the law sin? Of course not! Indeed, I would not have come to know the sin^d except through the law: I would not have recognized covetousness if the law had not said, “You must not covet.” ⁸But the sin, grasping an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of coveting.^e

Now without the law sin is dead. ⁹Once upon a time, without law, I was actually ‘alive’; but when the commandment came, the sin came to life and I died. ¹⁰Yes, the commandment that was to bring me life turned out to bring death. ¹¹Because the sin, grasping an opportunity through the commandment, completely deceived me, and used it to ‘kill’ me. ¹²So then, the law itself is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Indwelling sin

¹³So has what is good become death to me? Of course not! Rather the sin, that it might be exposed as sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that through the commandment the sin might become extremely sinful. ¹⁴We know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, having been ‘sold’ under sin^f ¹⁵—you see, I do not understand what I am doing: I do not practice what I want to do,

ritual one—He gives us eternal life instead of eternal death. Eternal death means eternal separation from the Creator, presumably a conscious state.

^a This refers to His physical body, and probably to the death of that body.

^b ‘In the flesh’ contrasts with ‘in Christ’ and probably refers to the natural/old man.

^c We are slaves in any case. What is in view is a change of owner.

^d If not a synonym for the fallen nature, or ‘the flesh’, ‘the sin’ appears to be closely related to it. ‘The flesh’ is Satan’s ally inside us while ‘the world’ is his ally outside us. So without the Holy Spirit a person is in a bad way.

^e Anyone who has children has seen this principle at work (also if he can still remember how it was when he was a child). Once upon a time there was a doctrine that said that the children of Christians are born without a sin nature—I have always thought that the only people who could believe that would be people with no children!

^f A person who was sold became a slave ‘under’ a new owner, so I take Paul’s point to be that sin is giving the orders.

but I do what I hate!^a **16**But if I do what I do not want to do, I agree with the law that it is good. **17**So now it is no longer I who am doing it, but the sin dwelling in me. **18**Further, I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; because I do not do the good that I want to do; rather I practice the evil that I do not want to do. **20**Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but the sin dwelling in me. **21**So I find this 'law': when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. **22**I joyfully agree with God's law according to the inner man, **23**but I see a different 'law' in my body parts, warring against the law of my mind and taking me captive to the law of the sin that is in my body parts.

24What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?^b **25**I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, sin's law.

Deliverance

8 ¹Now then, there is no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,^c ²because the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me^d free from the law of the sin and the death. ³Further, what the law could not do, in that it was weak due to the flesh, God has done by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned the sin in the flesh,^e ⁴so that the righteous requirement of the

^a In this interesting passage Paul contrast his two natures. As an aid to the reader, I will attempt to identify the two natures throughout the passage.

14 We know that the law is spiritual, but I [old] am fleshly, having been 'sold' under sin 15—you see, I [new] do not understand what I am [old] doing: I [old] do not practice what I [new] want to do, but I [old] do what I [new] hate! 16 But if I [old] do what I [new] do not want to do, I [new] agree with the law that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I [new] who am doing it, but the sin dwelling in me [both]. 18 Further, I [new] know that nothing good dwells in me [old], that is, in my flesh; because I will is present with me [new], but I [old] do not find how to perform the good. 19 Because I [old] do not do the good that I [new] want to do; rather I [old] practice the evil that I [new] do not want to do. 20 Now if I [old] do what I [new] do not want to do, it is no longer I [new] who do it, but the sin dwelling in me [both]. 21 So I [new] find this 'law', when I [new] want to do good, evil is right there with me [both]. 22 I [new] joyfully agree with God's law according to the inner man [new], 23 but I [new] see a different 'law' in my body parts [old], warring against the law of my mind [new] and taking me [both] captive to the law of the sin that is in my body parts [old]. 24 What a wretched man I am [both]! Who will deliver me [new] from this body of death [old]? 25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself [new] serve God's law, but with the flesh [old], sin's law.

^b A body that insists on sinning is a body that is condemned to death.

^c "Who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" is omitted by 2.3% of the Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality, objectively so), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc. Those who follow the 2.3% like to claim that the clause was imported from verse four. But Paul is a Jew, and they like to repeat things. In Romans 7:14-23 Paul described the conflict of the two natures within himself—he was not 'home free'. That he is not through with the topic is clear from verses 5-17 below, where he describes in detail the conflict between flesh and Spirit. The reader may rest assured that the 97% are correct. Anyone who insists on walking according to the flesh will discover that there is indeed condemnation.

^d Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you' singular, to be followed by NASB and LB. But 'you' in English is ambiguous as to number, and neither NASB nor LB tells the reader that 'you' is singular (because in the context it is obviously wrong). Both versions favor the reader with a footnote informing that "some" manuscripts read "me" [their way of referring to 700 against 4, which to my mind is a dishonest use of language].

^e The sin in our flesh having been condemned, it is now possible to walk according to the Spirit.

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law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Spirit X flesh

⁵Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶Further, the mind-set of the flesh yields death, but the mind-set of the Spirit yields life and peace; ⁷because the mind-set of the flesh represents enmity against God, since it does not submit to God's law, nor indeed can it. ⁸So, those who are 'in flesh' cannot please God.^a ⁹You, however, are not 'in flesh' but 'in Spirit', if indeed God's Spirit dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, the body is dead through sin, but the Spirit is life through righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then He who raised the Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies^b because of His Spirit who dwells in you.^c

Sonship

¹²So then, brothers, we have no obligation to the flesh, to live according to it; ¹³because if you live according to the flesh, you are about to die; but if you put to death the practices of the body, by the Spirit, you will live. ¹⁴Because as many as are led by God's Spirit, these are God's sons^d ¹⁵—you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fear all over again, but you did receive the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "*Abba*, Father!"^e ¹⁶That Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children ¹⁷—if children, also heirs: heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ^f (if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him).^g

Redemption of the body

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is going to be revealed in us. ¹⁹You see, the creation waits with eager anticipation for the revelation of God's sons; ²⁰because without

^a This is a 'genetic' incapability, so we need a new birth.

^b Where, down here? If it is "because of His Spirit who dwells [present tense] in you", presumably so. Consider 1 Thessalonians 5:23—"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." I take it that the grammatical structure of this phrase, "the spirit and the soul and the body" (in Greek), demands a tripartite/trichotomous view of the human being. I confess that I have trouble imagining complete sanctification for the body, in this life, but there it is. Still, verse 11 here does not demand 'complete' sanctification: obviously we use our mortal bodies as we serve God down here, and the more we use them to serve God, the more sanctified they will be.

^c In these verses we have 'Spirit of God', 'Spirit of Christ', 'Spirit' and 'Spirit of Him who raised Jesus'; so how many spirits or persons are there? I would say that Paul is just using different ways of referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Triune God. Comparing all the relevant passages, the Godhead is made up of just the three persons.

^d Hey, wait a minute; this is not what I was taught in Seminary! The Text says that in order to be God's son you must be led by God's Spirit! Verse 12 is addressed to 'brothers', and verse 13 says that to live according to the flesh results in death. But someone living according to the flesh is obviously not being led by the Spirit. You cannot die unless you are alive; notice also the "if indeed" in verse 17.

^e 'Father' is a translation of the Aramaic '*Abba*'.

^f Wow! If we are co-heirs, then whatever the inheritance is belongs to us too. I leave it to the reader to research the contents of Christ's inheritance!

^g The clear implication is: no suffering, no glory. In the next verse the sufferings are treated as a fact.

choice the creation was subjected to futility, due to the One who did the subjecting, based on the hope ²¹that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the freedom of the glory of God's children.^a ²²Yes, we know that the whole creation has been groaning and in labor pains until now. ²³Not only that, we ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, eagerly awaiting adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴Yes, we were saved in the hope,^b but a hope that is seen is not hope—why would anyone hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly await it with endurance.

²⁶Likewise also the Spirit comes to the aid *of the hope* in our weaknesses, since we do not know what we need to pray for. Indeed the Spirit Himself intercedes on our behalf with inexpressible groanings, ²⁷while He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, since He prays for the saints in accordance with God.^c

Glory

²⁸Further, we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, for those who are called according to purpose. ²⁹Because whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,^d so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰Further, whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.^e

Summary to this point

³¹What then shall we say to these things? Since God is for us, who is against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up on behalf of us all, how shall He not with Him also graciously give us all things?^f ³³Who will bring a charge against God's chosen ones? God is He who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? Christ is He who died, but even more, was indeed raised, who indeed is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes on our behalf.^g

³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? ³⁶(As it is written:

^a In the beginning, when the Creator turned the administration of this planet over to Adam, everything was 'good'. But then came the Fall, and the administrator was no longer good. How could a fallen ruler administer a perfect creation? Since the creation was merely a setting for the man, the Creator reduced it to the same level, based on 'the hope' of a future restoration for both man and nature (see 1 Peter 1:19-20).

^b Since the restoration of the planet depends on the restoration of Adam's descendants, at least some of them, and since this is a time consuming process, we start out in 'the hope'.

^c The intercession of the Spirit represents two members of the Trinity! We do not know what we need to pray for (altogether too often), but the Spirit does, and for that He certainly deserves our thanks.

^d If you are not being conformed to the Son's image, there is something wrong, because this is probably the 'purpose'.

^e All the verbs in verse 30 are in the past tense, reflecting God's sovereignty. Note the sequence: foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

^f 2 Peter 1:3 again.

^g Comparing this with verse 27, all three members of the Trinity are cheering us on!

“For your sake we are being put to death all day long;
we are accounted as sheep for slaughter.”^a)

³⁷No, in all these things we prevail completely through Him who loved us. ³⁸Because I am persuaded that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, ³⁹neither height nor depth nor any other created thing will have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.^b

Israel

9 ¹I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience is testifying with me in the Holy Spirit—²I have great sorrow and unceasing distress in my heart. ³For I keep wishing that I myself could be accursed away from the Messiah for the sake of my brothers, my physical relatives, ⁴the Israelites.^c To them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, and the promises. ⁵The patriarchs are theirs, and from them came the Christ (the physical part),^d who is over all, God forever blessed. Amen.

Children of the promise

⁶However, it is not as though the Word of God has failed!^e For not all who have descended from Israel are ‘Israel’. ⁷Neither are they all ‘children’ because they are Abraham’s descendants; but, “in Isaac will your seed be called.”^f ⁸That is, it is not the physical children who are God’s ‘children’, but the children of the promise are regarded as ‘seed’. ⁹For this is the word of promise: “At this season I will come, and Sarah will have a son.”^g

¹⁰Not only that, but also when Rebecca had conceived twins by our forefather Isaac ¹¹(though they had not yet been born, not having done anything good or bad, so that God’s purpose according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹²it was said to her, “The older will serve the younger.”^h ¹³As it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”ⁱ

It is pointless to fight God’s Sovereignty!

¹⁴So what shall we say, there is no injustice with God, is there? Of course not! ¹⁵For He says to Moses:

^a See Psalm 44:22. Our turn is coming; it is on the doorstep.

^b God’s love is like a sphere, with us on the inside—nothing can reach us without first passing through the ‘filter’ of that love. (There are times when it is easier to say that than to believe it.)

^c Wow, Paul, do you really mean it? Perhaps he is reflecting God’s sorrow.

^d Both “the Christ” and “who is over all” are in the masculine gender, separated by *to kata sarka*, often rendered as ‘according to the flesh’. But the article, *to*, is in the neuter gender, and so must have a different referent. Paul is being precisely correct: it was only the physical part of the Messiah that came through Israel, the divine part did not.

^e The covenants and the promises involve human participation, so they only come to fruition for those who obey God (almost always a minority of the population).

^f See Genesis 21:12.

^g See Genesis 18:10,14.

^h See Genesis 25:23.

ⁱ See Malachi 1:2,3. Of course Malachi was written long after the two had demonstrated their characters by their lives. Further, the ‘hated’ is not an active hate, but a disregard.

“I will have mercy on whomever I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on
whomever I have compassion.”^a

¹⁶So then, it is not of him who wills nor of him who strives, but of God who shows mercy. ¹⁷For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”^b ¹⁸So then, He has mercy on whom He wishes, and He hardens whom He wishes.

¹⁹You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has ever resisted His will?” ²⁰Really now, just who are you, O man, to talk back to God? What is formed will not say to the one who formed it, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? ²¹Or has the potter no right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?^c

²²What if God, wishing to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³just in order to make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy,^d which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴even us whom He called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵As He also says in Hosea:

“I will call the ‘not my people’, ‘my people’,
and the ‘not loved’ (f), ‘loved’.”^e

²⁶“And it will be in the place where it was said to them,
‘You are not my people,’
there they will be called sons of the living God.”^f

²⁷And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel:

“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea,
only the remnant will be saved;

²⁸because He is finishing and cutting short an accounting in righteousness; yes, the Lord will impose a condensed accounting^g upon the earth.”^h

²⁹And as Isaiah had said previously:

“Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed,
we would have become like Sodom,
and we would have been made like Gomorrah.”ⁱ

^a See Exodus 33:19.

^b See Exodus 9:16. If you check the record, Pharaoh hardened his own heart the first five times; after that God did the hardening.

^c We can argue, and complain, and squirm, but after everything is said and done, when faced with God’s Sovereignty we have just two options: rebel or submit, giving due regard to the consequences. That said, however, this text is concentrating on God’s Sovereignty. Due regard must also be given to all the texts that deal with human responsibility.

^d Presumably by way of contrast.

^e See Hosea 2:23.

^f See Hosea 1:10.

^g “In righteousness; yes, the Lord will impose a condensed accounting” is omitted by less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^h See Isaiah 10:22-23. It has always been the case that those who really want to walk with God represent a small minority of the population sample.

ⁱ See Isaiah 1:9. To be like Sodom would be complete destruction.

Their present condition

³⁰So what shall we say? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained to righteousness, namely the righteousness that comes from faith; ³¹while Israel, pursuing a standard of righteousness, did not attain to that standard. ³²Why not? Because it was not from faith, but as from works of the law. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone’; ³³as it is written:

“Look! I am placing in Zion a stumbling stone
and a rock of offense,
and no one who believes on Him will be put to shame.”^a

Israel needs salvation

10 ¹Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is for their salvation. ²For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to real knowledge. ³For they, failing to understand God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to God’s righteousness.

How to be saved

⁴Now for everyone who believes into righteousness, Christ is the end of the law.^b ⁵—Moses writes about the righteousness that is from the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.”^c ⁶But the righteousness that is from faith speaks like this: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’”^d (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷“or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’”^e (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸So what does it say? “The message is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”^f (that is, the message of faith that we proclaim): ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰Because with the heart one believes into righteousness, and with the mouth one promises^g into salvation. ¹¹Because the Scripture says: “Everyone who believes on Him will never be put to shame”^h; ¹²because there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, since the same Lord of all is rich to all who call upon Him; ¹³because: “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”ⁱ

The message is necessary

¹⁴How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without someone proclaiming it? ¹⁵And how will they proclaim unless they are

^a See Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16. They had to ‘believe on’ the ‘stumbling block’, the Christ, but He did not perform the way they expected that the Messiah would perform.

^b That is, as a means of salvation.

^c See Leviticus 18:5.

^d See Deuteronomy 30:12.

^e See Deuteronomy 30:13. The ‘abyss’ here is presumably not the eschatological one.

^f See Deuteronomy 30:14.

^g This refers to a solemn commitment made publicly—even a demon can mouth the phrase, ‘Jesus is Lord’, as can any person, except that the demon knows it is really true.

^h See Isaiah 28:16.

ⁱ See Joel 2:32. This has always been true, although the level of opportunity differs from time to time and people to people.

sent? As it is written: “How timely is the arrival^a of those who bring good news of peace,^b of those who announce the good things.”^c **16**(However, they did not all obey the gospel; because Isaiah says: “LORD, who has believed our message?”^d) **17**So, the faith is from a message, and that message is by the Word of God.^e

A rebellious people

18But I say, did they really not hear? Indeed yes:

“Their voice has gone out into all the earth,
and their spoken words
to the ends of the inhabited world.”^f

19Again I say, did Israel really not know? First Moses says:

“I will provoke you to jealousy by a non-nation,
I will move you to anger by a senseless nation.”^g

20But Isaiah is so bold as to say:

“I was found by those who were not seeking me;
I was revealed to those who were not asking for me.”^h

21But concerning Israel he says:

“All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and contrary people.”ⁱ

The remnant

11 ¹So now I say, God did not reject His people, did He? Of course not! Why I myself am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin!^j ²God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel saying: ³“LORD, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to take my life!”^k ⁴But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for myself seven thousand men^l who have

^a Literally, ‘beautiful the feet’.

^b “Of those who bring good news of peace” is omitted by 10.5% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^c See Isaiah 52:7 and Nahum 1:15.

^d See Isaiah 53:1.

^e Perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘Christ’ rather than “God”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding. It is the Word of God that gives authority to our message. Actually, ‘word’ here is a spoken word, precisely the messenger proclaiming his good news.

^f See Psalm 19:4.

^g See Deuteronomy 32:21.

^h See Isaiah 65:1.

ⁱ See Isaiah 65:2. To be ‘disobedient’ and ‘contrary’, there must be a revealed will, one that they knew about.

^j Observe that Paul knew what tribe he belonged to; this at the beginning of the Christian era. If God would save Paul, then He is still saving Jews (and God knows what tribe they are from, even if they no longer do).

^k See 1 Kings 19:10,14.

^l The term here refers specifically to males.

not bowed the knee to Baal.”^a **5**Even so then at this present time, there is a remnant according to an election by grace. **6**Now if by grace, it is no longer from works; otherwise the grace is no longer grace. But if from works, it is no longer grace; otherwise the work is no longer work.^b

7What then? What Israel is seeking, this it did not obtain; but the election^c did obtain it, while the rest were dulled. **8**Just as it is written:

“God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that were not to see and ears that were not to hear, to this very day.”^d

9And David says:

“Let their table be made into a snare and into a trap,
into a stumbling block and into a retribution to them.

10Let their eyes be darkened so as not to see,
and their back always be bowed down.”^e

The restoration

11So now I say, surely they have not stumbled so as to fall [and stay fallen]? Of course not! Rather, through their transgression the salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy. **12**Now if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss riches for the nations, how much more their fulfillment!

13So I am speaking to you Gentiles (inasmuch as I am ‘apostle to the Gentiles’, I magnify my ministry), **14**if somehow I can provoke my own people^f to jealousy and save some of them. **15**For if their being rejected means reconciliation for the world, what will their restoration be but life from the dead? **16**Now if the ‘firstfruit’ is holy, so is the whole batch; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Grafted olive branches

17Now if some of the branches were broken off, while you, being a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among them, and with them have become a partaker of the root and the rich sap of the cultivated olive, **18**do not boast against those branches (since if you do boast—it is not you who support the root but the root you). **19**You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” **20**Granted. Because of unbelief they were broken off, but you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but fear! **21**Because if God did not spare the natural branches, perhaps He will not spare you either! **22**So consider the kindness and severity of God: upon those who fell, severity; but toward you, kindness, if you continue in that kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off.^g **23**And even they, if they do not persist

^a See 1 Kings 19:18. Evidently Elijah knew nothing about them, and perhaps each of them also thought he was the only one. I see a practical application here: I must never assume that what God is doing to and through me is the whole show, or even a major part of it. Now, much more than in Elijah’s day, God is doing all sorts of interesting things all over the world!

^b “But if from works, it is no longer grace; otherwise the work is no longer work” is omitted by 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^c ‘Election’ acts as a mass noun, including all the elected individuals.

^d See Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10.

^e See Psalm 69:22-23.

^f Literally, ‘flesh’.

^g Here is a plain statement. ‘Continuing’ wins, and it is something that is up to us.

in the unbelief, will be grafted back in, because God has the power to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut out of a wild by nature olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?^a

Hardening

²⁵Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of this ‘mystery’^b (so that you not be concealed): hardening has come upon Israel in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved, just as it is written:

“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
and He will turn ungodliness away from Jacob;^c

²⁷this is my covenant with them,
when I take away their sins.”^d

²⁸On the one hand, regarding the Gospel, they are enemies because of you; on the other, regarding the election, they are beloved on account of the forefathers. ²⁹Because God’s gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable.^e ³⁰For just as you also were once disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy through their disobedience, ³¹so also these have now been disobedient that through the mercy shown to you they also may be shown mercy. ³²Yes, God has given everyone over to disobedience so that He might show mercy to all.^f

Doxology

³³Oh, the depth of the riches of God’s wisdom and knowledge!
How unsearchable His judgments and untraceable His ways!^g

³⁴Because “Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been His counselor?”^h

³⁵Or “Who has ever given to Him and has to be repaid?”ⁱ

³⁶Because from Him and through Him and to Him
are all things.^j

To Him be the glory forever! Amen.

The will of God

12 ¹Now then, brothers, I exhort you, in view of God’s compassions, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice,^a holy, satisfying to God—your intel-

^a One is reminded of Ezekiel 18, the whole chapter—if you have not read it for a while, I suggest you refresh your memory.

^b This term is used of information that God has not yet made generally available, not about something mysterious.

^c ‘Jacob’ is Jacob, not the Church!

^d See Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9. When will this happen? Presumably at the beginning of the millennial Messianic Kingdom. The conversion of the last Gentile will be followed by the Rapture. All the Israelites that enter the Kingdom will be saved (all rebels will have been executed).

^e That is, God does not take them back; what we do with them is another story.

^f A bitter pill, but apart from God’s mercy we do not obey Him.

^g This is the ‘answer’ for all of us who would like to understand just how election works, and so on. God is too big, and we are too small!

^h See Isaiah 40:13 and Jeremiah 23:18.

ⁱ See Job 41:11.

^j Everything said and done, God is the Owner of the universe.

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ligent duty. ²Yes, stop conforming to the pattern of this world; rather, be transformed by the renewing of your mind so as to be able to experience the good and satisfying and perfect will of God.^b

Be sensible

³Based on the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to set your sights higher than you should, but set them sensibly, as God has apportioned a measure of faith to each.^c ⁴Because just as in one body we have many parts, but all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. ⁶Since we have different spiritual gifts according to the grace that was given us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, according to the analogy of the Faith;^d ⁷if serving, in the serving; if teaching, in the teaching; ⁸if exhorting, in the exhortation;^e the sharer, with simplicity; the leader, with diligence; the mercy-shower, with cheerfulness.^f

Behave!

⁹Love is to be genuine: abhorring the malignant; clinging to the good; ¹⁰showing family affection to one another in brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; ¹¹not lagging in diligence; serving the Lord with an enthusiastic spirit; ¹²rejoicing in the hope; enduring the affliction; continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³distributing to the needs of the saints; practicing hospitality.^g

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.^h ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Regard each other as being on the same level—do not distinguish the upper classes, but associate with the lower classes; do not exalt yourself.ⁱ ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Have regard for things that everyone considers to be good. ¹⁸If possible, what depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

^a Any animal in the Old Testament had to die in order to become a sacrifice, so what does Paul mean by a 'living' one? In 1 Corinthians 15:31 he said that he died every day. Paul could not have been referring to actual physical death, obviously, since Hebrews 9:27 affirms that it is appointed to men to die only once (no re-incarnation). He may well have faced possible death often enough, but I suppose he is referring to dying to himself. I suppose this is also the meaning of our Lord's words in Luke 9:23-24—"If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." In that day a cross was an instrument of death. We must die to our own will in order to embrace God's. To present the body is presumably a metonym for presenting one's whole self.

^b 'The pattern of this world' belongs to Satan, so it must be rejected in order to do God's will. Many 'Christians' appear to be afraid of God's will, as well they might, unless they meet the conditions—only then is it 'good', 'satisfying' and 'perfect'.

^c We need to understand what God wants us to be and do, and set our sights on that. Any attitude of competition, wanting to be bigger and better than others, will produce bad results.

^d Any prophesying needs to be in accordance with Scripture.

^e One might feel that Paul is being repetitious, but we all know people who try to operate in someone else's area of gifting, and the results are not good. If an ear tries to be an eye, both hearing and sight suffer.

^f Nothing like cheerfulness when helping someone who is hurting.

^g I take it that the whole paragraph is explaining just how love is to be genuine—very practical!

^h If a boss is mistreating you and you curse him, will he get better or worse? That said, however, I believe we must distinguish between things done against us personally and things done against the Kingdom. Something done against the Kingdom is an act of war, and needs to be repelled.

ⁱ I take it that this text is dealing with social position, not personal abilities.

¹⁹Dear ones, do not avenge yourselves; rather give place to the wrath;^a for it is written: “Vengeance is up to me; I will repay,”^b says the Lord. ²⁰Therefore, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing this you will heap coals of fire on his head.”^c ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome the evil with the good.^d

Submit

13 ¹Let every soul submit to the governing authorities, because there is no authority except under God, and the existing authorities have been placed by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authority is opposed to God’s ordinance, and those who oppose will bring judgment on themselves.^e ³Now rulers are not a terror to good deeds but to bad ones. So if you wish not to fear the authority, do the good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴because it is God’s minister to you with a view to the good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, because it does not bear the sword for nothing; because it is God’s minister, an avenger with a view to wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵Therefore it is necessary to submit, not only because of the wrath, but also because of the conscience.^f ⁶This is precisely why you pay taxes, for they are God’s servants, continually attending on this very thing.^g ⁷Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes, customs to whom customs, respect to whom respect, honor to whom honor.

Love

⁸Owe no one anything except to love one another, since he who loves the other has fulfilled the law.^h ⁹Because—“You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,”ⁱ “You shall not covet,”^j and whatever further commandment—everything is summed up in

^a Wrath is normally expressed through physical violence, and perhaps in our day through legal action. These are the sort of reaction that an ‘enemy’ will expect, not acts of kindness, which may even make him feel ashamed of himself. In any case, we are not to descend to his level, but let God do any avenging.

^b See Deuteronomy 32:35.

^c See Proverbs 25:21-22. Presumably the ‘coals of fire’ are not literal.

^d Sounds great, but how does it work? Well, in Luke 10:19 Sovereign Jesus said: “Take note, I am giving you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing at all may harm you.” And in Ephesians 3:20 we read: “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is working in us...” Please see my footnotes at those passages for an extended discussion.

^e God does not like anarchy.

^f Presumably regimes that are overtly evil are not in view. Where a regime overtly combats the good, while promoting the evil, divine guidance is especially necessary for representatives of the good, because even an evil regime exists by God’s permission. That said, however, in Luke 10:19 Sovereign Jesus gives us “the authority over all the power of the enemy”. It is therefore within the sphere of our competence to forbid any use of Satan’s power in the administration of the country, in the surrounding culture, in the entertainment industry, and so on. The sky is the limit.

^g Have you ever seen a government that didn’t want more money?

^h Of course this is *agape* love.

ⁱ About a third of the Greek manuscripts omit “You shall not bear false witness”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^j See Exodus 20:13-17 and Deuteronomy 5:17-21.

this word, namely: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”^a **10**Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment^b of the law.

Put on Christ

11Besides this, knowing the time, it is high time for us to be awakened from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. **12**The night is nearly over, and the day is near;^c so let us get rid of the works of the darkness, and let us put on the weapons of the light.^d **13**Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual orgies and licentiousness, not in strife and jealousy. **14**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, with a view to lusts.^e

The law of liberty

14 **1**Receive someone who is weak in the faith, but not for disputes over arguables. **2**One man has faith to eat everything, while the weak one eats only vegetables. **3**One who eats must not look down on one who does not, and one who does not eat must not judge one who does,^f because God has accepted him. **4**Who are you to judge someone else’s household servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And stand he will, for God has the power to make him stand.^g

5One man esteems one day above another; another esteems everyday alike. Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind.^h **6**He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.ⁱ And he who eats, eats to the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, also giving thanks to God. **7**You see, none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. **8**Because if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s. **9**For this very reason Christ both died and rose, and lived,^j so as to rule both dead and living.^k

^a See Leviticus 19:18.

^b The Greek word here could also be rendered ‘complement’.

^c When a servant of Christ dies physically, he leaves the ‘night’ of this world behind and his ‘day’ of glory begins. Each day we live brings us closer to that moment, so we need to make the best possible use of the time we have left.

^d That is right, ‘weapons’. Light repels darkness. To make a difference, weapons must be used.

^e Of course we have to eat and drink to maintain life and health; it is the abuse of these appetites that is in view; in fact, Paul’s terminology indicates ‘heavy’ abuses.

^f Right on! Those are precisely the attitudes that one often sees in such cases.

^g Christ is the Master of the Church.

^h In that event, the day of the week we decide to observe should not be made a matter of doctrine. Christians generally observe Sunday, Jews Saturday, Muslims Friday, but if someone prefers Tuesday, he should be free to do so. (Of course, if you want to hold a job, you had better go along with the requirements of the market place.)

ⁱ “And he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it” is omitted by 4.6% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding (it is an easy case of ‘like ending’).

^j Although seemingly out of sequence, I assume that the reference of “and lived” is to His earthly life—without the incarnation He could not have died and conquered death. However, the perceived difficulty was enough to lead perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts to omit “and rose”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc., except that they then make “and lived” refer to the resurrection.

^k Most presentations of the Gospel I have heard revolve around the selfish interests of the hearers, what they are going to get out of it. But the clearest statements in Scripture giving the ‘why’ of the cross tell

The Judgment Seat of Christ

¹⁰But you, why do you judge your brother? And you too, why do you look down on your brother? Because we will all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.^a ¹¹For it is written:

“As I live,” says the LORD, “every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall acknowledge God.”^b

¹²So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. ¹³Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another, but rather resolve this: not to put a stumbling block or pitfall in a brother’s way.

¹⁴I know and have been convinced by Sovereign Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself^c (still, to someone who considers a thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean), ¹⁵but if your brother is offended because of food, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not, with your food, ruin someone for whom Christ died. ¹⁶So do not let your good be slandered; ¹⁷because the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in Holy Spirit. ¹⁸For whoever serves the Christ in these things is satisfying to God and approved by men.^d

¹⁹So then, let us pursue the things that promote peace and the things by which one may edify another. ²⁰Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are ‘clean’; however it is wrong for the man who gives offence by eating. ²¹It is good not to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is weakened.^e

²²Do you have faith? Have it privately before God. Happy is he who does not judge himself in what he approves. ²³But he who eats with doubt stands condemned, because it is not from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.^f

Doxology

²⁴Now to Him who has power to establish you according to my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret through long ages, ²⁵but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures,^g according to the command of the eternal God, with a view to

a different story. Here in 14:9 we have a very explicit one: He died to be **Lord!** 2 Corinthians 5:15 is also explicit: “He died for all so that those who now live should no longer live for themselves but for the One who died for all and was raised again.” Philippians 2:8-11 refers to the final victory. Hebrews 2:14 refers to destroying Satan. How about preaching a Gospel that revolves around Christ’s interests!

^a 2.4% of the Greek manuscripts read “God” instead of “Christ”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^b See Isaiah 45:23.

^c For a Jew to say this, he had to be convinced by a higher power.

^d That is, approved by men who fear God, not by those in rebellion against Him.

^e “Or is offended, or is weakened” is omitted by 1.8% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^f Well now, faith would appear to be a rather important commodity! But just why is everything else ‘sin’? If the basic idea in ‘sin’ is to miss the mark, or to fall short (Romans 3:23), then faith is of the essence. Habakkuk 2:4, “the just shall live by faith”, is repeated three times in the New Testament—Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11 and Hebrews 10:38. “That no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith’” (Galatians 3:11). So to depend on the law (or any equation based on works) is to fall short. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). If God demands faith, then anything else will fall short, will miss the mark.

^g Since it is being revealed ‘only now’, these ‘prophetic Scriptures’ must be New Testament writings, given by God!

obedience of faith among all ethnic nations ²⁶—to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ—to Him be the glory forever! Amen.^a

Summary

15 ¹Now we who are strong ought to bear with the limitations of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ²Let each of us please the neighbor with a view to what is good for edifying. ³Because even the Christ did not please Himself; rather, as it is written: “The revilings of those reviling you fell on me.”^b ⁴Whatever things were written before were so written for our instruction, so that through the fortitude and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵Now may the God of that fortitude and that encouragement grant you to be of the same mind^c among yourselves according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with one heart and voice.

Glorify

⁷Therefore accept one another, just as the Christ also accepted us,^d to the glory of God. ⁸Now I say that Christ Jesus^e has become a minister to the circumcised on behalf of God’s truth, in order to confirm the promises to the fathers; ⁹and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy,^f as it is written:

“For this reason I will give praise to you among the Gentiles,
O LORD,^g and will sing psalms to your name.”^h

¹⁰And again He says:

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!”ⁱ

¹¹And again:

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,
and laud Him, all you peoples!”^j

¹²And again, Isaiah says:

“The Root of Jesse will appear,
even He who rises up to rule over the nations;
the Gentiles will place their hope on Him.”^k

^a 5.2% of the Greek manuscripts place verses 24-26 at the end of the book, rather than here. Paul habitually places doxologies throughout his letters—they do not occur only at the end.

^b See Psalm 69:9.

^c It is only as a group of people are habitually exposed to the same Scriptures that ‘the same mind’ has much chance.

^d Perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘you’, but the 60% includes the best line of transmission. The verb I have rendered as ‘accept’ can also mean ‘receive’.

^e “Jesus” is omitted by perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^f We generally do not even trust someone who does not keep his promises, much less ‘glorify’ him. So it was necessary to fulfill the promises made to the patriarchs.

^g Less than a third of the Greek manuscripts have “O LORD”, but that third includes the best line of transmission, that follows the Hebrew Text of both 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49.

^h See 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49.

ⁱ See Deuteronomy 32:43.

^j See Psalm 117:1.

^k See Isaiah 11:10.

¹³Now may the God of the hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,^a so that you may abound in that hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.^b

Paul's mission

¹⁴Now I myself am really confident about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish others.^c ¹⁵Nevertheless I have written to you quite boldly on some points, brothers, as a reminder to you, because of the grace given to me by God, ¹⁶that I should be a minister of Jesus Christ to the nations, serving the Gospel of God as a priest so that the Gentiles might become an acceptable offering,^d sanctified by Holy Spirit. ¹⁷So in Christ Jesus I do have a boast in things pertaining to God; ¹⁸because I do not presume to speak of anything except those things that Christ has accomplished through me to make the Gentiles obedient—by word and deed, ¹⁹by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of God's Spirit, so that I have fully proclaimed^e the Gospel of the Christ from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum.^f ²⁰It has always been my aim to evangelize where Christ has not been named, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation; ²¹rather, as it is written:

“Those to whom He was not announced will see,
and those who have not heard will understand.”^g

A visit to Rome

²²That is why I have been hindered these many times from coming to you. ²³But now, no longer having a place in these parts, and having a longing these many years to come to you, ²⁴whenever I travel to Spain I will come to you.^h Because I hope to see you while passing through, and to be sent on my way there by you, if I may first enjoy your company for a while.

²⁵Now, however, I am traveling to Jerusalem, serving the saints. ²⁶Because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. ²⁷Yes, they were pleased, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are also obligated to minister to them in physical things. ²⁸So when I have finished this and have sealed to them this 'fruit', I will go by way of you to Spain.ⁱ ²⁹And I know

^a If one stops and thinks about it, 'joy' and 'peace' depend on believing—when we begin to doubt we lose both. Also, if you are filled with hope, you tend to have more 'bounce', you work with greater enthusiasm.

^b To abound by the power presumably means that we are to be doing things by that power. One does not 'abound' by sitting still doing nothing.

^c Instead of "others", some 7% of the Greek manuscripts read 'one another', as in most versions.

^d The concept is interesting: Paul is a priest, and the nations are his offering. I habitually present my own work to God as an offering.

^e Note the 'word and deed', the 'signs and wonders'. Can someone who has only 'word' claim to have 'fully proclaimed' the Gospel?

^f Illyricum lies to the north of Macedonia, in what used to be Yugoslavia (a few decades ago).

^g See Isaiah 52:15.

^h "I will come to you" is omitted by 4.1% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

ⁱ I am not aware of any record that Paul ever got to Spain.

that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel^a of the Christ.

³⁰Now I implore you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf,^b ³¹that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service to Jerusalem may be well received by the saints; ³²so that I may come to you with joy by the will of God and be refreshed together with you. ³³Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Closing remarks

Phoebe

16 ¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the congregation in Cenchrea, ²so that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever matter she may need from you; for indeed she herself has been a helper of many, including my own self.

Greetings

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life;^c to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the congregations of the Gentiles. ⁵And greet the congregation that is in their house.^d

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the first convert to Christ from Achaia.^e ⁶Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.^f ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junias, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, and who were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet Herodian, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus, who are in the Lord. ¹²Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.^g ¹³Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, also his mother, and mine.^h ¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brothers who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, also Olympus and all the

^a “Of the Gospel” is omitted by 3.7% of the Greek manuscripts, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^b If Paul needed prayer, how about us?

^c So far as I know, we do not have a record of just how, when or where this happened.

^d In the beginning, congregations met in people’s homes. This avoids the expense of erecting buildings. I believe the days are upon us when all serious followers of Jesus Christ will be increasingly persecuted, including in North America and Europe. An underground Church will have little use for ‘buildings’.

^e 4% of the Greek manuscripts read “Asia” instead of “Achaia” (these are very different places), to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, LB, etc.—an inferior proceeding.

^f Although scarcely a fourth of the Greek manuscripts read “you” (instead of “us”), that fourth includes the best line of transmission.

^g The three in this verse are women.

^h If Rufus were his physical brother, presumably Paul would have expressed himself differently, so the ‘mother’ here is not literally Paul’s.

saints who are with them.^a **16**Greet one another with a holy kiss. The congregations of Christ greet you.

Warning

17Now I exhort you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine you have learned, and avoid them. **18**Because such people do not serve our Lord Jesus^b Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.^c **19**I rejoice over you because your obedience has become known to all, but I want you to be wise as to what is good, yet innocent as to what is evil.^d **20**The God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet!^e

Sign off

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ^f be with you. **21**Timothy, my fellow worker, greets you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my countrymen.

22I, Tertius, who penned this letter in the Lord, greet you. **23**Gaius, host to me and the whole congregation, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, greets you, as does brother Quartus.^g

24The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us^h all! Amen.ⁱ

^a Since Paul had never been to Rome, so far, I wonder how he knew so many believers who were there (he knew them well enough to give details about them). I suppose most of them had migrated there from places Paul had been, and he would have to know about that migration.

^b Some 13% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Jesus”, as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^c Guileless people are often not prepared to recognize guile in others. So those who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the flock need to warn the people about who should be avoided.

^d When the first pair ate of the forbidden tree, this was not the result.

^e The sooner, the better!

^f 1% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) omit “Christ”, to be followed by NIV and NASB—an inferior proceeding.

^g One gains the clear impression that the people mentioned in verse 23 knew that Tertius was penning this letter. Not only that, they asked to be included! I wonder who Quartus may have been.

^h I have followed perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in putting ‘us’ rather than the familiar ‘you’. If verses 22-24 were not dictated by Paul, then the first person is especially appropriate, coming from Tertius.

ⁱ 3.2% of the Greek manuscripts omit verse 24, while 7.2% supply 14:24-26 at this point.

The First Epistle of Paul to the

CORINTHIANS

Opening Considerations

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and brother Sosthenes,^a ²to the church^b of God that is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus,^c called saints,^d along with all those everywhere^e who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord —yes, theirs and yours:^f ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.^g

A word of thanksgiving

⁴Concerning you, I always thank my God because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus; ⁵for in Him you were enriched in every way, in all speech and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,^h ⁷so that you lack no spiritual gift as you expectantly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,ⁱ ⁸who will also confirm you until the end, blameless in the Day of our Lord, Jesus Christ.^j ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into fellowship^k with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.^l

A word of exhortation

¹⁰Now I appeal to you, brothers, by the name^m of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thingⁿ and that there be no divisions among you, but that

^a He acknowledges a junior partner.

^b Since there were probably several local congregations meeting in homes in Corinth, not to mention “everywhere”, I have rendered ‘church’. Note that Paul obviously intended that his letter have a wide circulation, very wide.

^c If your life style is still that of the world, you have not been ‘sanctified’.

^d Called by God.

^e Clearly Paul knows that he is not writing just for the Corinthians. But just how is this letter going to get to believers “everywhere”? If Paul himself did not make copies, presumably the congregation that received the ‘original’ would set about making certified copies.

^f “Yours” is the reading of the best line of transmission, as I see it, being part of 25% of the total of manuscripts. But the idea is a bit awkward, and the change of one letter solved the ‘problem’, as in the 75%—‘theirs and ours’ is straightforward.

^g Where ‘Lord’ occurs without the definite article, as here, I usually render ‘Sovereign’; with either ‘the’ or ‘our’ I usually render ‘Lord’.

^h As the Message was progressively confirmed in them, they were progressively enriched with the things mentioned.

ⁱ It appears that the early Christians expected the Lord to return at any time, which would tend to have a sobering effect upon one’s style of living.

^j The “Day of our Lord Jesus Christ” includes the accounting for all those who are in Him. So the promise here is major, and verse 9 starts with ‘God is faithful’.

^k “Called into fellowship” sounds like an ongoing exchange.

^l To the ‘Western’ mind it may seem like Paul was being a bit repetitious; but Paul was a Jew—he is making very sure that they know where he is coming from, and where he wants to take them.

^m The name represents the person.

ⁿ They are not being told to repeat things like parrots, but to be in essential agreement about important points.

you be restored^a to the same mind and to the same purpose. ¹¹You see, my brothers, it has been reported to me concerning you, by some from Chloe's household,^b that there are contentions among you. ¹²What I mean is that you are individually saying: "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ!" ¹³Has Christ been divided? It was not Paul who was crucified for you, was it? You were not baptized into the name of Paul, were you?

A disclaimer about baptism

¹⁴I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵lest anyone should say that I had baptized into my own name. ¹⁶O yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus; besides them I do not remember if I baptized anyone else. ¹⁷Because Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel^c—not with eloquent 'wisdom', lest the cross of Christ be emptied of power.^d

The nature of the Gospel

Foolishness to the lost

¹⁸The message of the cross, you see, is foolishness to those who are being wasted,^e but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and confound the shrewdness of the intelligent."^f

²⁰Where is the wise one? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its 'wisdom' did not get to know God, it pleased God to save the believing ones through the 'foolishness' of what was preached—²²since Jews request a sign while Greeks seek after wisdom, ²³but we proclaim a crucified Christ: an offense to Jews, foolishness to Greeks.^g ²⁴Now to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, ²⁵because the 'foolishness' of God is wiser than men, and the 'weakness' of God is stronger than men.^h

^a They have drifted.

^b Paul cites his source.

^c If water baptism were essential to salvation, I fail to see how Paul could have expressed himself in this way—he is clearly implying that water baptism is not an essential part of the Gospel. In the early Church people were baptized immediately, not after weeks of 'preparation', because the convert was publicly breaking with Satan and his kingdom and formally placing himself under Christ's protection. Such baptism is an important procedure, and its value should be explained to any new convert.

^d Dear me, is eloquence the enemy of power? Does not eloquence give glory to the speaker rather than to Christ? Perhaps not inescapably, but the tendency is definitely there.

^e We are accustomed to 'perishing'. The verb here has a considerable semantic area and can be rendered—destroy, kill, deprive, void, lose, perish—depending on the context, but I believe the root idea is 'waste'. The only way to fulfill the purpose for which you were created, to realize your potential, is to turn your life over to Jesus. The alternative is to waste your life, both now and forever. Of course the enemy works to make people think the opposite.

^f See Isaiah 29:14.

^g To the Jews, their Messiah would be a conquering king, and since death on a cross was viewed as a curse (Deuteronomy 21:23, Galatians 3:13), a crucified Messiah was simply unthinkable. What did the Greeks want with someone else's Messiah, especially a dead one—sheer nonsense!

^h We like to forget this, but it is best not to do so. Arrogant servants of Satan often use stronger terms than 'foolishness'—they will use 'repugnant', 'ridiculous', 'intolerable', etc.

God uses ‘nothings’

²⁶Just look at your calling, brothers: not many are wise, not many are powerful, not many are of noble birth, by human standards; ²⁷but God has chosen the foolish things of the world that He might put the wise to shame, and God has chosen the weak things of the world that He might put the strong things to shame; ²⁸and God has chosen the lowly things of the world and the despised things—even the ‘nothings’—that He might nullify the ‘somethings’; ²⁹so that no flesh should boast in God’s presence.^a ³⁰It is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who was made to us wisdom from God—also righteousness and sanctification and redemption^b—³¹so that, as it is written: “He who boasts, let him boast in the LORD.”^c

Not with human wisdom but with God’s power

2 ¹So when I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming God’s testimony^d to you with a ‘superior’ speech or wisdom. ²For I determined to ‘know’ nothing while among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³Also, I was with you in weakness, in fear, and with much trembling. ⁴Yes, my message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith not be in men’s wisdom, but in God’s power.^e

Wisdom for the mature

⁶However, we do speak wisdom among the mature,^f albeit not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are being set aside;^g ⁷but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden^h wisdom that God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸that none of the rulers of this age have understood (because if they had understood, they would not have crucified the Lord of the glory). ⁹However, as it is written:

“Things no eye has seen and no ear has heard,
and no heart of man has imagined,
such things has God prepared for those who love Him.”ⁱ

¹⁰But to us God has revealed them by His Spirit;^a because the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

^a This is the bottom line. Several times the Text declares that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. “Flesh” here refers to human beings.

^b We receive Christ’s righteousness to get started; the sanctification is to keep us clean along the road; the redemption is the final victory. Now really, isn’t that a wonderful salvation? Thank you, Jesus!

^c See Jeremiah 9:24. Since God has given us all we have, to glory in self is wrong.

^d Instead of “testimony”, less than 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘mystery’, to be followed by the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue (as in some versions).

^e How many missionaries and pastors today are following Paul’s example? How many of us know how to demonstrate God’s power? Faith is to be based on power, not human wisdom. If we don’t know how to use God’s power, we had better cry out to Him until we learn how. Certain theological systems virtually condemn their adherents to never use God’s power.

^f This is important. Paul is not championing ignorance or stupidity. In teaching Christians he certainly used God’s wisdom. It was in his evangelizing that he avoided ‘human wisdom’.

^g ‘Being set aside’ how, and when? If God’s people would really be ‘salt’ and ‘light’ (Matthew 5:13-14) they could transform any culture.

^h In the Bible a ‘mystery’ is something hidden, something yet to be revealed, not something ‘mysterious’.

ⁱ Wonderful! Thank you, God! See Isaiah 64:4.

¹¹Now who among men knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? So also no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹²We have not received the spirit of the world^b but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God;^c ¹³which things we also expound, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Holy Spirit,^d interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.

¹⁴Now a soulish^e man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; indeed, he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he who is spiritual evaluates everything, while not being himself subject to anyone's judgment.^f ¹⁶For "who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?"^g But we have the mind of Christ.^h

The nature of the ministry

It is not to be sectarian

3 ¹Brothers, I was not able to address you as spiritual, but as fleshly, as infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk and not solid food, because you were not ready yet. Alas, you are still not ready, ³because you are still fleshly! For since there is envy, strife and divisionsⁱ among you, are you not carnal and acting like ordinary people? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?

God's coworkers

⁵Who then is Paul, who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord has given to each one? ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God keeps making it grow. ⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who makes it grow.^j ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are at one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.^k ⁹Yes, we are God's coworkers; you are God's 'field', God's 'building'.

^a To us has been granted the privilege of having a fuller understanding of God's purposes than was granted to O.T. saints.

^b 'The spirit of the world' evidently must exist. If the reference is not to Satan directly, he is certainly behind it.

^c Evidently one of the things the Holy Spirit wants to do is to illumine us on the subject of God's free gifts—if we would only listen!

^d Note that Paul is plainly stating that he receives instruction from the Holy Spirit. If he could do it, we can too. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Holy", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e That is what the Text says. A 'soulish' person cannot understand spiritual things, which sounds rather like a congenital defect, no spirit—the reference might be to humanoids *à la* Genesis 6 (Matthew 24:37). (I would say that the correct translation of Jude 19 is: "they are 'soulish', not having a spirit". See the footnote at that point.)

^f The same verb is used three times, to which I have given different renderings—'discerned', 'evaluates', 'subject to judgment' (the middle one is in the active voice, the other two in the passive). The king of interpretation is the context, and the verb (*anakrinō*) covers a considerable semantic area.

^g See Isaiah 40:13. Compare John 3:8, where the Lord Jesus says that the Spirit controlled person is like the wind, unpredictable—other people will have trouble figuring him out; when they expect him to 'zig', he will 'zag'.

^h Well now, do we or don't we? How many people do you know who think like Jesus did?

ⁱ Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "and divisions", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^j God is the One who makes things grow. No farmer should call himself an atheist.

^k This is a point worth remembering. The lazy will not get much.

There will be an Accounting

¹⁰According to the grace of God that was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid a foundation, while another builds on it. But let each one be careful how he builds; ¹¹for no one can lay any foundation other than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ.^a ¹²Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³the work of each will become evident; because the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire. Yes, the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If the work that anyone built endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, albeit so as through fire.^b

^a I would say that the primary reference here is to leaders of local congregations, who need to be careful how they 'build' God's 'house'. But I believe it also clearly applies to anyone whose personal life is based on Jesus Christ. Each of us will give an account of how we built our lives on that foundation. Note that we are not offered the option of changing the foundation. Anyone who attempts to do so does not belong to God.

^b Paul is talking about the Day of Christ wherein those in Christ will be called to account. The Text plainly states that what we have done will be tested by fire. Someone who spent most of his time living for himself rather than for Christ's Kingdom will be surrounded by nice, dry straw (all that any fire could ask for!). So the angel aims the blowtorch at the straw—the fire is high, hot, but short-lived. The person is left standing in a pile of fine ash, somewhat the worse for the wear.

The price you pay for not living for Christ's kingdom is to lose your life. That is all it costs, just your life! Consider the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in Luke 9:24-25. Let us begin with verse 23. "If any one desires to come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what will it profit a man to gain the whole world but waste or forfeit himself?" What does the Lord mean when He speaks of losing one's "life"? One does not lose one's soul for love of Christ. Nor is the reference to being killed. Rather, Jesus has in mind the life we live, the accumulated results of our living. All that I have done up to this moment plus all that I will yet do until overtaken by death or the rapture of the Church, whichever happens first—that is the "life" that is at risk (in my own case).

Let us look at our Lord's words a little more closely. There seems to be a contradiction here—if you lose, you save; if you want to save, you lose. How can it work? The following context helps us out. In verse 26 Jesus explains verses 24-25 in terms of His second coming. The parallel passage, Matthew 16:27, is clearer. "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he will repay each according to his deeds." Christ was thinking of the day of reckoning. In other words, "we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10) and "each of us will give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive his due according to what he has done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). I understand that 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 is referring to the same occasion, the day of reckoning. After declaring that Jesus Christ is the only foundation, Paul speaks of different materials that one might use in building on it: "gold, silver, precious stones" or "wood, hay, straw". The point is, our deeds will be tested by fire. If fire has any effect upon gold or silver it is only to purify them, but its effect on hay and straw is devastating! Okay, so what?

Let us go back to the beginning. God created the human being for His glory: to reflect it and contribute to it. I suppose we may understand Psalm 19:1 and Isaiah 43:7 in this way, at least by extension. But Adam lost this capacity when he rebelled against God. For this reason the sentence that weighs against our race is that we "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But the Son came into the world to restore our lost potential. Ephesians 1:12 and 14 tell us that the object of the plan of salvation is "the praise of His glory" (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20). And 1 Corinthians 10:31 puts it into a **command**: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Now then, the point of all this is not to 'ruin' our lives, to take all the 'fun' out of them (as many seem to think). God is not being arrogant, unreasonable, too demanding. Quite the contrary—He is just trying to save us from throwing away our lives. Surely, because the glory of God is eternal (Psalm 104:31), and when I do something for His glory that something is transformed and acquires eternal value—it becomes "gold, silver, precious stones". Works done for the glory of God will go through the fire without harm. On the other hand, what is done with a view to our own ambitions and ideas is "straw". We all know what fire does to straw!

We are a temple of God

¹⁶Do you (pl) not know that you are a temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; because God's temple, which you are, is holy.^a

¹⁸Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become 'foolish' so that he may become wise. ¹⁹Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness";^b ²⁰and again, "The LORD knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are futile."^c ²¹So then, let no one boast in men, for all things are yours: ²²whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, whether the world or life or death, whether things present or things to come—all are yours,^d ²³and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

As stewards we must be faithful

4 ¹Let a man consider us like this: as Christ's subordinates and stewards of God's mysteries.^e ²Moreover, what is required of stewards is that each be found faithful.^f ³So to me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court; in fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am conscious of nothing against myself, although I am not justified by this; it is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and expose the motives of the hearts.^g At that time the praise that comes to each will be from God.^h

No room for boasting

⁶I have illustrated these things using myself and Apollos, brothers, for your sakes, so that you may learn from us not to think beyond what is written,ⁱ that no one of you be puffed up in favor of the one against the other. ⁷Now who is distinguishing you? Or what do you have that you did not receive?^j So if you did indeed

So there it is. To be a slave of Christ means to live with reference to the Kingdom; it means to do everything for the glory of God. In this way the slave "saves" his life because he will be building it with "gold and silver", which will pass through the fire at the judgment seat of Christ without loss. In contrast, the believer who refuses to be a slave of Jesus builds his life with "hay and straw", which will be consumed by the fire—and so he "loses" his life; he lived in vain; the potential that his life represented was wasted, thrown away. What a tragedy!

^a This passage contrasts with 6:19; there each individual believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit, while here the local congregation is stated to be God's temple, with the Holy Spirit indwelling the members. Note that God does not take kindly to any effort to damage His temple.

^b See Job 5:12.

^c See Psalm 94:11.

^d In what sense? I suppose this refers to potential use, not ownership.

^e What does a steward of God's mysteries do? He explains them to others. The function of a teacher is similar.

^f By the owner; see the last clause of verse 4, below.

^g Part of judging correctly is knowing why the accused did it. Since 'knowing the motives of the hearts' is generally beyond us [even our own at times], we had better leave the judging up to the Judge.

^h I was brought up on the AV that says: "then shall every man have praise of God", which led me to believe that everyone would get some praise. However, I believe the Text says something different, as indicated in my rendering. Paul is not affirming that all will get praise (of what use is 'praise' to someone in the Lake of fire?), but that the Judge will distribute whatever praise is merited.

ⁱ Written where? By whom? I suppose the reference is to principles in the Scriptures.

^j Here is the fundamental recipe against boasting. None of us chose who our parents would be, where we would be born, what language would be our native tongue. But these circumstances dictate the oppor-

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receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? ⁸You are already stuffed! You are already rich! You have become ‘kings’ without us! I could wish that you really did reign, so that we might be kings with you too!^a

The cost of being an apostle

⁹For I keep thinking that God has displayed us, the apostles, at the end of the line, like men sentenced to death;^b because we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ while you are wise! We are weak but you are strong! You are esteemed, we are despised! ¹¹To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty; we are poorly dressed, brutally treated, and wander homeless; ¹²yes, we labor, working with our own hands. Upon being reviled, we bless; upon being persecuted, we endure it; ¹³upon being slandered, we exhort. We have been made as the refuse of the world, the off-scouring of whatever, to this moment.^c

Children imitate fathers

¹⁴I am not writing these things to shame you; I am admonishing you as my dear children. ¹⁵Because even if you were to have thousands of tutors in Christ, you would not have many fathers, because I am the one who begot you in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I am urging you, become my imitators.^d ¹⁷That is why I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful son in Sovereign, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every congregation.

Not in word but in power

¹⁸Now some have been puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who have been puffed up, but the power. ²⁰Because the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power.^e ²¹What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a gentle spirit?

tunities that a person will have, quite apart from talents and abilities. Things that were given to us do not form a proper basis for boasting.

^a Presumably a bit of sarcasm.

^b The reference seems to be to a returning Roman commander’s victory march, where some of the conquered enemy soldiers would be displayed at the end of the line, and be executed later.

^c Wow, what a ‘job description’! Any applicants? How many of the plague of self-styled ‘apostles’ in our day meet these qualifications? We need to understand what Paul is saying here. To be looked down on and criticized by believers among whom one has labored is one thing. Local people with personal ambition know how to do that. For God to make us “as the refuse of the world” is something very different. How should we understand this? If we insist on proclaiming a ‘gospel’ that the world considers to be stupid, abject foolishness, we will certainly be ridiculed. But if we insist on biblical values that the world has declared to be ‘hate crimes’, we will certainly be hated and persecuted, treated as refuse. The choice of Hebrews 13:13 is upon us: “So then, let us go out to Him, outside the camp, bearing His disgrace.”

^d Our spiritual children will naturally look to us for example. If people imitate us, how badly will they be damaged?

^e Here is a plain statement. On this basis, how many churches and ministries that you know of are part of God’s Kingdom? Notice that I did not capitalize ‘word’; the reference is presumably to human speech, not the Sword.

The nature of the Christian life*Immorality must be punished*

5 ¹It is actually reported that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as not even pagans talk about^a—that someone has his father’s wife! ²And you are puffed up and not even grieved, so as to exclude the one who has done this deed from your fellowship. ³For I indeed, as present in spirit^b though absent in body, have already judged the one who created this situation, as though I were present: ⁴in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,^c you and my spirit being together, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,^d ⁵we must hand such a one over to Satan for a destruction of the ‘flesh’, that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.^e

^a It was reported that a man had his father’s wife, a type of fornication such that not even the pagans talked about it. However, the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue (following 3.2% of the Greek manuscripts—this includes the earliest ones, that are of objectively inferior quality) affirms that this type of incest does not even exist among the pagans, a plain falsehood. Every conceivable type of sexual perversion has existed throughout human history. Strangely, such evangelical versions as NIV, NASB, LB and Berkley propagate this error.

^b Interpreters have generally spiritualized ‘present in spirit’, but I suspect that it may be literal. A number of people who converted out of Spiritism have told me personally that they used to project their spirits away from their bodies (with demonic assistance), something that Spiritists and Satanists openly avow (they call it ‘astral projection’). When I lived among an indigenous people in the Amazon jungle, the shamans claimed the same thing. At first I resisted the idea, but the accumulated evidence became too strong.

Then I began to think of possible cases in the Bible. In 2 Kings 5:26 Elisha tells Jehazi that his ‘heart’ went along and witnessed what he did. According to 2 Kings 6:12 apparently Elisha projected his spirit over to the Syrian king’s bedroom! How about the Lord Jesus? In Mark 6:47-48 the boat was in ‘the middle of the sea’, or several miles from land (John 6:19), and it was night; yet Jesus ‘saw’ them straining at the rowing’ (He perceived by the eye). In John 1:48 Jesus tells Nathanael that He saw him ‘under the fig tree’ (perceived by the eye), something that was physically impossible; so much so that Nathanael immediately declares Him to be God. (See also Matthew 17:25, and so on.) How about Paul? In Colossians 2:5 Paul says that he ‘observes’ their orderliness. The basic meaning of the verb rendered ‘observe’ is to observe with the physical eye, which implies being within range and with no obstacles. But Paul obviously was not there as he wrote, in fact had never been there. He affirms that it is his spirit that is doing the seeing and rejoicing.

The Protestant Reformation was a result, in part, of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on reason, so Protestants in general have had trouble understanding the spirit world. So the tendency of commentators has been to ‘spiritualize’ Paul’s statement, rather than take it literally. Of course they have done the same with 2 Kings 5:26 and 6:12, not to mention John 1:48. Here in Brazil we have many former Spiritists and Satanists who have been converted and they affirm that they used to project their spirits outside their bodies and go all over the place—several of my former students, now genuinely converted, have told me they used to do it—but they could do so only with the assistance of a fallen angel (demon). Satan’s ‘thing’ is to be like the Most High, so he is always trying to imitate Him; perhaps God’s servants used to know how to do this, only without such assistance [I have heard of a few in our day who still do].

Returning to 1 Corinthians 5, notice that in verse 4 Paul says, “you and my spirit being together”, which sounds sort of literal to me.

^c Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^d Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e I do not understand this. If while in the group the man fell into such sin, how can excommunicating him (verse 13) and turning him over to Satan bring about an improvement? I would expect Satan to lock him up tight. Unless it be that the shock treatment would somehow wake the man up. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Jesus”, to be followed by NIV, LB, TEV, etc.

Down with moral 'yeast'

⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷Therefore purge out the old leaven, so that you can be a new batch, like you are, without yeast. Especially since Christ our Passover has been sacrificed in our place.^a ⁸So then let us observe the feast,^b not with old leaven, nor with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth.

Avoid contaminators

⁹I wrote to you in my letter^c not to associate with fornicators—¹⁰not of course the fornicators of this world, or the greedy, or the swindlers, or the idolaters; since then you would have to exit the world! ¹¹But now I write you not to associate with anyone who calls himself a brother who is a fornicator, or greedy, or an idolater, or abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such.^d

¹²Now just why should it be up to me to judge those who are outside? Will you not judge those who are inside? ¹³Those who are outside God will judge, and you must exclude the wicked one from among you.

Down with lawsuits!

6 ¹How can anyone of you who has a dispute with another dare to have it judged before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints are to be judging the world?^e So if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we

^a Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “in our place”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.

^b Presumably the Passover (our Easter)—having mentioned Christ as our Passover lamb, he applies the idea to their daily life.

^c Evidently this was a prior missive, so this present letter is really number two. Not everything that Paul wrote was inspired: anything not inspired would not be included in the N.T. Canon.

^d Since we cannot exit the world, we are obliged to deal with the sinners in it; but we do so without identifying with them and their life style. But within the circle of believers there is identification, communion, mutual commitment, and a life style very different from that of the world [well, at least it is supposed to be]. What is at stake is not only the spiritual power of the congregation, but also its testimony before the world—someone who wants to keep on sinning like the world has not been transformed and does not belong in the circle, and this should be made very clear to one and all. Paul is saying that they should not do anything that could be construed as an acceptance of his conduct.

^e The question, “Do you not know?” indicates that if the person addressed does not know, he should, and his ignorance is culpable. For Paul to write in this way, his addressees had to have had a reasonable opportunity of knowing, or it would be an unfair gambit on Paul’s part. On such a topic the information should be available in God’s written revelation, and I believe it is. Consider Psalm 149:5-9. “Let the saints exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the nations, and punishments upon the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the written judgment. This honor is for all His saints.” Note that the saints are in their beds! So the activity that is described in the following verses must take place in the spiritual realm. I assume that the ‘kings’ and ‘nobles’ includes both men and fallen angels. It seems clear to me that the intent of the Text is that we be doing this right now, in this life. There is no lack of ‘written judgments’ to be imposed: Zechariah 5:2-4, against thieves and liars; Proverbs 20:10, against those who use diverse weights and measures; Isaiah 10:1-2, against those who make unjust laws; Romans 1:26-32, against homosexuals and a variety of others (note that verse 32 says that “those who practice such things **are** deserving of death”, ‘are’ not ‘were’—since Romans was written after Pentecost, within the Age of Grace and of the Church, this judgment still applies). God’s moral character cannot change; Psalm 34:16 says: “The face of Jehovah is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” Presumably before wiping out the remembrance He will have to cut off the evil people themselves.

will judge angels?^a How much more the things of this life!^b ⁴Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint those who are least esteemed in the congregation to judge!^c ⁵I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is not a single wise man among you who would be competent to judge between a man and his brother? ⁶Instead, brother goes to law against brother, and this before unbelievers! ⁷Actually, the very fact that you have lawsuits among you already represents a defeat for you.^d Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why not rather accept being cheated? ⁸No, you yourselves do the wronging and cheating, and to brothers!

How to avoid inheriting the Kingdom

⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,^e nor catamites,^f nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor the greedy, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor the abusive, nor swindlers can inherit the Kingdom of God, absolutely. ¹¹And that is what some of you were;^g but you were bathed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.^h

*Fornication is **bad!***

¹²All things are ‘permissible’ for me, but not all things are expedient. All things are ‘permissible’ for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.ⁱ Now the body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.^j ¹⁴Further, God both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His power. ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Not ever! ¹⁶Can you

Returning to 1 Corinthians 6:2, the only difference between present and future tense for ‘judge’ is the accent, and since the earliest Greek manuscripts generally do not have accents, in them the verb is ambiguous as to tense. Most, but not all, later manuscripts accent the verb as future and every version that I have seen follows suit. But if Paul is thinking of Psalm 149, then the present tense is correct—in fact, the immediately following passive form of the verb is present tense. I take Paul’s point to be: if we are supposed to be judging the world, how can we possibly ask the world to judge us? To do so is illogical.

^a When will this happen? I do not know, but see the note above. In any case, the implication is clear that we are superior to them.

^b Obviously, if we are to judge the things of this life, it has to be during this life!

^c This is almost cute. In effect Paul is saying that the humblest believer will be a more competent judge than whatever is in the world! Of course, a genuine believer will have the Holy Spirit, who makes the difference.

^d They are allowing themselves to be controlled by the world’s values—clearly a defeat!

^e Note that ‘fornicators’ and ‘adulterers’ receive separate mention, so they cannot refer to the same thing. ‘Adultery’ does not include ‘fornication’, nor vice versa.

^f ‘Catamites’ refers to those who fulfill the role of ‘female’ in anal sex, the ‘passive’ partner. ‘Sodomites’ refers to those who fulfill the ‘male’ role in anal sex. A catamite is someone who participates voluntarily; a victim of rape is altogether different. Please note that the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is emphatic: practicing homosexuals absolutely will not inherit the Kingdom of God—period!

^g Paul makes clear that it is possible to be saved out of any of the practices mentioned, but anyone who dies while still practicing is out, ‘absolutely’.

^h The Spirit is the agent.

ⁱ We have to eat to live, but anyone who lives to eat will face an angry Creator.

^j At first glance this seems awkward: however, that the body is not for fornication is obvious—that is not why the Creator gives us bodies. And we are to consecrate our bodies to the Lord’s service, but how is “the Lord for the body”? I don’t know, unless it be that ‘body’ is used with two different meanings, first referring to our physical body, next referring to the Church.

I CORINTHIANS 7

not know that the one who joins himself with a prostitute is one body *with her*? For “the two,” He says, “will become one flesh.”^a **17**But he who is joined with the Lord is one spirit *with Him*.

18Flee from fornication! Every sin that a man may commit is outside the body, but he who fornicates sins against his own body.^b **19**Do you not know that your^c bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? **20**Because you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.^d

About marriage

7 **1**Now concerning the things about which you wrote to me: it is good for a man not to touch a woman. **2**But because of the fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.^e **3**Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. **4**The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; similarly also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. **5**Do not deprive one another except by mutual consent for a season, so that you may devote yourselves to fasting^f and to prayer, and come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.^g

6Now I say this^h as a concession, not as a command **7**(though I wish that all men were even as I myself; but each has his own gift from God, one like this and one like that). **8**Yes I say to the unmarried and the widows: it is good for them if they should remain even as I;ⁱ **9**but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry; since it is better to marry than to burn.^j

^a See Genesis 2:24.

^b Precisely. Verse 16 above states plainly that whoever joins himself to a prostitute becomes one flesh with her. “The two will become one flesh” is not a poetic expression; it is a medical fact. During coitus there is an exchange of enzymes, such that the participants are affected in their bodies, literally. It follows that a promiscuous person is damaging his body, progressively. But it may be worse even than that. Proverbs 6:32 says: “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul.” Verses 33-35 describe the social consequences, but I believe the participants suffer consequences within themselves as well. I suspect that along with the enzymes goes a bit of the soul, so a professional prostitute has a seriously weakened soul, and a promiscuous male keeps on lousing up his soul, quite apart from the physical consequences. No wonder the Text says to flee!!

^c In 3:16 the pronoun was plural, here it is also plural, but since ‘bodies’ is also plural, the reference appears to be to each person’s body.

^d The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits, “and in your spirit, which are God’s”, following 3.7% of the Greek manuscripts—this includes the earliest ones, that are of objectively inferior quality (it is followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Observe that it is just one wife, and just one husband.

^f Less than 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit “to fasting and”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. (It is a simple case of ‘like ending’.)

^g The whole paragraph is talking about sexual intercourse.

^h I take the pronoun to be cataphoric, referring to what follows (most are anaphoric, referring to something in the prior context).

ⁱ As a practicing Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus would almost certainly have been married, so at this point he is presumably a widower.

^j This is usually understood as ‘burn with passion’, but if practicing fornicators do not enter the Kingdom, the more literal meaning may obtain.

Mixed marriages

¹⁰Now to the married I command (not I but the Lord): a wife is not to be separated from her husband ¹¹(but if she does separate herself,^a let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband), and a husband is not to divorce his wife. ¹²But to the rest I (not the Lord) say: if any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³And a woman who has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are consecrated.^b ¹⁵But if the unbeliever separates, let him separate—in such cases the brother or the sister is not enslaved, but God has called us to peace.^c ¹⁶For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?^d

About other situations

¹⁷Otherwise, as God has distributed to each, as the Lord has called each one, so let him live (this is what I command in all the congregations). ¹⁸Was anyone already circumcised when called? Let him not reverse it.^e Was anyone uncircumcised when called? Let him not be circumcised.^f ¹⁹Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, compared to keeping God's commandments. ²⁰Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. ²¹Were you called while a slave? Do not let it bother you, but if you can really become free, do so. ²²For the one in the Lord who was called while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Similarly, the one who was called while free is Christ's slave. ²³You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. ²⁴Brothers, let each one remain with God in the social condition in which he was called.^g

About virgins

²⁵Now about the virgins I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who has obtained mercy from the Lord to be trustworthy. ²⁶I consider therefore that this is good because of the current distress—that it is good for a man to remain as he is: ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek release. Have

^a Note that it is the woman taking the initiative, for whatever reason.

^b The believing parent consecrates the child to God.

^c In verses 10 and 11, where both are believers (evidently), the Lord forbids divorce and re-marriage. Here in verse 15 the subject is a mixed marriage where the unbeliever wants out (verses 12-14 make clear that the believer is not to take the initiative in a separation). There are those who argue that if the unbeliever leaves, the believer is free to re-marry, but how can that be true? If re-marriage is not allowed if a believing partner leaves (verses 10-11), with what logic can it be argued that the rule changes if the partner is an unbeliever? It simply does not follow. On the contrary, the believer is called upon to make a special effort to win the other. However, if the unbeliever is determined to leave, an effort by the believer to go along at any cost will only prolong a climate of strife, and God has called us to peace. The point of marriage is not to make one's life a hell on earth—it is better to live alone than in unrelenting strife.

^d In any place where the Gospel arrives for the first time, it is predictable that at first only one partner in a marriage will convert. This causes a strained atmosphere in the home, but if they can stick it out, the second partner stands a good chance of converting as well.

^e Attempting to reverse a circumcision was a known surgical procedure at that time, but would be totally unnecessary for a Christian.

^f Dear me, Paul, so why did you circumcise Timothy (Acts 16:3)?

^g We are not to fret, but if the Lord opens the opportunity to improve our situation, I take it that we may (and should) do so, as with the slave.

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you been released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸However, should you marry, you have not sinned:^a and if a virgin should marry, she has not sinned. Still, such will have trouble in the flesh, and I want to spare you.^b

A sense of urgency

²⁹Now I say this, brothers, the time has been shortened, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, ³⁰and those who weep as though not weeping, and those who rejoice as though not rejoicing, and those who buy as though not possessing, ³¹and those who use this world as though not abusing it: because this world's mode is passing away.^c

Marriage again

³²Now I want you to be without anxiety. He who is unmarried cares about the things of the Lord: how he will please the Lord. ³³While he who is married cares about the things of the world: how he will please his wife.^d ³⁴The wife and the virgin are also different. She who is unmarried cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; while she who is married cares about the things of the world: how she will please her husband. ³⁵I am saying this for your own profit, not to put a leash on you, but for what is appropriate, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.^e

³⁶Now if anyone thinks he is behaving inappropriately toward his virgin, if she is past her prime and thus it should be, let him do what he desires: he does not sin; let them marry. ³⁷But he who stands steadfast in his heart, not having necessity, but has control over his own will, and has determined in his heart to preserve his own virginity, does well. ³⁸So then, he who gives in marriage does well, but he who does not give in marriage does better.^f

³⁹A woman is bound by law for as long as her husband lives, but if the man should die, she is free to be married to whom she wishes—only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But she is more blessed if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have God's Spirit.

About things offered to idols

8 ¹Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. ²And if anyone thinks that

^a Verses 26-28^a are addressed to males.

^b Since we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, we should ask His specific direction before taking on such a serious responsibility.

^c If the time was short two thousand years ago, it is now that much shorter. The point is that our lives should revolve around Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, not around our own desires and ambitions. There is no lack of marriage seminars that teach how to make each other happy, as if that were the major purpose in life. Not so. Everything in our lives should be subordinated to the interests of Christ's Kingdom, not stroking each other's ego. We like to forget 1 John 2:15-17, but to do so is not smart.

^d Paul is not being sarcastic; he is just stating a plain fact (as we who are married know).

^e The level of our commitment to Christ and His Kingdom has a direct bearing upon the 'strength' of physical distractions.

^f I suppose that for a couple that is considering marriage, both of them being sincere disciples of Sovereign Jesus, the question should be: "Can we make the greatest contribution to Christ's Kingdom together, or apart?"

Verses 36-38 have given considerable exercise to modern commentators, as also to copyists of Greek manuscripts since the third century. The 'difficulty' appears to have been to understand just what Paul meant by "virgin", which resulted in the variant 'marry', instead of "give in marriage".

he knows anything, he has come to know nothing yet as he ought to know.^a ³But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.^b

Idols are really nothing

⁴Therefore, concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and no one else is God except the One. ⁵For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on the earth (since there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), ⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, out of whom are all things and we into Him, and one Sovereign Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through Him.^c

Respect the other’s conscience

⁷However, this knowledge is not in everyone; but some, with consciousness^d of the idol, still eat it as offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we better off, nor if we do not eat are we worse off.^e

⁹But take care lest somehow this ‘right’ of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ¹⁰For if someone who is weak sees you with your knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience be emboldened to eat things offered to idols? ¹¹And so the weak brother, for whom Christ died, will be wasted because of your knowledge. ¹²But when you thus sin against the brothers and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³So then, if food causes my brother to fall, I will never eat meat again, lest I cause my brother to fall.^f

The ‘rights’ of an apostle

9 ¹Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?^g Are you not my work in the Lord? ²If I am not an apostle to others, yet at least I am to you, because you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. ³My defense to those who are judging me is this: ⁴Do we have no right to eat and drink? ⁵Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, just as the rest of the apostles and the Lord’s brothers^h and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to forego working? ⁷Who ever serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drinkⁱ of its milk? ⁸I am not saying these things as a mere man, am

^a It is probably true that none of us has complete knowledge on any subject. It follows that we should refrain from acting as if we did!

^b That is one way to make sure God knows who you are!

^c Everything starts with the Father, including the possibility that we become His children. Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:10 and John 1:10 make clear that the Son was the principal agent in the Creation (although the Trinity was doubtless involved), which includes our own existence.

^d Instead of “with consciousness of”, less than 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘accustomed to’, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—clearly an inferior proceeding.

^e Spiritually speaking.

^f The ‘fall’ here is serious, including the possibility that he may not get up again. This is sometimes called the ‘law of love’, giving up a right for the sake of a brother.

^g One of the requirements for a replacement for Judas Iscariot was to have seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:22). Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^h This refers to the sons that Mary had with Joseph after Jesus was born. ‘Cephas’ was another name for Peter.

ⁱ Actually the Text says ‘eat’, but milk is a liquid; unless it be that Paul is thinking of cheese, that is derived from milk.

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I? Does not the Law also say the same? ⁹For it stands written in the Law of Moses: “You shall not muzzle an ox that is threshing.”^a Is it really about the oxen that God is concerned,^b ¹⁰or does He surely say it for our sakes? Yes, it was written for us, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should partake of his hope.

To live from the Gospel

¹¹Since we planted spiritual things in you, is it a big deal if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others have a share in this right from you, do not we even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but we put up with everything so as not to cause any hindrance to the Gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who minister the sacred things eat from the temple, and those who serve at the altar have a share in the altar? ¹⁴So also the Lord has instructed those who proclaim the Gospel to live from the Gospel.^c

To forego a right

¹⁵Now I have not used any of these rights, nor have I written these things that it should be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void ¹⁶—I cannot boast because I preach the Gospel, because I am compelled to do so; indeed, woe is me if I do not preach it! ¹⁷(If I do this of my own volition, I have a reward; but if otherwise, I have been entrusted with a commission.) ¹⁸So what is my reward? That when I evangelize I may present the Gospel of Christ^d without charge, so as not to use my rights in the Gospel.^e

All things to all men

¹⁹Though being free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, in order that I might win the more: ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those under law as under law, that I might win those under law; ²¹to those without law as without law (not being without law toward God but under law toward Christ), that I might win those without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now I do this for the sake of the Gospel, so as to become its partner.^f

^a See Deuteronomy 25:4.

^b Obviously human beings are more important to God than are the animals, but God is telling us to treat the animals with some consideration.

^c When was that? When Jesus sent out the twelve and later the seventy, He told them not to take money but to depend on the hospitality of those to whom they ministered. Later on, however, He reversed that instruction, but “to live” refers to basic needs, not luxury.

^d Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “of Christ”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e If you only do something because you are compelled, because you can’t get out of it, you get no credit for it. Paul preaches the Gospel because he has to, he is compelled, so gets no credit. But Paul wants some credit, some reward! So how can he get it? Not by preaching, since that is obligatory—by preaching without charge! Paul has the right to charge but foregoes it so as to get some credit/reward. Evidently this was rather important to him (verse 15)—I confess that I don’t understand why he said it would be better to die.

^f If you are a partner, you get a share of the profits; evidently Paul’s share was being deposited in the Bank of Heaven.

Even an apostle can be rejected

²⁴Do you not know that in a stadium race all the runners run, but one gets the prize? Run like that, so that you may win. ²⁵All athletic competitors exercise general self-control—they do it in order to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. ²⁶So that is how I ‘run’, with a definite goal; that is how I fight, with well-aimed blows. ²⁷Yes, I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, having preached to others, I myself should be rejected.^a

Learn from Israel

10 ¹Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea ²—all were baptized into Moses by the cloud and by the sea—³and all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; because they kept drinking from a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was the Christ.^b ⁵For all that, God was not pleased with most of them—their *carcasses* were scattered around the desert!^c

Examples

⁶Now these things became examples for us, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷And do not become idolaters, just like some of them; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to amuse themselves.”^d ⁸And let us not fornicate, just as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand died!^e ⁹Neither let us test the Christ, just as also some of them did—and were destroyed by the snakes!^f ¹⁰And do not grumble, just as also some of them did—and were executed by the destroyer!^g

¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples and were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends^h of the ages have come. ¹²So then, let him who thinks he stands be careful that he does not fall! ¹³No testingⁱ has overtaken you except what is common to man, and God is competent,^j who will not allow you

^a This is a strong term. If Paul was concerned, we had better be too! Note that this has to do with disciplining the body.

^b I would say that wherever Jehovah appears in the Old Testament it is Jehovah the Son, who became the Christ at His incarnation. But in what sense did they keep “drinking from a spiritual rock that accompanied them”? The physical rock did not move around, presumably, but the “spiritual rock” did.

^c The apostle is not concerned to spare our sensibilities; quite the contrary. He is issuing a very strong warning. God’s blessing does not necessarily indicate His approval.

^d See Exodus 32:6.

^e See Numbers 25:1-9. Another thousand died after the first day, giving a total of twenty-four thousand deaths.

^f See Numbers 21:6-9.

^g See Numbers 14:37 and 16:49. Just because God is no longer striking us down like that, people think they are getting away with doing the same things. They are in for an unpleasant surprise. If the examples were written “for our admonition”, it is because they are still relevant to us.

^h One would expect the singular here, but the Text is plainly plural. Well, I suppose each of the ages (plural) would have a distinct end, and the effect could be cumulative.

ⁱ The Greek word here can mean either ‘test’ or ‘tempt’ (test with a moral nuance), depending on the context. James 1:13 states plainly that God does not tempt us, and since in this context God is clearly involved, the correct choice is ‘test’.

^j The best line of transmission (albeit representing only a third of the manuscripts) has ‘competent’ rather than ‘faithful’; that fits very well with the idea of testing, especially if it is God who is doing it.

to be tested beyond what you can stand, but with the testing will also provide the way out, that you may be able to endure it.^a

Eschew idolatry!

14Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry! **15**I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say.^b **16**The cup of blessing that we bless,^c is it not a sharing of the blood of Christ?^d The bread that we break, is it not a sharing of the body of Christ?^e **17**Since the loaf is one, we, the many, are one body, because we all partake of that single loaf.^f **18**Consider the physical Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

Idol = demon

19So what am I getting at? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? **20**Rather, that the things pagans sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to become participants with the demons.^g **21**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. **22**Are we going to provoke the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than He?

About conscience

23All things are 'permissible' for me,^h but not all things are expedient. All things are 'permissible' for me, but not all things edify. **24**Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*. **25**Eat whatever is being sold in the meat market, asking no question for the sake of conscience; **26**since "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."ⁱ **27**If some unbeliever invites you and you decide to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no questions for the sake of conscience. **28**But if anyone says, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the speaker and of the conscience; since "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."^j **29**'Conscience' I say, not your own but that of the other.

^a This is an important declaration, although I suppose we have all had moments when we wondered if we would continue to 'stand'. The Text affirms that there will always be a way out—not always easy to 'see'.

^b This is cataphoric; they are to judge what follows.

^c Those officiating bless the 'cup', which then blesses those who partake. Yes, to partake worthily brings blessing.

^d Although one finds it difficult to agree with the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, that the words of the one officiating transform the wine into literal blood, Paul evidently takes a very serious view of the 'Lord's Table'. It is not a mere symbolism.

^e "The body of Christ" here refers to His physical body on the cross, just as "the blood of Christ" refers to His blood shed on the cross.

^f Evidently they did not cut/break the bread up into little pieces beforehand—there was a whole loaf on the table.

^g Obviously demons exist. The visible idols represent invisible demons. When you worship an idol you subordinate yourself to its demon. There are 'idols' that are not physical images.

^h Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "for me" (both times in this verse), to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. The difference in meaning is significant.

ⁱ See Psalm 24:1.

^j At first blush this repetition of the quote seems out of place. I suppose Paul's point to be that the stated truth cuts both ways: it allows me to eat or to refrain. Indeed, some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit the repetition, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

Do all to the glory of God

Now just why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? ³⁰If I partake with thanks, why be slandered over something I give thanks for?^a ³¹Therefore, whether you eat or you drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.^b ³²Give no offense, either to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God^c ³³—even as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved.

11 ¹Become my imitators, just as I am Christ's.^d

The nature of Church life

About women

²Now I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in all things and hold the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, while a wife's head is the man and Christ's head is God. ⁴Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her own head—it is one and the same as if it had been shaved. ⁶So if a woman does not cover herself, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.^e

⁷Indeed, a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God:^f but woman is the glory of man.^g ⁸For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹and neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man^h ¹⁰—for this reason the woman needs to have authority upon her head, because of the angelsⁱ—¹¹nevertheless, in the Lord neither is man independent of

^a Paul wants to avoid being slandered, even if it is for doing something good and legitimate.

^b Here is a basic principle that furnishes us with the key for deciding about doubtful things, and things produced by modern technology that are not mentioned in the Bible. If I want to go watch a movie, I should ask myself, "Why do I want to do this? Is it for the glory of God?" If I want to buy a new, super-duper cell phone, I should ask the same questions. If we really want to please God, we will give an honest answer and act accordingly.

^c This text makes clear that during the Church Age there are three categories of people: Jews, non-Jews and the Church (made up of both Jews and non-Jews who are in Christ). Before Pentecost there were two categories: Jews and non-Jews. There are those who think that after Pentecost there were still just two: Church and non-Church, wherein the Church replaced Israel. But it is not so; Israel still exists as a separate entity in God's plan. Chapters nine, ten and eleven of Romans go into some detail on this point.

^d Well now, how many of us would have the nerve to say that to someone? It is a good goal to aim for.

^e This does not make for very popular teaching nowadays, but there it is. But is it "shameful" before God, or before men? If only before men, it is not sin.

^f Paul would appear to be saying that the male represents the image of God in a way that the female does not.

^g If woman is the glory of man, how is man the glory of God? Might it have something to do with the Bride?

^h The Creator's purpose in making the woman was to give the man an appropriate helper, which means that it is the man who is supposed to have a project, to which his wife is supposed to contribute.

ⁱ I believe verse ten constitutes an aside that derives from verse nine, not from verses five and six. The general practice in the versions of adding 'symbol of' before 'authority' is unwarranted, and does damage to the Text. The woman was created for the man, but since there are no female angels, the angels are very fascinated by the female of our species (remember Genesis 6). For this reason women need the protection of male authority. (Those feminists who peremptorily reject any semblance of male authority are just asking for a demon, and what little demon is going to object?)

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woman nor woman independent of man. ¹²Because as the woman came from the man, so also the man comes through the woman;^a but all things are from God.

¹³Judge among yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because that hair has been given for a covering.

¹⁶But if anyone decides to be contentious, neither we nor the congregations of God have any other practice.^b

About the Lord's Supper

Some local abuses

¹⁷Now in giving the following instruction I do not praise you, since you are not coming together for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸Because, to begin, I hear that when you come together in an assembly there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it. ¹⁹For there would really need to be factions among you so that the 'approved' ones may be recognized among you.^c

²⁰So when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. ²¹Because in eating, each one tries to get his meal first,^d and one goes hungry while another gets drunk! ²²Now really, do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise God's congregation, and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? Indeed not!

How the Lord inaugurated it

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also transmitted to you: The Lord Jesus, during the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said: "Take, eat; this is my body that is being broken^e on your behalf; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after they had dined, He took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death,^f until He comes.

Be careful to partake worthily

²⁷So then whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup unworthily^g will be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man examine himself, and then let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹Because he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to himself, not distinguishing

^a That is to say, every man since Adam receives birth through a woman.

^b Back in verse 2 above Paul mentions 'traditions', and traditions are not the same as commandments. To disobey God's commands is sin, but what of disobeying a tradition? The impression I gain is that disobeying a tradition is not sin, although it does have consequences.

^c I take it that Paul is using a bit of irony here, but maybe not—to have levels of society in a congregation there must be criteria to define such levels. But does God want levels of society in a congregation?

^d Compare verses 33-34 below.

^e The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits 'take, eat' (following 8.3% of the Greek manuscripts) and 'broken' (following some 2% of the manuscripts); and so NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. do the same.

^f The bread and the cup have to do with the physical body that died on the cross, not with the Church.

^g About 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "unworthily", to be followed by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.

the Lord's^a body. ³⁰Because of this many among you are weak and sick, and a good many have died.^b

³¹If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we may not be condemned with the world.^c

³³So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together into judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

About spiritual gifts

12 ¹Now concerning the spiritual things, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. ²You know that when you were pagans you were always led toward the mute idols,^d being carried away. ³Therefore I inform you that no one speaking by God's Spirit calls Jesus accursed, and no one can declare Jesus to be Lord^e except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are allotments of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are allotments of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶And there are allotments of activities, but the same God is He who works them all, in all.^f ⁷But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the common good.^g

A list of gifts

⁸So to one a word of wisdom is given, by the Spirit; to another a word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; ⁹to a different one faith, by the same Spirit; to another presents of healings,^h by the same Spirit; ¹⁰to another workings of mir-

^a The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits 'Lord's' (following just 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, to be followed in turn by such versions as NASB and LB). Here in Brazil there are many who claim, based on this variant, that 'the body' here is the church, not Jesus' physical body. So they walk around, trading bread and wine with each other, laughing, talking, slapping each other on the back, having a general good time [their way of distinguishing the church]. Surely the appropriate way to 'remember the Lord's death' is to be in an attitude of penitent thanksgiving, confessing any sin, renewing one's commitment—this is something you do alone with God. Those who party instead of examine may well discover that they were partaking unworthily.

^b Ever since the Flood the Creator has imposed and exacted the death penalty for those who shed innocent blood (Genesis 9:5-6). There are dozens of passages in the Old Testament that deal with the theme of blood guiltiness. Here are a few: Genesis 21:12, "shall surely be put to death"; Exodus 21:14, a murderer was even to be dragged away from the altar and killed; Numbers 35:31, "you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer, ...he shall surely be put to death"; 2 Kings 24:4, "he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD **would not pardon**". Here in verses 27 and 30 Paul says that God had killed 'a good many' because they were 'guilty of the blood of the Lord'. Romans 1:32, written decades after Pentecost, affirms that murderers are still deserving of death. We all need the shed blood of God's Lamb for cleansing from sin, but please do not take it lightly!

^c Remember Hebrews 12:6.

^d By whom or what? I would say that it was by Satan's emissaries, in one way or another.

^e Of course anyone, including demons, can mouth the phrase, 'Jesus is Lord'; Paul is talking about personal commitment.

^f If gifts, ministries and activities are all allotted by God, then the life of any congregation is supposed to be under His direct control.

^g Nothing that God gives is with the intent of feeding our ego.

^h There is no such thing as 'the gift of healing', at least not in the Text. 'healings' is always a noun, not a verb, and is always plural; 'gifts' is also always plural, never singular. So the Spirit distributes gifts or presents of healings. That said, it also appears to be true that certain people receive an unusual number of such presents, giving rise to a 'ministry of healing'.

acles, to another prophecy, to another discernings of spirits;^a to a different one kinds^b of languages, to another interpretation of languages. **11**However, the one and the same Spirit produces all of these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.^c

An analogy from the body

12Now just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of that one body, though being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. **13**For we also were all baptized into one body by one Spirit^d—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and were all given to drink into one Spirit.^e **14**For in fact the body is not one part but many. **15**If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” it would not therefore cease to be of the body. **16**And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” it would not therefore cease to be of the body. **17**If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would the smelling be? **18**But God has really placed the members in the body, each one of them, just as He pleased.^f **19**(If the whole were just one member, where would the body be? **20**But in fact the parts are many but the body one.)^g

21Further, the eye cannot say to the hand, “I do not need you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I do not need you.” **22**Much to the contrary, those members of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary. **23**And the parts of the body that we consider to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentables have special modesty, **24**while our presentables do not need it. Yes, God has blended the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacks it, **25**so that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another; **26**and if one member suffers, all the members

^a Why ‘discernings’ (pl), which is what the Text says? I suppose one could say it was discerning at different times, but if a gift is used more than once, that meaning is automatic. Could it refer to the different kinds of spirit beings? I can think of five: the Holy Spirit, good angels, demons (fallen angels), a normal human spirit, and a projected human spirit (all of which are usually invisible to us, which is why special discernment is needed). I would now say that humanoids (demon with woman) should be added to the list.

^b The Text plainly says ‘kinds’ (plural) of languages. I never understood this until I heard a student of mine using more than one language. I am a linguist (PhD) and I know when I am listening to a real language (it has structure). This student had (and presumably still has) one language for worship, another for intercession, another for warfare, and I think there was at least one more—they were very different, but were clearly real languages. Later I got to know a competent surgeon who has at least four languages. Whoever claims to have the gift of tongues should have more than one; after all, in all Bibles ‘tongues’ is plural, and plural means more than one.

^c No one gets a gift just because he wants it; the Holy Spirit has His own criteria for distributing them. However, in verse 31 below we are commanded to desire the best gifts. We are to ask, and the Holy Spirit takes it from there.

^d It is the Holy Spirit who places us into the Body of Christ.

^e The imagery here seems awkward; but if you drink something, it is then inside you, and once regenerate we have the Holy Spirit inside us. But He is much, much bigger than we are, so we wind up inside Him (perhaps a little like swallowing water while swimming).

^f This is true of our physical bodies, but it is also true of any congregation.

^g To the ‘Western’ mind this may seem redundant, but recall that Paul was a Jew. Can you imagine a body that is nothing more than a huge, monstrous tongue?

should suffer along, or if one member is honored, all the members should rejoice along.^a

Functions in the Church

²⁷Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸And those whom God has appointed in the Church are: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; after that miracles, then^b presents of healings, helps, administrations, kinds of languages. ²⁹All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not miracle workers, are they? ³⁰All do not have presents of healings, do they? All do not speak languages, do they? All do not interpret, do they?^c ³¹But earnestly desire the best gifts.

About agape love

13 And now I show you a most excellent way.^d ¹If I speak the languages of men, even of angels,^e but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or

^a Since both the *Textus Receptus* and the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue have ‘suffer’ and ‘rejoice’ in the Indicative (following 60% of the Greek manuscripts), most versions do too. But the 40% includes the best line of transmission and has the verbs in the Subjunctive. Since Paul is applying the figure of a body to people, it is obvious that although we should share, we are not obliged to do so, and often do not.

^b It should be observed that the terminology here is clearly hierarchical: ‘1st, 2nd, 3rd, then, then...’ (similar lists in other places lack this terminology) [the Kingdom of God is not a democracy]. Next, if God has appointed these functions, there must be a good reason for them, and to deliberately exclude any of them is to go against God. Here in Brazil, with a few exceptions, the churches have no place for teachers; they simply are not allowed. The consequences are not pretty.

Presumably even the most ardent ‘cessationist’ will grant that “teachers”, “helps” and “administrations” are still around. But this letter was written around 55 AD, well into the Church Age, therefore. Why would God “appoint in the Church” things that would be extinguished in a few decades. If miracles come “after” teachers, how can miracles be gone if teachers are still here? We have the command to “earnestly desire the best gifts”, so which ones are the best? Presumably those at the top of the hierarchical list. Why would God command us to earnestly desire a gift like apostleship, if He was going to extinguish it before the end of the first century? In such an event the command would be meaningless for the last 1900 years!

^c The Greek grammar of verses 29 and 30 is plain: no gift is given to everybody—not everyone is an apostle and not everyone speaks languages. Those churches that teach that speaking in tongues is the necessary sign of being ‘baptized in the Spirit’ (and until you are ‘baptized’ you are a 2nd class citizen, if a citizen at all), have done untold damage to their people. Since the Holy Spirit simply does not give ‘tongues’ to everybody, those who do not get it are out in the cold. But the social pressure is intolerable, so many end up faking it. Since many of the leaders are also faking it, the social problem is solved: the person is ‘in’. But since Satan is the source of all lies, someone who fakes it is living a lie and invites Satan into his life. I have been in many Pentecostal, neo-pentecostal, charismatic, whatever churches and have heard thousands of people ‘speaking in tongues’—a large majority were faking it, while a few were speaking a real language, but under demonic control. A church that teaches a lie invites Satan into the church, and he does not hesitate. Of course some had the genuine gift.

^d Most versions oppose love to the gifts, either by calling it ‘more excellent’ or by adding the definite article (that is not in the Text) ‘the most excellent’. I seriously doubt that the author had that in mind. The term *hyperbolê* refers to an extraordinarily high level of quality, but is not inherently exclusive. Had Paul put the definite article it would be exclusive, but he did not. Since God is not the author of confusion, and since He gives both gifts and love, I would say that they are supposed to work together. See 14:1 below.

^e I would say that this is an argument *a fortiori*, which being freely translated would be, “If I speak the languages of men, or even of angels (if there were such a thing).” Since angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:13-14) and do not normally have physical bodies (although they can materialize in our world), they do not have literal tongues and ears, and consequently do not use sound to communicate among themselves—I suppose they use some sort of thought transference (something we cannot do, at least not yet). The claim of any group that calls the gibberish they speak an angelic language I consider to be a plain falsehood, besides being a pitiful insult to the angels.

a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains,^a but have not love, I am nothing. ³Even if I give away all my possessions and hand over my body to be burned,^b but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love described

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy; love does not brag, is not proud, ⁵is not indecent, is not self-seeking, is not ‘short-fused’, is not malicious;^c ⁶it does not take pleasure in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷it bears all, believes all, hopes all, endures all;^d ⁸love never fails.

Love contrasted

Now as for prophecies, they will be set aside; as for languages, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will be superseded; ⁹since we know in part and prophesy in part. ¹⁰But whenever the complete should come, then the ‘in part’ will be done away with. ¹¹(When I was a small child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of the child.) ¹²Because now we see blurred images as in a metal mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also am fully known.^e

^a Evidently it takes a special level or quality of faith to actually move a mountain, a level to which I myself have yet to attain.

^b We have here a rather bothersome set of textual variants. For those who can handle Greek I reproduce the statement of evidence from my Greek Text:

καυθησομαι f³⁵ (50.6%) OC || *καυθησομαι* C (44.7%) HF,RP,TR,CP || *καυθησεται* (1%) || *καυθη* (0.8%) || *καυχησομαι* P⁴⁶ ⲘA,B (1.5%) NU || *καυχσομαι* 048 (0.5%) || four further variants (0.8%).

Until 1991, when the collations for select variant sets done by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Germany appeared, statements of evidence presented the Future Subjunctive form (that of the *Textus Receptus*) as being attested by the heavy Byzantine majority. Since Greek grammar does not have a Future Subjunctive, there were those who made sport of the *Textus Receptus* for reproducing a non-existent form—usually they were partisans of the Aorist Subjunctive form, that changes the verb and is attested by only 1.5% of the manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality). We now know that the real majority form is the Future Indicative, but since it immediately follows *iva*, that usually takes the Subjunctive, many scribes may have made the change virtually without thinking. The verb ‘to boast’, as in the eclectic Greek text, is totally out of place here—how can you boast with love?

^c All the negative qualities mentioned derive from self.

^d Wow! But presumably *agape* love is not blind; it starts out by bearing, believing, hoping and enduring, until confronted with objective contrary evidence. God is love, but He is not blind, and neither is He deceived.

^e Verses 8^b-10 have received more than their fair share of mistreatment, partly because commentators have not linked verse 12 to them (seeing verse 11 as parenthetical). Consider verse 10: “But whenever the complete should come, then the ‘in part’ will be done away with.” If we can pinpoint the ‘then’, we will have also pinpointed the ‘when’; and verse 12 pinpoints the ‘then’. When will we see ‘face to face’, when will we know as we are known? 1 John 3:2 has the answer: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” It is at the return of Christ that we will see ‘face to face’, so “whenever the complete should come” refers to Christ at His second coming. The problem with ‘prophecy’, ‘tongues’ and our present ‘knowledge’ is that they are ‘in part’, but after the return of Christ we will have no further need for them. Since Christ has not returned yet, these ‘in part’ things are still certainly with us. The claim that ‘the complete’ refers to the completed New Testament canon and that the miraculous gifts ceased when the last shovel of dirt fell on the Apostle John’s grave is an historical falsehood, besides doing violence to the Text. Christians who lived during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries, whose writings have come down to us, affirm that the gifts were still in use in their day. No 20th or 21st

¹³For now these three obtain: faith, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love.^a

Prophecy is better than Tongues

14 ¹Pursue love, and desire the spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²Because he who speaks in a 'language' is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands; in spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to people.^b ⁴The one speaking in a 'language' edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the congregation. ⁵I could wish^c that you all spoke in 'languages', but even more that you might prophesy; because the one prophesying is greater than the one speaking in 'languages'^d (unless he interprets),^e so that the congregation may receive edification.

Messages need to be intelligible

⁶Now then, brothers, what good will I do you if I come to you speaking in 'languages' instead of addressing you with revelation, or with knowledge, or with prophecy, or with teaching? ⁷Take lifeless things like a flute or a harp; if they make no distinction in the notes when they produce sound, how will it be known what is being piped or harped? ⁸Also a trumpet; if it gives an indistinct sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹So it is with you: if you do not deliver an intelligible message with the 'language', how will it be known what is being said? You will just be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are probably a great many kinds of sounds in the world, and none of them is without significance. ¹¹But if I do not know the force of the sound, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and he will be a foreigner to me.

¹²And you too: since you are zealous for spiritual things, aim at the edification of the congregation, that you may *all* grow. ¹³Therefore the one speaking in a 'language' should pray that he may interpret.^f ¹⁴For if I pray in a 'language', my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵So what then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will also pray with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, but I will also sing with the mind. ¹⁶Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the outsider say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since

century Christian, **who was not there**, is competent to contradict them. If it had really been the Holy Spirit's purpose to tell us that the *charismata* would disappear in a few decades, He presumably could have done a much better job of it.

^a We will not need faith and hope in Heaven, but love will continue.

^b Prophecy is not only for foretelling the future, but all true prophecy comes directly from God. Many churches today give 'prophecy/prophecy' an unbiblical meaning, wherein the people tell each other all the good things they hope will happen to them. That is just wishful thinking, not true prophecy.

^c The verb here is ambiguous as to mode; it could be either Indicative or Subjunctive. Since Paul has already stated that not everyone receives 'languages', and that the Holy Spirit distributes as He chooses, the Subjunctive is the correct choice.

^d For someone to argue that he is being humble in seeking and using the lesser gift will not pass muster, because in 12:31 we are **commanded** to seek the best gifts.

^e According to verse 27 below, only one interpreter should perform his function during a given meeting. So if someone says he is going to interpret his own language, he must have the genuine gift and be able to interpret any other languages. (I have witnessed no end of people faking a language and then faking its interpretation.)

^f I do not understand this, since someone with the gift of interpretation does not need to ask. If no interpreter is present, perhaps the speaker could ask God to give him the interpretation.

he does not know what you are saying? ¹⁷You, of course, give thanks quite well, but the other is not edified.

Paul's example

¹⁸I thank my God speaking in 'languages' more than you all,^a ¹⁹but in the congregation I would rather speak five words with my understanding, precisely so as to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a 'language'.

²⁰Brothers, stop thinking like children—well, in malice be 'infants', but in thinking be adults. ²¹In the law it stands written:

"I will speak to this people in foreign languages
and with different 'lips',

but not even then will they listen to me,"^b says the LORD.

²²Therefore the 'languages' are for a sign, not to believers but to unbelievers;^c while prophesying^d is not for unbelievers but for believers. ²³So if the whole congregation comes together and all are speaking in 'languages', but outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are raving? ²⁴But if everyone is prophesying, and an unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is reproved by all, he is examined by all. ²⁵And thus the secrets of his heart are exposed, and so, falling on his face he will worship God, affirming, "Truly God is among you!"

There are limits

²⁶So what goes on, brothers? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a 'language', has a revelation, has an interpretation.^e Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷If anyone speaks in a 'language', let it be two—at the most three—and in turn, and let one interpret.^f ²⁸But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church; let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others evaluate.^g ³⁰But if another who is sitting by receives a revelation, the first should stop speaking. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³²Yes, spirits of prophets are subordinate to prophets.^h ³³Further, God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

^a Since Paul obviously would not use a 'language' in public, he made heavy use of them when alone with God. People who follow Paul's example have told me that it recharges their spiritual 'battery' in short order. No wonder Paul did it!

^b See Isaiah 28:11-12 and Deuteronomy 28:49.

^c Like on the day of Pentecost, to be a 'sign' a 'language' would have to be one that the unbeliever knew, but that the speaker would have no way of knowing. If the unbeliever thinks you are raving (verse 23), where is the 'sign'? To argue that 'tongues' is the sign that you have been 'baptized in the Spirit' does not follow from this verse, since that would be for believers.

^d The term here can mean either 'prophecy' or 'prophesying'; the context calls for the second option. God normally speaks through believers, not unbelievers.

^e Can it be that there was a little competition going on?

^f Since someone with the gift of interpreting can interpret any and all such utterances, there should be only one interpreter at work during a particular session.

^g Prophecy must always be evaluated.

^h A prophet cannot control what messages he receives from God, but he can control when and how he delivers them (and may even decide not to).

Wives are not to speak

As in all the congregations of the saints, ³⁴your wives^a should keep silent in the assemblies, for they are not permitted to speak, but to be in subordination, as the law also says. ³⁵If they want to learn about something, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for women to speak in church.^b ³⁶Or was it from you that the Word of God went forth? Or was it only to you that it came?^c

Paul gets 'authoritative'

³⁷If anyone thinks that he is a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write to you are the Lord's commands.^d ³⁸But if anyone is ignorant, let him remain so.^e

³⁹So then, brothers, seek to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in 'languages'.^f ⁴⁰Let all things be done properly and in order.

About resurrection

A review

15 ¹Now, brothers, I want to add information to the Gospel that I proclaimed to you, that you also received, and in which you stand; ²through which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word that I proclaimed to you—unless you believed in vain.^g ³Because I transmitted to you at first that which I also received:^h that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve.ⁱ ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, while some have

^a The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits 'your' (following some 3% of the Greek manuscripts), which allows the translation 'women' rather than 'wives', as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. Since 'wives' excludes single women, the difference is significant.

^b The crucial factor here is authority, and the underlying need is to protect the structure of the home, the foundational unit of society, including the church. If a woman teaches her husband in church, crossing the street to their house will not make her want to submit to him; the human being just does not work that way. That is why the Text does not allow for female pastors or teachers, since to teach is to exercise authority. But here in verses 34 and 35 Paul goes even further; to protect the husbands' authority, wives should not publicly request an explanation from pastor or teacher, since that could allow a wife to play the teacher against her husband in the home. If a wife requests an explanation from her husband, and he does not know the answer, he can consult the pastor and then transmit the explanation—this preserves the authority structure in the home (which goes back to Genesis 3:16).

^c Either of these situations would constitute a special privilege, which could give rise to a little spiritual pride.

^d Was Paul on an ego trip, or was he aware that he was writing under inspiration? Since he says something similar in a number of his letters, it is clear that he believed he was writing Scripture.

^e I do not understand this. If the definition of "ignorant" here is one who does not do the acknowledging required in verse 37, then Paul may be saying that such a person is not worth arguing with.

^f Here is the inspired conclusion to the extended discussion of the charismatic gifts. Isn't it strange that most churches disobey this verse, in one way or another? 'Traditional' churches tend to forbid not only tongues but also prophecy (to 'seek' it is totally out of the question). 'Pentecostal' churches generally elevate tongues above prophecy, which is plainly contrary to the Text.

^g Is this just a 'scarecrow'?

^h Received from whom? From God, either directly, or indirectly (through people like Peter).

ⁱ Evidently 'the Twelve' became like a technical term to refer to the recognized group of apostles. When Jesus first appeared to that group during the evening of Resurrection Day, there were actually only ten present—the Iscariot was no longer a member and Thomas was absent.

fallen asleep.^a ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸And last of all He was seen by me also, like one born out of season. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me has not been in vain; in fact, I have worked harder than all of them—well, not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹So whether it was I or they, thus we preached and thus you believed.

Resurrection is a fact

¹²Now if Christ is being proclaimed as having been raised from among the dead, how can some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is empty, and so is your faith! ¹⁵Further, we are even discovered to be false witnesses of God, because we have testified about God that He raised the Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if no dead are raised, neither has Christ been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If it is only for this life that we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.^b

The sequence of events

²⁰But indeed, Christ has been raised from the dead; He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For since death came through a man, resurrection of the dead also came through a man.^c ²²For as all in Adam are dying, so also all in the Christ will be made alive.^d ²³But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ at His coming; ²⁴then the end,^e when He hands over the Kingdom to the God and Father, whenever He puts an end to every ruler and all authority and power. ²⁵Because it is necessary that He reign until He has put all the enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.^f ²⁷For “He has put all things under His feet.”^g But when it says that all things have been subordinated, it is obvious that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸Now whenever all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Consequences of denial

²⁹Otherwise, what will they do who are being baptized in place of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, just why are they being baptized in the place of

^a A euphemism for death used mainly of believers in the New Testament.

^b We would be ‘pitiable’ because of contrast between reality and our expectations—our high hopes would be dashed; the higher the hopes, the greater the disappointment. The Christian lifestyle is the best available, even without a resurrection. Paul comes at the question from several angles precisely because the resurrection of Christ is the center piece of our faith. Without it there is no Gospel.

^c Although Jesus was God, it was as a man that He defeated Satan.

^d Since all human beings are in Adam, all are dying; but it is only those who are in Christ who will be made alive.

^e The ‘first’ resurrection refers to that of the saved (the ‘second’ being that of the lost), and apparently occurs in three stages: 1) Christ, the firstfruits, and those He took with Him at that time; 2) the Rapture; 3) after the Millennium.

^f Death is definitely our enemy, having been introduced into human experience by sin.

^g See Psalm 8:6.

the dead?^a ³⁰And why do we face danger every hour? ³¹I die every day^b—so I affirm by the boasting about you that I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³²If I fought human ‘animals’ in Ephesus,^c what did I gain? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”^d ³³Stop kidding yourselves: evil associations corrupt good habits. ³⁴Sober up righteously, and stop sinning, for some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.^e

A philosophical objection

³⁵But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” ³⁶Ignorant, what you plant is not brought to life unless it dies. ³⁷And what you plant is a bare seed (perhaps of wheat or some one of the others); you do not plant the body that it will become. ³⁸But God gives it a body just as He determined, to each of the seeds its own body. ³⁹All flesh is not the same flesh: that of humans is one kind, and the flesh of animals is another,^f that of fish is another, that of birds is yet another. ⁴⁰There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one, while that of the earthly is another. ⁴¹There is one splendor of the sun, another splendor of the moon, and another splendor of the stars; and star differs from star in brightness.

⁴²The resurrection of the dead is like that: the body is ‘planted’ in deterioration and it is raised in incorruptibility; ⁴³it is ‘planted’ in dishonor and it is raised in glory; it is ‘planted’ in weakness and it is raised in power; ⁴⁴it is ‘planted’ a natural body and it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.^g

⁴⁵So also it is written: “The first man, Adam, became a living being”;^h the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was of the earth, of soil; the second man was the Lordⁱ from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the earth-man, just so are the

^a To be ‘dead’, they were once alive, and will be judged on the basis of what they did while alive; once dead their account is closed. So Paul is here presumably referring to those who are replacing the dead in the ranks of believers by being baptized. If there is no resurrection, what is the point of doing so, especially if all you are going to get is persecution?

^b Paul could not have been referring to actual physical death, obviously, since Hebrews 9:27 affirms that it is appointed to men to die only once (no re-incarnation). He may well have faced possible death often enough, but I suppose he is referring to dying to himself, to his own ambitions, ideas and wishes, so as to embrace God’s will.

^c Many versions have Paul actually fighting wild animals, but had he done so as a punishment in an arena, he would have lost his Roman citizenship, which he claimed to have until the end. (And presumably the only place in the city of Ephesus where you could fight with wild animals would be in the arena.) The Text has ‘against man’, that the above mentioned versions give as ‘for human purposes’ or ‘in the manner of men’. But 16:9 refers to many adversaries in Ephesus, and if their tactics were especially nasty, Paul may have felt it appropriate to liken them to animals.

^d See Isaiah 22:13.

^e Dear me, what is Paul saying? As long as anyone around us does not know about God, we should be ashamed. Since he speaks of ‘evil associations’ and ‘sobering up’, I suppose that they had not made a clean break with their surrounding culture, and their former associates were not seeing all that much difference in their lifestyle. A clean break would require an explanation.

^f Human meat is not the same as animal meat!

^g The spiritual body is still a body. Verses 42-44 are describing the saved, not the lost.

^h See Genesis 2:7.

ⁱ The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits ‘the Lord’ (following 2.4% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality); and so NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. do the same—now really, to omit ‘the

earth-people; and as was the heaven-man, just so are the heaven-people. ⁴⁹And just as we have borne the image of the earth-man, we should also bear the image of the heaven-man.^a

Our turn is coming

⁵⁰Now this I say, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither will deterioration inherit incorruptibility. ⁵¹And now, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed ⁵²—in a split second, in an eye twinkle, at the last trumpet—the trumpet will blast and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. ⁵³Because this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. ⁵⁴So whenever this corruptible puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality, then this written word will happen: “Death has been swallowed down into victory.”^b

⁵⁵“Where, O Death, is your sting?

Where, O Hades, is your victory?”^c

⁵⁶The stinger of death is sin, and the adjunct of sin is the law.

⁵⁷Now thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! ⁵⁸So then, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Concluding topics

About a special collection

16 ¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, you must do just as I instructed the congregations in Galatia. ²On the first day of the week, each of you should set something aside, saving up as he is being prospered, that there be no collections when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send whomever you approve by letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴But should it be fitting that I go as well, they will go with me.^d

Personal plans

⁵Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am coming through Macedonia). ⁶And perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even winter, that you may send me on my way, wherever I go. ⁷I do not wish to see you now just in passing, since I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸So I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹because a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

This and that

¹⁰Now if Timothy should come, see to it that he may be with you without fear,^e because he does the Lord’s work just as I do. ¹¹Therefore no one should

Lord’ is clearly an inferior reading, and to do so on such slender evidence is irresponsible and reprehensible.

^a Since both the *Textus Receptus* and the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue have the Indicative here (‘we will bear’), almost all versions so read. But over 80% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have the Subjunctive, which I have followed. It is not automatic; it is up to us.

^b See Isaiah 25:8. This whole paragraph is addressed to “brothers” (verse 50).

^c See Hosea 13:14. Hades is not the Lake of fire. Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘death’, instead of “Hades”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^d Paul clearly considers that he is in charge.

^e Presumably about having his physical needs supplied.

despise him;^a but send him on his way in peace, that he may come to me; I am expecting him along with the brothers.^b

¹²Now about brother Apollos: I repeatedly urged him to go to you with the brothers, but he just did not want to go at this time; he will go whenever he has an opportunity.

¹³Watch! Stand firm in the faith! Be courageous! Be strong! ¹⁴Do all you do in love.

¹⁵Now brothers, you know that the household of Stephanas is the firstfruits of Achaia and that they have really devoted themselves to ministering to the saints, ¹⁶so I urge you to submit to such people, to all the fellow-workers and laborers. ¹⁷I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they have supplied; ¹⁸for they refreshed my spirit and yours; so give recognition to such men.

Final greetings

¹⁹The congregations of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla, with the congregation in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. ²⁰All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

²¹I, Paul, personally sign this greeting.^c ²²If anyone does not love^d our Lord Jesus Christ,^e let him be accursed. The Lord is coming!^f

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ²⁴My love is with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

^a I suppose it could be because he was young.

^b In passing we may note that there was evidently quite a bit of traffic between the congregations in different places.

^c The letter was dictated to a scribe or secretary, but Paul wrote the last bit himself: this was his signature, authenticating the letter.

^d The verb here is *filew*, not *agapaw*. We must be fond of the Lord, or be 'accursed'. How many sermons have you heard on that subject? (People who think of God as an angry old 'man' are not going to be fond of Him, but if they think in such terms, they do not really know Him.)

^e The eclectic Greek text currently in vogue omits 'Jesus Christ' (following some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality); and so NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc. do the same—ho hum. I have supplied 'our' on the basis of 58% of the manuscripts, including the best line of transmission.

^f All commentators appear to be in agreement that *Maranatha* is a transliteration of an Aramaic expression [although I would have expected Paul to use Hebrew] made up of two words, but there is disagreement over how to make the division. It could be 'maran atha', meaning 'the Lord has come', or 'marana tha', meaning either 'the Lord is coming' or 'O Lord, come'. All three make good sense, so take your pick.

The Second Epistle of Paul to the

CORINTHIANS

Opening Considerations

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and brother Timothy,^a to the church^b of God that is in Corinth, together with all the saints throughout Achaia: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Sovereign^c Jesus Christ.

Praise for deliverance

³All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion^d and God of all encouragement, ⁴who encourages us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in whatever affliction, by means of the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.^e ⁵Because just as the sufferings of the Christ flow over into us,^f so also our encouraging overflows, through Christ. ⁶Now then, if we are afflicted, it is for the sake of your encouragement and deliverance, that are effective for enduring the same sufferings that we also are suffering ⁷(yes, our hope concerning you is steadfast);^g if we are encouraged, it *also* is for the sake of your encouragement and deliverance, since we know that you will share in the encouragement just as you do in the sufferings.^h

⁸And so, brothers, we do not want you to be in ignorance concerning the affliction that came upon us in Asia: we were under extreme pressure, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹Yes, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we not place confidence in ourselves, but in the God who raises the dead;ⁱ ¹⁰He did deliver us from that deadly peril, and still delivers; in whom we trust that He will keep on delivering, ¹¹you also

^a He acknowledges a junior partner.

^b Since there were probably several local congregations meeting in homes in Corinth, not to mention “throughout Achaia”, I have rendered “church”. Note that Paul obviously intended that his letter have a wide circulation. Rather than give up their copy, would not the congregation that received the ‘original’ set about making verified copies to distribute to other locales? (Such a procedure would give us the beginnings of a ‘majority text’ in that region from the start.)

^c Where ‘Lord’ occurs without the definite article, as here, I usually render ‘Sovereign’; with either ‘the’ or ‘our’ I usually render ‘Lord’.

^d Literally, ‘the compassions’ or ‘the mercies’. I suppose the point to be that He is the Source of all genuine compassion (you won’t get any from Satan).

^e One important reason God sends suffering our way is so that we can help others later.

^f We get our share of suffering, we participate in Christ’s sufferings—Colossians 1:24 and 1 Peter 4:13. Evidently for God’s Kingdom to increase among men, as we continue to undo Satan’s works in the world, we have to suffer.

^g I take it that he is affirming his confidence that they will not cave in under the suffering.

^h We cannot stop people from going through their share of suffering, but we can encourage them.

ⁱ If you look to the God who heals the sick, it is because you are sick; if you look to the God who raises the dead, it is because you are facing death. Paul evidently figured he had been pretty close.

adding your cooperation in prayer,^a on our behalf; that thanks may be given by many persons for the gift bestowed on us by means of many, on your behalf.^b

A change of plans

¹²Now this is our boast: the testimony of our conscience that we have conducted ourselves in the world with openness and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and especially toward you. ¹³For we do not write you any other things than what you can read and understand;^c and I do hope that you will keep on understanding to the end ¹⁴(as indeed some of you have acknowledged) that we are your boast, just as you are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus.^d

¹⁵It was in this confidence that I was planning to come by you first, ¹⁶and by you to proceed into Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia (that you might benefit twice),^e and then to be sent by you on my way to Judea.^f ¹⁷Now then, when I was deciding this, I was not acting frivolously, was I? Or the things I decide, do I decide according to the flesh, so that with me there would be both “Yes, yes” and “No, no”? ¹⁸As God is faithful, our word to you was not “Yes” and “No”,^g ¹⁹because the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy^h—was not “Yes” and “No”. In fact, with Him it has *always* been “Yes”, ²⁰because all the promises of God in Him are “Yes”; indeed, in Him they are “Amen”, that there be glory to God through us.ⁱ ²¹Now He who establishes us together with you into Christ, and who anointed^j us, is God, ²²who also sealed us and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.^k

The change explained

²³For my part, I call on God as witness, upon my soul, that it was to spare you that I have not yet returned to Corinth. ²⁴(Not that we have control over your faith,^l but we work with you for your joy, for it is by faith that you stand firm.)

2 ¹Actually, I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow. ²For if I make you sorrowful, then who will make me glad, besides the one whom I made sorrowful? ³And I wrote this very thing to you so as

^a Prayer makes a difference.

^b They will get a return on their ‘investment’, the time they spent in prayer. Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘our behalf’, as in most versions.

^c I take it that Paul is saying that he never writes with the intention of obfuscating an issue. That would be a good example for everyone to follow.

^d Paul seems to be speaking of a reciprocal boasting, and that before Christ’s Judgment Seat! We probably all know a father and son who are proud of each other; the idea may be similar.

^e The “benefit” is presumably spiritual; Paul seems to be saying that he imparts such benefit wherever he goes. I would like to be able to say the same thing.

^f Here Paul is probably referring to financial help.

^g Paul took a clear stand on things; he was not ambiguous.

^h Paul gives credit to his associates.

ⁱ As we take advantage of the promises, God gets the glory. God’s promises are positive, with the ‘yes’.

^j The anointing is in the past, but the establishing is an ongoing process—note that it is “into” Christ.

^k The Holy Spirit in us is like God’s brand on us, but is also our guarantee that we have been regenerated. Verses 21-22 refer to all three persons of the Godhead.

^l This is an important point: in Matthew 23:8-10 the Lord Jesus forbids any attempt to dominate someone else’s faith or conscience. As He said to the Samaritan woman, the Father wants worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24)—the worship must not be faked, forced or controlled.

II CORINTHIANS 2

not to have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice, when I come, having confidence in you all that my joy is also yours.

About the first letter

⁴Now I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart, with many tears, not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the greatness of my love for you. ⁵So, if anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has all of you, to some extent—not to be too ‘heavy’. ⁶This punishment that was inflicted by the majority^a is sufficient to such a one, ⁷so that now, on the other side, you should forgive and comfort him, so that he not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.^b

⁹Now I also wrote to this end: to put you to the test, to see whether you are obedient in all things. ¹⁰If you forgive anyone, I do too; further, if indeed I have forgiven anything to someone, I have done so for your sakes in the presence of Christ,^c ¹¹so that we not be exploited by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his intentions.^d

An afterthought

¹²Also, upon arriving in Troas for the Gospel of Christ, a door having been opened to me by Sovereign,^e ¹³I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; so taking leave of them I went on into Macedonia.

We have a glorious ministry

A fragrance of life

¹⁴Now thanks be to the God who always leads us in triumph in the Christ,^f and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him^g in every place. ¹⁵Because we are the aroma of Christ for God, among those who are being saved and among those who are being wasted^h—¹⁶to these a smell of death into death, while to those a fragrance of life into lifeⁱ—and who is adequate for such things?

^a Note that it is not necessary for ‘everyone’ to be in agreement with disciplinary action.

^b The purpose of the discipline was to restore, not destroy.

^c An interesting concept: Paul does the forgiving ‘in the presence of Christ’. He clearly believes that his forgiving, or otherwise, makes a difference. Well, he had ordered the disciplinary action, so it was appropriate for him to address the consequences.

^d Well, at least we shouldn’t be, but how many Christians today really take the enemy seriously? Paul will refer to Satan by name several times.

^e If it was the Lord who opened the door, was that not indicative of His will? So did he move on against that will?

^f The title ‘Christ’ is usually accompanied by the definite article, ‘the Christ’—we are not to forget what the title really means.

^g The antecedent of the pronoun could be either the Father or the Son, but in this context most likely refers to the Son—getting to know Him is in view.

^h We are accustomed to ‘perishing’. The verb here has a considerable semantic area and can be rendered—destroy, kill, deprive, void, lose, perish—depending on the context, but I believe the root idea is ‘waste’. The only way to fulfill the purpose for which you were created, to realize your potential, is to turn your life over to Jesus. The alternative is to waste your life, both now and forever. Of course the enemy works to make people think the opposite.

ⁱ The Gospel of Christ represents both life and death: if you receive it, you get life; if you reject it, you get death. Naturally, those in rebellion against God do not enjoy being reminded that they have chosen death.

¹⁷However, we are not like the rest^a who retail^b the word of God; rather, we speak in Christ, out of sincerity, as of God in His very presence.^c

An aside

3 ¹(Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you,^d or commendation from you? ²You are our letter, inscribed on our hearts, known and read by all men; ³you are manifestly a letter of Christ, mediated by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God,^e not on stone tablets but on ‘tablets’ that are hearts of flesh.)

Competent ministers

⁴Now we have such confidence before God because of the Christ; ⁵not that we are competent of ourselves to reckon anything as being from ourselves, but our competence is from God^f—⁶indeed, He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant;^g not of letter but of Spirit, because the letter kills, while the Spirit gives life.^h

A greater glory

⁷Now if the ministry of death, engraved in letters on stones, came with glory—so that the children of Israel could not gaze at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance (that was fading)—⁸how can the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? ⁹For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, how much more glorious is the ministry of righteousness! ¹⁰Because what had glory could actually be said to be without glory, compared to the surpassing glory—¹¹if what is being set aside had glory, that which is continuing is much more glorious.ⁱ

¹²Therefore, since we have such a hope, we use great boldness of speech—¹³**not** like Moses, who put a veil over his own face, so that the children of Israel would not observe the end of what was fading.^j ¹⁴**But**, it was their minds that were closed, because to this day that very veil remains in place when the Old Testament is read, since only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵Yes, even to this day,

^a The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between “the rest” and ‘the many’, but I follow the best line of transmission.

^b A retailer makes his living by buying goods wholesale and reselling them piecemeal, at a profit. In our day there is no lack of those who dole out their teaching, precisely with a view to getting more money out of it.

^c To be objectively aware that you are in God’s presence does have a way of encouraging you to make the right choices!

^d Note that the early church used letters of introduction to help them in evaluating new arrivals.

^e In some sense all of us are ‘letters’ that those around us read. To the extent that we invest in others, build into their lives, we contribute to their ‘letters’. Of course it is our lives that people see, not what is inscribed on the heart.

^f Competence is basic to everything that is done in this world; anything done by an incompetent will almost always be inferior. This is certainly true in the spiritual realm, where work done ‘in the flesh’ is poor work.

^g Note that Paul is clearly aware that he is promoting a new covenant. The old covenant was characterized by “letter”, while the new is characterized by “Spirit” (or “spirit”).

^h I have capitalized ‘Spirit’, but ‘spirit’ is also true. The ‘spirit’ of a message has to do with its purpose, which should take into consideration the local context.

ⁱ Paul is being emphatic about the superiority of the new covenant.

^j At first he used the veil because the people found the shine to be disconcerting, but the shine faded, and he kept on using the veil so they couldn’t see that it was gone. Any reflected light depends on the source, and constant exposure to that source.

II CORINTHIANS 4

when Moses is read a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶However, whenever anyone turns to the Lord the veil is removed.^a ¹⁷Now the Spirit is the Lord,^b and where the Lord's Spirit is there is freedom.^c ¹⁸So we all, contemplating as in a mirror the glory of the Lord with unveiled face,^d are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, precisely from Lord Spirit.^e

But it isn't easy

4 ¹Therefore, since we have received mercy along with this ministry, we do not lose heart. ²Rather, we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in deception nor falsifying the Word of God,^f but by the open proclamation of the Truth^g commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God. ³So where our Gospel has actually been concealed, it has been hidden from those who are being wasted, ⁴among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving,^h so that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn on them.

^a Any Jew can escape that veil—here is how.

^b A clear statement that the Holy Spirit is God.

^c “The Truth will make you free” (John 8:32). Several times the Lord Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Truth.

^d Comparing this text with others like Psalm 1:2-3, James 1:22-25, 2:12, Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12, I conclude that the ‘mirror’ here refers to God's Word. As we spend time in the Word with “unveiled face” (sincerely open to what it says), the Holy Spirit moves us up from one plane of glory to another—the goal is “the same image”.

^e Had Paul been writing in Hebrew, I imagine we would have ‘Jehovah-Spirit’, or ‘Jehovah the Spirit’. He here reinforces what he already said in verse 17—the Holy Spirit is part of the Triune God.

^f Alas, there is no lack of those who deceive and falsify.

^g The importance of this is enlarged upon in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

^h The Text clearly states that Satan, “the god of this age”, is in the business of blinding the minds of unbelievers when they hear the Gospel, so they will not understand, so they will not be convicted, so they will not repent and convert. This is a terrible truth, the most terrible truth in the world, at least as I see it. The enemy has access to our minds, access in the sense that he has the power or ability to invade them, whether by introducing thoughts or by jamming our reasoning. The Lord Jesus had already declared this truth previously, when He explained the parable of the sower. “These are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown; but, as soon as they hear it Satan comes and takes away the word that was planted in their hearts” (Mark 4:15). In the parallel passage in Luke 8:12 Jesus adds the following words: “lest they believe and be saved.” Note that the Word is already in the mind or heart of the person, but then Satan comes, invades the mind and “takes away” that word. I am not sure just how this intrusion by the enemy works, perhaps he causes a mental block of some sort, but the practical effect is that the Word becomes ineffective, as if the person had not even heard it.

The crucial question then becomes, what can we do about it? We find the answer in Mark 3:27. “No one can plunder the strong man's goods, invading his house, unless he first bind the strong man; then he may plunder his house.” I have used the definite article with the first occurrence of ‘strong man’ because the Greek Text has it, the point being that this particular strong man has already been introduced in the immediate context. “The strong man” here is Satan. (The Jewish leaders tried to explain Jesus' authority over the demons by saying that He expelled them by the power of Beelzebul, prince of the demons. In His retort Jesus does not waste time with that name but uses the enemy's proper name, Satan.)

So then, the Lord Jesus declares that it is impossible to steal Satan's goods unless we bind him first. (From His use of “no one” it seems clear that the Lord is enunciating a general principle or truth.) And what might the nature of those ‘goods’ be? In the context (see Matthew 12:22-24) Jesus had delivered someone from a demon that caused blindness and dumbness, and in their comments the scribes and Pharisees include other instances where Jesus had expelled demons—it seems clear that the “goods” are people who are subject to Satan's power, in one way or another. Thus we have the same essential truth as that declared in Acts 26:18—we have to do something about Satan's power over a person so that he or she can be saved! So what can we do? Since the point of handcuffs is to keep someone from

⁵Now we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Sovereign,^a and ourselves as your servants^b for Jesus' sake; ⁶because the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness^c is He who shined in our hearts to give the light that comes from the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.^d ⁷Further, we have this treasure in jars of clay,^e so that this all-surpassing power may be of God and not from ourselves^f ⁸—we are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹persecuted, yet not abandoned; knocked down, but not out;^g ¹⁰always carrying about in the body the putting to death of the Lord^h Jesus, so that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body.ⁱ ¹¹For we, the living, are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.^j ¹²So then, death is at work in us, but life in you.^k

Momentary affliction: eternal glory

¹³Now since we have the same spirit of faith, just like it is written, “I believed; therefore I spoke,”^l we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us through Jesus^m and present us together with you. ¹⁵So all this is for your benefit, so that the grace that has spread through the many may cause the thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.ⁿ

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart—even though our outer man is wasting away, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day—¹⁷because our light, momentary affliction is working out for us an eternal and limitless measure of

acting, I believe that in so many words, aloud or in thought, we must forbid Satan from interfering in the minds of our hearers, before we preach. For more on this subject the reader may consult my site: www.prunch.org.

^a That is what the Text says; Christ Jesus must be proclaimed as Lord/Sovereign, nothing less.

^b Literally, ‘slaves’.

^c See Genesis 1:3.

^d Did you get that? When you really look at Jesus you see God’s glory; that knowledge becomes a light shining in your heart. Wonderful!

^e That we are clay pots does not change the nature of the “treasure”.

^f God gives us the privilege of using His power, but we had better not try to take the credit!

^g Dear me, this really doesn’t sound like ‘easy street’ or a ‘bed of roses’! Paul is talking about very real struggle.

^h Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Lord”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

ⁱ One is reminded of 1 Corinthians 15:31, where Paul says, “I die daily”. Clearly he cannot be referring to physical death, so it must be a dying to self. As I die to myself, to my own ideas and desires, the life of Jesus will be manifested in and through me. Or as he put it in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ, so it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; what I now live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself in my place.”

^j You can’t have resurrection without death.

^k There are stages in Christian life and ministry: at their beginning stage, Paul is paying the price for them to have life; later, they should pay the price for others to have life; and so on.

^l See Psalm 116:10. We speak on the basis of what we believe.

^m Our resurrection depends upon that of Jesus.

ⁿ The more people are reached by God’s grace, the more thanksgiving God gets.

II CORINTHIANS 5

glory,^a ¹⁸as we do not focus on the seen, but on the not seen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal.^b

We live by faith

5 ¹Now then, we know that though our earthly, tent-like ‘house’ may be destroyed, we have a building from God (not a handmade house), eternal in the heavens. ²Further, in this one we do groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly habitation; ³since, obviously, once clothed we will not be found naked. ⁴Yes, being in this ‘tent’ is a burden, so we groan—not enough to want to strip, but to be really clothed; that what is mortal may be swallowed up by the Life.^c

⁵Now it is God who has prepared us for this very purpose, who also has given us the down payment of the Spirit.^d ⁶So we are always confident, even knowing that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord’s home ⁷—we walk by faith, not by sight—⁸indeed, we are confident in preferring to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.^e ⁹Yes, that is why we make it our aim (whether at home or away from it) to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰Because we must all be exposed before Christ’s Judgment Seat, that each one may receive his due for the things he did while in the body, whether good or bad.^f ¹¹Therefore, since we know the Lord’s intimidation,^g we try to convince people.

Why Christ died

We are well known to God, and I hope in your consciences as well. ¹²We are not commending ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity of boasting on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.^h

¹³If we are ‘out of our senses’, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. ¹⁴For Christ’s love impels us, having concluded this: if One died for all it fol-

^a Using the language in 1 Corinthians 3:12-14, whatever we build in gold, silver and precious stones will contribute to that glory. What we do for the Kingdom down here goes into our savings account in the Bank of Heaven.

^b Where is your focus?

^c This paragraph relates only to the redeemed; only we have the prospect of improving our ‘clothing’. As for the lost, the mortal will be swallowed up by the Death, and they will be left naked (but not cease to exist).

^d If you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you don’t have a ‘contract’. He is the down payment on ‘the Life’ (verse 4); eternal life being a quality of life, we can start living it down here.

^e Paul is talking about facing death with confidence, knowing it is the doorway to something much better than this life. Of course this only applies to those who belong to Sovereign Jesus.

^f If we are wise, like Paul, we will never forget the Accounting. He was ‘confident’ that upon leaving his physical body he would be at home with the Lord. To have the same confidence we also must consciously live so as to be well pleasing to Him. Notice that the emphasis is on what we **do**.

^g God’s holiness is an aggressive quality that attacks anything evil that tries to approach. That holiness is truly intimidating, and we will all be judged by it. Jonathan Edwards preached on that basis, with extraordinary effect, but there are few in our day who follow his example. On a lower level, worldly people tend to feel uncomfortable in the presence of someone who is holy, sometimes to the point of reacting aggressively. As Satan increases his hold on the world, such aggressive reaction will become ever more common.

^h Paul will enlarge on this later on in the letter.

lows that all died;^a **15**and He died for all so that those who *now* live should no longer live for themselves but for the One who died for all^b and was raised again.^c

We are Christ's ambassadors

16So then, from now on we regard no one from a fleshly perspective—even if we have ‘known’ Christ in this way, we do so no longer^d—**17**so then, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old things have passed on; look, all has become new!^e **18**And that ‘all’ is from the God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus^f Christ and given us the ministry of the reconciliation,^g **19**namely that in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself,^h not imputing their trespasses to them, including committing to us the message of this reconciliation.

20So then, we are Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God! **21**Because He made the One who did not know sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become God’s righteousness.ⁱ

6 **1**So working together^j we really urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain, **2**for He says:

“At a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I aided you.”

Well, right now is a really favorable time; indeed, the day of salvation is now!^k

What it costs to be Christ's ambassadors

3(We give no occasion for offense in anything, that the ministry not be faulted; **4**rather we commend ourselves as God’s servants in every way with great endurance—in afflictions, in hardships, in distress, **5**in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in hard work, in sleepless nights, in fastings; **6**by purity, by

^a They all died in Him; just like all sinned in Adam.

^b I follow the best line of transmission, along with a minority of the manuscript total (35% here), in reading “all” instead of the familiar ‘them’.

^c The clearest statements giving **why** Christ died begin with Romans 14:9, “that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living”; followed by this verse, that we should no longer live for ourselves, but for Him. Philippians 2:8-11 refers to the final victory. Hebrews 2:14 refers to destroying Satan; saving us from hell is a by-product. As it says in Romans 10:9, “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord...’, you will be saved”.

^d The unregenerate are forever trying to explain or understand Jesus in purely humanistic terms. We who are in Christ must not do so. Further, we should not try to understand anyone in such terms—we need to take account of what is happening in the spiritual realm. (As a student Saul of Tarsus had certainly seen and heard Jesus.)

^e This is neither immediate nor automatic; it is potential. No benefit of the shed blood of God’s Lamb is automatic; it must be appropriated.

^f Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Jesus”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^g Yes, the reconciliation—no other reconciling compares with reconciling men to God.

^h Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful!

ⁱ Here we are face to face with the mystery of our redemption. Jesus, God’s Son, never sinned, did not ‘know’ sin, experientially, but He was “made to be sin” on our behalf. It is a grim picture, as though on the cross He was changed into a bundle of sin. And in exchange He gave us His righteousness. How can we ‘measure’ or understand such love? It is beyond our comprehension. As Romans 11:33 expresses it: “Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

^j ‘Working together’ with whom? Presumably with other ambassadors, but also with God.

^k See Isaiah 49:8. The ‘window’ of opportunity for any individual does not last forever.

II CORINTHIANS 7

knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, ⁷by truthful speech, by God's power, with the weapons of the righteousness in the right hand and in the left;^a ⁸through glory and dishonor, through defamation and good repute; as 'deceivers' and true, ⁹as unknown and well known, as dying and we live on, as chastened and not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing everything!^b

An aside

¹¹O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is open wide. ¹²You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your affections. ¹³Now in return for the same (I speak as to my children), you also be wide open.

Separation is a 'must'

¹⁴Do not enter a mismatch with unbelievers;^c for what do righteousness and lawlessness have in common? And what fellowship does light have with darkness? ¹⁵And what agreement is there between Christ and Belial? Or what portion can a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶Further, what agreement can a temple of God have with idols? Because you^d are a temple of the living God, just as God said:

"I will dwell in them and walk among them;
I will be their God and they will be my people."^e

¹⁷Therefore,

"Come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord,
"Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."^f

¹⁸And,

"I will be a Father to you,
and you will be sons and daughters to me,
says the LORD Almighty."^g

7 ¹Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.^h

Titus, and the first letter

Introduction

²Make room for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you are in our hearts, whether to die together or to live together. ⁴I have great

^a Why right and left? A right-handed soldier would have a shield in his left hand, for defense, with a sword or spear in his right, for offense—our weapons are for both offense and defense.

^b Well, well, well, there really ought to be an easier way to make a living! Well, it depends on what kind of living quarters you want in Heaven. When I get there I hope to see many individuals who can say to me, "You made me rich; thank you!"

^c This does not refer only to marriage, as the explanation that follows makes clear.

^d Instead of "you", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'we', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e See Leviticus 26:12 and Ezekiel 37:27.

^f See Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:34.

^g This appears to be an application based on several passages.

^h "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God"—how long since you heard, or preached, a sermon on that?

confidence in you; I do a lot of boasting about you. I am filled with encouragement, overflowing with joy in spite of all our affliction.

Enter Titus

⁵Now indeed, when we came into Macedonia we had no physical rest, but were surrounded by affliction—conflicts on the outside, fears on the inside. ⁶But the God who encourages the lowly encouraged us by the coming of Titus; ⁷and not only by his coming, but also by how much he was encouraged over you as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal in my stead, so that I rejoiced even more.

The effect of the first letter

⁸Even though that letter caused you sorrow, I do not regret it (though I almost did), because I perceive that the letter made you sorry, though only for a while. ⁹Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry as God intended, so as not to be harmed by us in any way.^a ¹⁰Now godly sorrow produces repentance into salvation without regret, but the world's sorrow produces death.^b

¹¹Just consider your own being caused to sorrow in a godly manner, how much diligence it produced in you—what self-defense, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have demonstrated yourselves to be clear in the matter. ¹²So even though I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the wrongdoer, nor for that of the victim, but, before God, so that your real commitment to us might be made clear to you.^c ¹³We have been encouraged by all this.

Titus again

Because of your^d encouragement, we rejoiced all the more over the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. ¹⁴Because wherein I boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame, but just as everything we spoke to you was true, so also our boasting to Titus proved to be true. ¹⁵Also, his affection for you is all the greater, as he remembers your collective obedience as you received him with fear and trembling. ¹⁶I am so glad that I have complete confidence in you.^e

The collection for the church in Jerusalem

The Macedonian example

8 ¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace of God that has been bestowed upon the congregations of Macedonia, ²that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their extreme poverty produced their extravagant, sincere generosity. ³Because according to their ability, I bear witness, even beyond that ability, of their own accord, ⁴they begged us with much

^a The implication is that it is possible for those in spiritual authority to cause harm, through the misuse of that authority. I imagine that we have all seen this sort of thing happen in fact.

^b The Creator made us with emotions, which when properly used are beneficial, but that under the world's control are destructive.

^c God's agenda in dealing with us often includes several objectives.

^d Instead of "your", perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have 'our', to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e Paul knew how to 'accentuate the positive', as we used to say.

II CORINTHIANS 8

entreaty to receive the gift, the sharing in the ministry to the saints ⁵—and more than we had hoped, they first gave themselves to the Lord^a (and due to God’s will, to us).

⁶So we urged Titus that as he had made a beginning so he should also bring to completion in you this grace as well; ⁷that as you excel in everything—in faith, in word, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—that you excel in this grace too.

Christ’s example

⁸I am not giving a command, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our^b sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. ¹⁰So here is my advice in this (since already a year ago you began to give and to plan, this is to your advantage): ¹¹now you must really finish the doing—not only of the enthusiastic planning but also of the completing—out of what you have ¹²(because when the intention is presented, it is acceptable according to what one may have, not what he does not have). ¹³Now this is not to distress you so as to relieve others, ¹⁴but by way of balance—at this juncture your surplus alleviates their lack, so that later their surplus may alleviate your lack—yes, that there be balance;^c ¹⁵as it is written: “He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.”^d

When handling money, avoid criticism

¹⁶Now thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you in the heart of Titus; ¹⁷because he not only welcomed my appeal but being very diligent he went to you of his own accord.^e ¹⁸But we have sent together with him the brother whose praise in the Gospel is throughout all the congregations; ¹⁹and not only that—he was actually chosen by the congregations as our traveling companion with this gift, that is being administered by us with a view to the glory of the Lord Himself, and to our own goodwill, ²⁰avoiding any criticism about how we are handling this abundance; ²¹giving thought to blamelessness, not only before the

^a Is obeying the commands of Christ the exclusive privilege of the rich? How about the first believers, there in Jerusalem, were they rich or poor? It would appear that the vast majority were poor; so much so that the few well-to-do were selling their property to feed the rest. (That is what gave rise to the case of Ananias and Sapphira [Acts 4:32-5:11].) They evidently did not want to leave Jerusalem, in spite of the Lord’s words recorded in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8. So God Himself sent the persecutions to disperse them. And they scattered, preaching as they went, poor though they were.

Here in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 we find an account that is very much to the point. Those Macedonian believers were very poor (“extreme poverty”). Furthermore, they were experiencing a “severe test of affliction”. Even so, they insisted on giving. From verse 4 it almost seems that Paul felt a bit embarrassed about asking them to give—they needed help themselves! But they insisted; they wanted to give. And they gave more than they properly could (“beyond their ability”). But how was that possible? They had the mentality of the Kingdom—in verse 5 we read that “**first** they gave themselves to the Lord”. And they must have understood the secret of God’s economy, as described in 2 Corinthians 9:8.

^b Although some 60% of the Greek manuscripts, and most versions, have ‘your’ (thereby agreeing with the complement), I take it that the best line of transmission has “our”, that is more inclusive.

^c Note that I have replaced the usual ‘equality’ with ‘balance’. God is not egalitarian; He likes diversity—no two snowflakes are identical, no two drops of water, no two leaves or blades of grass, and much less two human beings. God hates laziness, so we should never do anything to encourage it (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

^d See Exodus 16:18. Maybe there was some sharing involved in that picture.

^e Evidently Titus was bearing this letter, and it was he who delivered it to them.

Lord but also before men.^a **22**Further, we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved to be diligent in many things, but now much more so, because of *our*^b great confidence in you. **23**As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker toward you; as for our brothers, they are envoys of the congregations, a glory of Christ.^c **24**Therefore show the proof of your love (and of our boasting about you) to them as representatives of the congregations.

A little precaution

9 ¹Now concerning the ministry to the saints, it is unnecessary for me to write to you; ²for I know your readiness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia has been ready since last year, and your zeal has stirred up the majority.^d ³Still, I have sent the brothers so that our boasting about you in this matter not prove to be empty, so that you may be ready, like I said ⁴—if any Macedonians were to go with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention, you!) would be put to shame by this confident boasting.^e ⁵So I considered it necessary to urge the brothers to go to you in advance and finish preparing the ‘blessing’ you had promised, that it be ready, representing generosity and not stinginess.

Kingdom economics

⁶Now then, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.^f ⁷Each one *should give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a glad giver. ⁸Fur-

^a As we say in Brazil, ‘all care is little’ when handling God’s money. Carelessness, not to mention dishonesty, reflects negatively on the Gospel. The Macedonian Christians took the matter seriously.

^b There is no possessive pronoun in the Text to show whose confidence, so it could be ‘his’, but in the context it seems to me to be more likely to be ‘our’.

^c An interesting concept—Paul affirms that Christ was proud of those men. Now that is a compliment that I would really like to hear: “he is a glory of Christ”.

^d Nothing like a good example.

^e Maybe Paul should not have boasted quite so much. Do we ever get ‘carried away’ by our enthusiasm? Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “boasting”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^f All of chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians deal with money, in one way or another. But the description of how God’s economy operates begins at 9:6. This verse enunciates a fundamental principle that has global application. “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”

Any farmer understands this. If he only plants a few beans that is all he will get. If he wants more he has to plant more. Any businessman will also understand it. If he wants money he has to invest it. But there is one detail that can be quite bothersome—we must plant first, and reap later. It is better to tighten your belt than to eat the seed, no matter how hungry you are. Isn’t it obvious? If you eat the seed you will not have anything to plant, and if you plant nothing you reap nothing!

In the Creator’s goodness nature is often quite generous. I suppose corn is the champion. We usually plant three or four kernels in a hill, but suppose we just plant one. If that grain germinates we get one stalk. That stalk should produce two good ears (a third ear will likely be a nubbin). Now then, have you ever counted the number of kernels on an ear of corn? I have. A poor ear may have 300 kernels. A good ear will have around 500. A **super** ear can have up to 800! Let us suppose our stalk gives us two good ears—we planted one kernel and get back 1,000! Isn’t that a deal? Even beans that only give us several dozen to one are a deal. That is God’s way.

As already noted the context is financial, and verse 7 makes clear that when the author speaks of planting and harvesting he wants us to apply the principle to giving. “God loves a glad giver.” I believe the following conclusion is beyond reasonable doubt: whoever gives nothing receives nothing. Maybe that is why many believers, including those in ‘full-time Christian service’, often seem to be in a financial bind. They do not give; they never contribute. Luke 6:38 shows the reaction of men and Proverbs 3:9-10 that of God when someone gives.

II CORINTHIANS 9

ther, God is able to make all ‘grace’ abound toward you, that always having all sufficiency in everything you may abound to every good work^a—⁹as it is written: “He has distributed around, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever”^b—¹⁰yes, the One who supplies^c seed to the sower and bread for food, so as to supply and multiply your seed for sowing and to increase the yield of your righteousness; ¹¹you being enriched in everything so as to always be generous, which passing through us produces thanksgiving to God. ¹²Because the administration of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God ¹³—on the basis of the proof that this service gives, they are glorifying God for the obedience of your confession into the Gospel of Christ, and for the generosity of your sharing with them and every-

^a I believe verse 8 gives the ‘secret’; let’s consider the meaning with care. It is **God** who is powerful, not we. He it is who will cause to abound, not we ourselves. And what He causes to abound to us is “all grace”. The grace in view here is the grace of giving (as in 2 Corinthians 8:1, “the grace of God given to the churches of Macedonia”, which was precisely the grace to give, even beyond their means). Now the Text piles up emphatic words: “always, all, sufficiency, everything, abound, every”. All that emphasis serves to guarantee two results: we ourselves should always have enough (at least), and we should be a significant channel of blessing to others. Let’s see how it works.

I understand that it is as follows: God wants us to be channels, conduits through which He can send a flow of blessings, both material and spiritual, to others. Much of what we receive may not be intended for our own use—it has another address and we are supposed to pass the blessing along (the precise address must be discerned through the Spirit). When we get the point and cooperate with God, He sends more. The more sensitive and faithful we are, the more God sends, an ever increasing flow of blessings. But if God sends a blessing, suppose a sum of money, that has another destination and we choose not to understand, decide not to cooperate, if we retain it for ourselves we become like a water pipe that corrodes shut. (Now a plugged pipe is a sad thing; it has lost its reason for being.) With that, the flow of God’s grace through our lives is stanchued, because He stops sending it. Surely. Why should God keep on sending if we will not let it pass? Can it be that our churches are full of ‘plugged pipes’?

When we cooperate with God He gains, the others gain, and we gain. But whoever holds back or abstains will be cheating himself, others and even God. Consider verses 9-14. Verse 9 is a quote from Psalm 112:9, bearing on the last clause of verse 8. Now verses 10 and 11: “The One who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, so as to supply and multiply your seed for sowing and to increase the yield of your righteousness; you being enriched in everything so as to always be generous, which passing through us produces thanksgiving to God.” This is marvelous! God even gives the seed to be planted, and lest we eat the seed He also gives us bread to eat. He wants us to plant, He wants to see fruit! When we are faithful and cooperate, then God not only meets our needs but augments our planting; in other words, He increases our generosity, or at least He will do so to the extent that we cooperate with His purpose. As a reasonable and proper consequence of this process God receives what He deserves: the beneficiaries give praise and thanks to Him.

Verses 12 and 13 elaborate on this aspect. When we line ourselves up with God’s economy He receives the glory due Him, the needs of the saints are supplied, and we are blessed. First, the people who receive the benefits from our ministry will pray for us, and certainly God will listen to those prayers. Next, even if they do not pray, our obedience will receive the effects of God’s faithfulness. This we know, not only from the promises and affirmations in this passage, but as an inference from God’s own interests—a faithful and useful ‘water pipe’ must not die of hunger.

So there it is, my friends. God is no man’s debtor. That is worth repeating: **God will not be anybody’s debtor!** We are too small; He will not allow Himself to be in debt to the likes of us. We may rest assured: whoever gives much, receives much; whoever gives little, receives little; whoever gives nothing... It seems to me that this principle, much like the tithe, works even when one’s motivation is selfish or self serving. However, I trust that the reader will agree that my whole appeal has been against selfishness. It is because of the “mercies of God” that we should present our lives as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). It is the privilege and pleasure of participating in God’s grace that should motivate us to give. I believe it is fair to say that our prosperity is in our own hands, at least in part (unfortunately it is also true that we may suffer because of others’ disobedience, just as they may suffer because of ours).

^b See Psalm 112:9.

^c This verb is used of an authority furnishing what is necessary for a subordinate to carry out an order.

body—¹⁴and in their prayer for you, longing for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

¹⁵Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!^a

Paul's defense of his apostolic authority

Weapons of spiritual warfare

10 ¹Now I, Paul, am myself appealing to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ (I who am 'humble when present' among you, but 'bold when absent' toward you). ²Yes, I beg you, that when I am present I may not have to be bold with the confidence that I will 'dare' to visit upon some who think that we are walking in a fleshly manner. ³Well, we do walk about in flesh, but we do not wage war that way,^b ⁴because the weapons of our warfare are not physical, but are powerful in God for demolishing strongholds:^c ⁵demolishing sophistries^d and every arrogance that sets itself up against the knowledge of God; taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ; ⁶being ready to punish every act of disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.^e

Paul is criticized

⁷Do you only look at the 'face' of things? If anyone has persuaded himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again with himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also we are Christ's. ⁸Now even if I boast a little to excess about our authority (which the Lord gave us for building up, not to tear you down), I will not act ashamed,^f ⁹so as not to appear *to agree* that it is only with letters that I 'terrify' you. ¹⁰Because some say, "His letters are 'heavy' and forceful, but his physical presence is weak, and his speech can be disdained." ¹¹Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters while absent is just what we will be in action when present.

Proper limits for boasting

¹²Now we do not dare to class or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are without understanding.^g ¹³We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will stay within the boundaries that God assigned to us,

^a Amen!

^b Well, at least we shouldn't!

^c The subject of biblical spiritual warfare is generally not well understood in Christian circles. Much of what has been written concerns defensive procedures, but this text speaks of demolishing strongholds (presumably the enemy's, since no one will want to destroy his own), that has to do with taking the offensive. For more on this subject the reader may consult my site: www.prunch.org.

^d A sophistry is a false argument that is presented in such a way as to appear correct, and impressive, especially if not properly analyzed. Satan has purveyed a number of sophistries designed to keep people from the knowledge of God, such as humanism, relativism, materialism, Freudianism, and so on.

^e I suppose that the three gerunds—'demolishing sophistries', 'taking captive every thought' and 'being ready to punish'—are some of our weapons, being grammatically subordinated to 'demolishing strongholds'. In the context, the thoughts we take captive are not our own (though that also is a good thing to do), but those of the enemy's servants. I do this in so many words, aloud or in thought, and thereby avoid unnecessary complications.

^f He is not going to pretend to be ashamed of having overdone the boasting (in the event), since his greater concern here is to cut the ground from under his critics.

^g If you compare yourself with a weakling, you can tell yourself that you are strong, which could get you beaten up. In any case, our standard is "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

a field that includes you. ¹⁴For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we had not reached you, because we did indeed get to you with the Gospel of Christ; ¹⁵nor do we boast ‘off limits’ in the labors of others, but we have hope that as your faith grows our boundaries will be greatly expanded through you, ¹⁶so as to evangelize the regions beyond you^a (not to boast in work already done in someone else’s field).

¹⁷“He who boasts, let him boast in the LORD.”^b ¹⁸Because it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but whom the Lord commends.^c

A godly jealousy

11 ¹I could wish that you would put up with a little of my foolishness, but indeed you already are. ²For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, because I betrothed you to one man to present you to Christ as a pure virgin. ³But I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve with his cunning, so your minds may be corrupted^d from the integrity that is in Christ. ⁴For if someone comes and preaches another ‘Jesus’ whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you easily put up with it.^e

Paul ministered without charge

⁵Now I consider that I am not at all inferior to the very best apostles. ⁶Though I may not be a trained speaker, I do have knowledge—but we have been fully manifested to you in all things. ⁷Or did I commit a sin in humbling self so that you might be exalted, in that I proclaimed God’s Gospel to you free of charge? ⁸I ‘robbed’ other congregations, receiving support from them so as to serve you, ⁹and when I was with you and in need, I did not burden anyone; because the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. Yes, I kept myself from being a burden to you in anything, and will keep on.

Exposing deceivers

¹⁰The truth of Christ is in me: this boasting will not be silenced in me in the regions of Achaia. ¹¹Why? Because I do not love you? God knows! ¹²Further, I will keep on doing what I do in order to cut off the opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things of which they boast. ¹³Such men are really false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into ‘apostles’ of Christ.^f ¹⁴And no wonder, because Satan himself masquerades as

^a Who does the actual evangelizing? Presumably the Corinthians, not Paul himself, so he is saying that their work will contribute to his ‘boundaries’. As my spiritual children pass on my teaching, they are increasing the area that my teaching has reached.

^b See Jeremiah 9:24.

^c Just because God uses or ‘blesses’ someone does not necessarily mean that He is approving of them.

^d The implication is clear: Satan does the corrupting, directly or indirectly, and it is their thinking that he is corrupting (and that is serious—Proverbs 23:7).

^e The impression one gets is that the Corinthian believers were lacking in discernment, or commitment, or both.

^f There have always been those who want to ‘get on the band-wagon’, to get a free ride; who traffic in spiritual things for personal, temporal advantage. Since such people only do damage, Paul’s desire to expose them stems from his concern for the Corinthians’ welfare.

an angel of light. ¹⁵So it is no great thing if his servants also masquerade as ministers of righteousness,^a whose end will be according to their works.

A little 'necessary' boasting

¹⁶Again I say, let no one think me a fool. But should anyone do so, at least receive me as a fool, that I also may boast a little bit. ¹⁷What I am going to say I do not say according to the Lord, but as though foolishly,^b in this confident boasting. ¹⁸Since many are boasting according to the flesh, I will too ¹⁹(for you put up with fools gladly, being so wise yourselves!). ²⁰In fact, you even put up with someone who enslaves you, who 'devours' you, who takes advantage, who exalts himself, who beats on your face!^c ²¹Is it disrespectful to say that we were 'weak'?^d

In whatever anyone is bold (I speak foolishly), I am bold also. ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they ministers of Christ? (I'm being irrational) I am more: in labors more abundantly, in beatings beyond count, in prison more frequently, in 'deaths' often^e—²⁴five times from the Jews I received the 'forty lashes minus one';^f ²⁵three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked (I spent twenty-four hours in the open sea)—²⁶in frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, in danger from robbers, in danger from my countrymen, in danger from Gentiles, in danger in cities, in danger in wildernesses, in danger in the sea, in danger among false brothers; ²⁷in toil and hardship, in many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, in frequent fastings, in cold and nakedness^g—²⁸quite apart from the other things, my daily disturbances, my concern for all the congregations. ²⁹Who is weak, and I do not feel it? Who is caused to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?

When I am weak, then I am strong

³⁰Well, if I must boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ,^h who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²In Damascus the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of the Damascenes, wanting to arrest me; ³³but I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands.ⁱ

^a It is well to remember that neither Satan nor his servants are in the habit of appearing with horns and tails. Just because someone 'looks good' doesn't mean that he is.

^b The implication would appear to be that whatever we do that is not 'according to the Lord' is foolish.

^c Paul is really worked up. Even allowing for his sarcasm, there were evidently negative things going on at Corinth that we do not know about.

^d I found this sentence to be especially difficult to translate, and am not sure I got it right. Compared to the types described in verse 20, he might have come across as being 'weak'.

^e Verses 24 and 25 spell out the 'deaths'; verse 26 resumes with the 'in's. We have no record of most of the experiences listed, an impressive list! Humanly speaking, he should have died several times.

^f Deuteronomy 25:3 forbids exceeding forty blows, so the Jews always stopped one short, just in case they had miscounted.

^g When the Lord told Ananias to go and restore Saul's sight, and he protested, the Lord continued, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Paul paid for what he did against the early Church. By the way, we usually have to pay for our misdeeds down here (how can you pay in Heaven?).

^h Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Christ", to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

ⁱ Apparently Paul considered this to be a humiliating experience.

A visit to the third heaven

12 ¹It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast; still, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or outside of it, I do not know, God knows. ³Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or outside of it, I do not know, God knows—⁴how he was caught up into Paradise^a and heard inexpressible things, things that a man is not permitted to tell. ⁵I can boast about someone like that, but not about myself, unless it be my weakness. ⁶Now even if I wanted to go on boasting, I would not be stupid but speak the truth;^b but I refrain, so that no one will think more of me than what he sees in me and hears from me.

The ‘thorn in the flesh’

⁷Because of the incredible importance of the revelations, to keep me from feeling too important, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan^c to beat on me—to keep me from feeling too important. ⁸Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more cheerfully about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may take up residence upon me.^d ¹⁰So then, I take pleasure in weaknesses,^e in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Apostolic signs were produced

¹¹I have been boasting foolishly, but you drove me to it. I ought to have been commended by you, because in nothing have I been inferior to the very best apostles, though I am nothing. ¹²Truly the apostolic signs were produced among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. ¹³Now in just what were you treated as inferior, compared to the other congregations, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong.^f

Still not burdening

¹⁴Well now, I am ready to come to you a third time, and I will *still* not burden you, because I want you, not your things—children should not have to save up for parents, but parents for children. ¹⁵So I will gladly spend and be spent for the sake of your souls, even if the more I love you the less I am loved. ¹⁶Ok,

^a “Paradise” here evidently refers to Heaven. In Luke 23:43 it refers to the half of Hades (Sheol in the O.T.) that was reserved for the righteous dead.

^b To exaggerate would be stupid.

^c ‘Satan’ is Satan. Down through human history God has always used Satan, demons and evil men, both to punish evil and to restrain it (usually in those who are evil). Here God does so with Paul before the fact, that is, to forestall the sin. The procedure was sufficiently unusual that God actually explained to Paul why He did it.

^d That is what the Text says, ‘take up residence’. I would say that for most of us unusual manifestations of God’s power are sporadic (if there are any at all)—if the power ‘takes up residence’, the manifestations should be a regular occurrence. The trouble is, there is evidently a considerable price in suffering that must be paid.

^e Well, I must confess that I have not gotten there yet.

^f Yes, it probably was a ‘wrong’, because they were not taught how God’s economy works. If Paul had taught them the content of chapter nine of this letter early on, a considerable portion of this letter would not have been necessary.

ok, I didn't burden you, but being crafty I took you by deception.^a **17**Come now, did I actually take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? **18**I urged Titus and sent the brother along—did Titus take any advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit, in the same footprints?

A little veiled threatening

19Do you still think that we are defending ourselves to you? It is before God we speak, in Christ; but all of it, dear ones, is with a view to your edification. **20**Yes, I am afraid that when I come I may not find you such as I wish, and you not find me such as you wish—may there be no strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, factions, slanders, gossipings, conceits, disorders—**21**that when I come again my God may not humble me before you, and I will mourn for many who have previously sinned and not repented of the impurity and fornication and licentiousness which they practiced.^b

I will not spare

13 ¹This is the third time I am coming to you. “At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.”^c ²As I already said while with you the second time, I now repeat in writing^d while absent, to those who sinned before and to all the rest: If I come again I will not spare, ³since you want proof that Christ is speaking through me—He who is not weak toward you but powerful among you ⁴(although He was crucified in weakness, He lives by the power of God). Now we also are weak in Him, but we will live with Him by the power of God toward you.^e

Examine yourselves

⁵Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you yourselves really not know that Jesus Christ is in you?^f—unless indeed you are disqualified. ⁶Well I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

⁷Now I pray to God that you do no evil; not that we may appear approved, but that you may do what is right (even though we may appear to have failed).^g ⁸For we cannot do anything against the Truth, but only for the Truth. ⁹Now we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And we also pray for this, your perfecting. ¹⁰This is why I write these things while absent, so that when present I may not have to deal harshly, according to the authority that the Lord gave me, for building up and not for tearing down.

Conclusion

¹¹Finally, brothers, rejoice; restore each other; encourage one another; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of the love and the peace will be with you.

^a In verse 16 Paul repeats a criticism that someone might falsely level at him.

^b There is only one definite article for the three nouns, and ‘which’ is singular, so the three are regarded as a single ‘package’. Unfortunately there have always been, and continue to be, those who go back to a sinful lifestyle, and stay there. Like Paul, about all we can do for such is ‘mourn’.

^c See Deuteronomy 19:15. It almost seems that Paul is comparing his visits to witnesses.

^d Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “in writing”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^e Being weak in God's presence is one thing; being weak in our work for Him is quite another. I take Paul to be saying that being weak in God's presence triggers the outflow of His power in our work.

^f Sin does have a way of undermining confidence. A Christian who keeps on sinning tends to become less and less sure of his salvation.

^g I don't understand this.

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¹²Greet one another with a holy kiss.

¹³All the saints greet you.

¹⁴The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.^a
Amen.

^a Here we have a clear reference to the Trinity.

The Epistle of Paul to the

GALATIANS

Introduction

Salutation

1 ¹Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through a man,^a but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead^b—²and all the brothers with me,^c to the congregations in Galatia:^d ³Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself^e for our sins, so that He might deliver us out of this present malignant age,^f according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul is disappointed

⁶I am sadly surprised that you are turning away so quickly from the one who called you by the grace of Christ, to a different gospel ⁷—it is not a mere variation, but certain people are unsettling you and wanting to distort the Gospel of the Christ. ⁸Now even if we, or an angel out of heaven, should preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed! ⁹As we have just said, I here emphatically repeat: If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed!!^g

¹⁰Am I just now appealing to men, or to God?^h Or am I trying to please men? You see, if I were still pleasing men I would not be a slave of Christ.ⁱ

Paul's credentials

¹¹Now I want you to know, brothers, that the Gospel preached by me is not according to man; ¹²because I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather it came through a revelation from Christ.^j

^a Paul's apostleship did not depend upon human ordination or recognition. So what about apostleship today?

^b The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is absolutely central to the Christian Faith (1 Corinthians 15:14,17).

^c It would be interesting to know who those "brothers" were.

^d "The congregations in Galatia"—Paul evidently intended that the letter be widely circulated. Would not each congregation want its own copy?

^e In John 10:17-18 Sovereign Jesus made this clear.

^f The word 'malignant' properly refers to Satan, the 'god of this world', so "this present malignant age" presumably refers to the whole world system controlled by Satan. All human cultures have suffered satanic influence, and all true followers of Sovereign Jesus should place biblical values above those of their surrounding culture. The second (last) Adam came to recover all that the first Adam lost—precisely the will of the Father.

^g 'Other gospels' would seem to be in plentiful supply; those who promote them are under a curse. Note that Paul is claiming to be competent to define the only true Gospel of Christ, and he can only do so genuinely by divine inspiration.

^h Since it is God who applies the curse, he is appealing to God to back him up. I myself do this habitually.

ⁱ Oops! Come on Paul, you cannot be serious. Do you really mean that pleasing men and being a slave of Christ are mutually exclusive? On the basis of my experience I would have to agree with Paul, with the understanding that fellow-slaves are not included in the 'pleasing men'. (When I am pleasing Christ His other slaves should be pleased as well.)

^j I follow what I understand to be the best line of transmission (though in a minority here, 30%) that reads 'Christ' without 'Jesus'. I take it that 'Christ' is in the ablative case: 'from' rather than 'of'. Paul is

How he was before

¹³You have heard of my former conduct while in Judaism, how I was rabid in my persecution of God's Church and tried to annihilate it; ¹⁴indeed I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age, being far more zealous for the traditions of my forefathers.

How he was re-cycled

¹⁵But when God—who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace—resolved ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might proclaim Him among the nations/Gentiles, I did not start by consulting with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before I was; rather I went off into Arabia,^a and then returned to Damascus.

A new life and ministry

¹⁸Subsequently, after three years,^b I went up to Jerusalem to compare notes with Peter,^c and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹(I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.^d ²⁰Really, before God, I am not lying in what I write to you.) ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²So I remained unknown by face to the congregations of Judea (those in Christ)^e ²³—they just kept hearing that “He who once persecuted us now proclaims the faith he formerly tried to destroy.” ²⁴And they glorified God about me.

How he was recognized by the apostolate

2 ¹Fourteen years later I went up to Jerusalem again, with Barnabas, taking Titus along as well. ²I went on the basis of a revelation and set before them [the main apostles] the Gospel that I proclaim among the nations/Gentiles.^f—Now I did this privately to those with influence, lest somehow I might run, or had run, in vain. ³However, not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, for being a Greek. ⁴This came up because of the false brothers who were smuggled in^g (who stole in to spy out our freedom, that we have in Christ Jesus, so as to reduce us to slavery), ⁵to whom we did not yield, even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.—⁶Now from those who seemed to be important (whatever they were makes no difference to me; God shows favoritism to no man)—those with influence contributed nothing to me, ⁷but on the contrary, upon seeing that I had been entrusted with the Gospel for the uncircumcised, just as was Peter for the circumcised ⁸(for He who was at work with Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised was also at work with me for that to the uncircumcised), ⁹and upon perceiving the grace that had been given to

claiming revelation—this is the plain meaning of verses 11-12. Saul of Tarsus got his training in Judaism at the feet of Gamaliel, but his understanding of Christianity came from no such human teacher.

^a Do you suppose he went to Mt. Horeb?

^b The Text does not say that he spent three years in Arabia; part of the time he was in Damascus.

^c 98% of the Greek manuscripts have “Peter”, not ‘Cephas’. In 2:1 below it is 93%.

^d Note that this James, though not one of the Twelve, is declared to be an apostle.

^e Every town with a synagogue would have a local congregation, but usually not “in Christ”.

^f This event is described in more detail in Acts chapter 15, where verse 3 says they were “sent on their way by the church”. Here Paul says he went “on the basis of a revelation”—I suppose he is referring mainly to the content of what he set before the apostles and elders. I gather that Paul and Barnabas had a closed session with James, Peter and John before going to the whole assembly.

^g Who was responsible for the smuggling? And in whose service were they, really, even though they were evidently part of the Christian community?

me, James and Cephas and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, while they to the Jews.^a **10**They did ask us to keep remembering the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.^b

Paul has to rebuke Peter

11But, when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was blameworthy. **12**Before certain men came from James,^c he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came he began to draw back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision party. **13**And the rest of the Jews played the hypocrite with him as well, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.^d **14**So when I saw that they were not walking straight according to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all: "If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, why do you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? **15**We natural Jews (and not 'Gentile sinners'),^e **16**knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, we ourselves have believed into Christ Jesus, so as to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law; because no one will be justified by works of law.^f **17**But if^g while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves were discovered to be sinners, then is Christ a minister of sin? Of course not!

18"Now if I rebuild the things that I destroyed, I acknowledge that I am a transgressor.^h **19**For through the law I died to the law in order to live to God.ⁱ **20**I have been crucified with Christ, so it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; what I now live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself in my place.^j **21**I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!"^k

^a Literally, 'circumcised'.

^b The early Church did not ignore the physical needs of the poor.

^c Note that in verse 9 James is listed before Peter and John, and in Acts 15:13 it is James who gives the verdict. James became the boss in Jerusalem, and I gather from what is recorded in Acts 21:18-25 that he was sliding back toward Judaism.

^d That even Barnabas went along shook Paul up; the situation had gotten out of hand. Someone had to take a stand.

^e My impression is that Paul is being a little sarcastic here, since the Jews liked to think that they were better than the Gentiles.

^f This point is so important that Paul says it three times!

^g We have here what in Greek grammar is called a 'condition of fact'—the protasis is presented as being true—so that often 'if' should be 'since'. By using 'we', Paul is associating himself with Peter and the others as a sinner (a nice touch), but they are already Christians, so he goes on to reject the notion that Christ could be viewed as an accomplice to their sin.

^h Whereas he had once tried to destroy the Church, he is now building it, which amounts to recognizing that he had been wrong before, a transgressor.

ⁱ He thought he was serving God before, persecuting the Church in his zeal for the law. But 'the law' crucified Christ, and in declaring allegiance to the crucified Christ he died to the law, so that he could really live for God. Galatians 4:4 says that the Son was "born under law".

^j A tremendous statement, and when we allow it to function in our lives it is an equally tremendous truth! Those who try to live the Christian life in their own strength generally make a poor job of it; when I allow Christ to live His life through me He makes a good job of it (to the extent that I stay out of the way).

^k This is a very serious statement! Anyone who can save himself does not need Christ's sacrifice.

Law or faith

3 ¹⁰ foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you not be persuaded by the Truth^a—Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as having been crucified, before your very eyes!^b ²Just tell me one thing: Did you receive the Spirit by works of law, or by hearing of faith? ³Can you be so foolish? Having begun in spirit, do you finish in flesh? ⁴Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? ⁵Furthermore, He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *is He activated* by works of law, or by hearing of faith?^c—⁶just as Abraham ⁷believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.^d

⁷Now you must know that only those who are of faith are ‘sons’ of Abraham. ⁸Further, the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith,^e proclaimed the Gospel in advance to Abraham: “All the nations will be blessed through you.”^f ⁹So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful.

The curse of the law

¹⁰Now as many as are ‘by works of law’ are under a curse; because it stands written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all the things written in the Book of the Law, to do them.”^g ¹¹Further, it is evident that no one is justified by law before God, because “the righteous one will live by faith.”^h ¹²While the law is not of faith but, “the man who does them will live by them.”ⁱ

¹³Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse in our place—because it stands written, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree”^j—¹⁴so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations/Gentiles through Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through the faith.

The covenant with Abraham

¹⁵Brothers: as a man I speak a covenant; though only of a man, once it has been ratified no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶But to Abraham were spoken the promises,^k and to his Seed. He does not say “and to seeds,” as about many, but “and

^a Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “that you not be persuaded by the Truth” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), which weakens the statement considerably.

^b It almost sounds like there was a dramatic demonstration.

^c Although I have capitalized the pronoun, there must have been a human being involved as well.

^d This is a quote from Genesis 15:6, but is not presented as such.

^e The form of the verb is ambiguous as to mood; it could be either Indicative or Subjunctive. The Indicative would give a direct quote, “God justifies the nations by faith”, but we don’t find this quote in the O.T., so I chose the Subjunctive. Notice that ‘the Scripture’ is personified! It/He sees/knows in advance what God is going to do.

^f This is a direct quote from Genesis 12:3, which, of course, had not been written yet in Abraham’s day (in his day the only written Scripture available was the book of Job). Notice that the personification of ‘Scripture’ continues: It/He is the One who said this to Abraham, so all we need to do is go back to Genesis to find out who it is—Jehovah Himself, presumably the Son!

^g This is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 27:26.

^h This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.

ⁱ This is a quote from Leviticus 18:5.

^j This is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 21:23.

^k Paul draws a contrast between a hypothetical covenant he might speak as a man, and the promises actually spoken to Abraham and his Seed.

to your seed,” as about one, who is Christ. ¹⁷Further, I say this: a covenant confirmed beforehand by God in Christ^a cannot be annulled by the law that came four hundred and thirty years later,^b so as to make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸For if the inheritance were of law, it would no longer be of promise, but God granted it to Abraham by promise.

The law was a guardian

¹⁹Why then the law? It was added on account of the transgressions, until the Seed should come to whom the inheritance had been promised; and it was ordered through angels by the hand of a mediator.^c ²⁰(Now that mediator is not for just one, but God is one.)^d ²¹Is the law then against the promises of God? Of course not! Rather, if a law had been given that was capable of imparting life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²²But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin,^e so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³Now before this faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, in confinement until the coming faith was revealed. ²⁴So then, the law became our guardian until Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

²⁶So all of you are sons of God through the faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ^f have clothed yourselves with Christ ²⁸—there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no ‘male and female’;^g all of you are one in Christ Jesus^h—²⁹so if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed^a and heirs according to the promise.

^a Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit “in Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Without Christ, the Seed, there would have been no promise. The incarnation of Jehovah the Son was in the Plan before the creation of this world (1 Peter 1:19-20).

^b Abraham left Haran in 1921 BC, when he was 75. The Exodus occurred in 1491 BC. 1921 – 1491 = 430. For an explanation of these dates see the excellent discussion by Floyd Nolen Jones in his *Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, Kings Word Press, 1999 (14th edition).

^c “By the hand of a mediator” would presumably refer to Moses, since he passed the Law on to the people, but the reference to “angels” puzzles me. The O.T. account has God dealing directly with Moses, or so it seems to me. Perhaps God used angels to communicate some of the lesser details, or to refresh Moses’ memory.

^d I take this verse to be parenthetical because it does not seem to contribute to the argument. The word ‘mediator’ that ends verse 19 gives rise to the parenthetical comment, because Paul then used the definite article with the same word at the beginning of verse 20, which is why I render “that mediator”. Paul then states the obvious—for someone to be a mediator there must be at least two parties at odds—which he contrasts with something even more obvious—God is one. Perhaps the point is that which lies behind the question in verse 21: since God is the source of both Law and Promise, and He being one cannot be at odds with Himself, then Law and Promise cannot be at odds. Moses functioned as mediator between God and the people.

^e “Everything”, not ‘everyone’—that is what the Text says. Romans 8:19-22 spells it out—the consequences of Adam’s fall extended to and included the creation. How could a perfect world be administered by a fallen man?

^f See 1 Corinthians 12:13.

^g The Text does not have ‘neither male nor female’; the formula changes, as I have indicated. I suppose the reference is to Genesis 1:27, and the reason for the female in Genesis 2:18. All are saved on the same basis.

^h The reference is to the spiritual realm, not the physical—a Jew who believes into Jesus does not stop being a physical Jew, a slave who believes into Jesus does not automatically change social status, a male who believes into Jesus does not stop being a physical male, etc. But if we are all “clothed with

Sons or slaves

4 ¹To proceed, as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, though he is owner of all, ²but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³Similarly, when we were children we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world.^b ⁴But at just the right time God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵so that He might redeem those under law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons,^c God sent out the Spirit of His Son into your^d hearts, calling, “Abba, Father”.^e ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son,^f and if a son, also an heir of God through Christ.^g

Paul's concern

⁸But at one time indeed, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those that by nature are not gods.^h ⁹But now that you know God—better, are known by God—how can you turn back to those weak, yes decidedly inferior, basic principles, to which you wish to be enslaved all over again? ¹⁰You are observing days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹I fear for you, lest somehow I have labored over you in vain.

¹²Brothers, I plead with you, become as I am, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³Rather, you know that I preached the Gospel to you the first time in spite of a physical infirmity.ⁱ ¹⁴Also, you did not despise or recoil at my physical trial, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵So what about your blessedness? Because I can testify that if it were possible you would

Christ”, verse 27, we will all look alike, at least from a distance. People looking at us should think they are looking at Him.

^a Abraham’s seed, not Jacob’s.

^b The only true freedom available in this life is to be a slave of Jesus Christ. In John 8:34 the Lord Jesus said, “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin”, and in verse 36, “if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”. Sin gives Satan an entrance, and he has various instruments for binding people (see verse 8 below).

^c If you have the Holy Spirit in your heart, it is because you have been adopted into God’s family; you are a ‘son’.

^d Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘our’ instead of “your”, setting up a conflict with the verb “you are” at the beginning of the verse (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^e “Father” is a translation of “Abba”.

^f Here Paul switches from plural to singular.

^g Evidently 1½% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, read “through God” instead of “of God through Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Romans 8:17 says we are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”.

^h The reference is presumably to demons. Since the ‘world’ (verse 3) is controlled by Satan, his agents impose the ‘principles’.

ⁱ It will be observed that I have rendered “in spite of” a physical infirmity, whereas most versions have “because of”, in accordance with the normal meaning of the grammatical construction here (*δία* with the accusative is the usual way to express cause). What troubles me is that the normal meaning does not make much sense here; how could an infirmity be the cause of his preaching the Gospel to them? A counter-cause would make better sense, but I am not aware of any way to express it in Greek; the closest thing appears to be *καυνη* ‘although’, that occurs all of five times in the N.T. In spoken English ‘raise’ and ‘raze’ are pronounced the same, but have opposite meanings, and this sort of thing is not rare in language. An ironic inflection reverses the meaning of what is said. I assume that something of the sort has occurred in this verse, and I have given the assumed intent.

have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?^a

¹⁷They zealously court you^b—not for good but intending to isolate you, so that you may seek them. ¹⁸Now it is good to be zealous in a good thing at any time, and not only when I am present with you.

¹⁹My little children, for whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you ²⁰—I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone; because I am perplexed about you!

'Hagar' VS 'Sarah'

²¹Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not heed that law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons: one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. ²³However, the one by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, while the one by the free woman was through the promise.^c ²⁴I will now allegorize them—these are two covenants: one is from Mount Sinai, bearing children into slavery, which is 'Hagar' ²⁵(for this 'Hagar' is Mount Sinai in Arabia^d and corresponds to the present day Jerusalem,^e and is in slavery with her children); ²⁶while the 'Jerusalem' that is above is free, which is the mother of us all.^f ²⁷For it is written:

“Rejoice, barren one, who does not give birth;
break forth and shout, you who have no labor pains;
because the abandoned woman has many more children
than she who has the husband.”^g

²⁸Now we,^h brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹But, it is the same now as it was then: the one born according to flesh persecutes the one born according to Spirit. ³⁰However, what does the Scripture say? “Expel the slave woman and her son, because the son of the slave woman absolutely must not inherit with the son of the free woman!”ⁱ ³¹So then, brothers, we are not children of a slave woman, but of the free woman.

^a In this fallen world, telling the truth does have a habit of making enemies.

^b Paul contrasts himself with the proselytizers: he tells them the truth, even if unpleasant; they start by 'battering up' their intended victims, but then move to create a dependency so they can control them.

^c For Sarah to conceive required a miracle.

^d I do not know Paul's definition of 'Arabia', but what the maps call 'Mt. Sinai' probably is not the real one; consider: When Moses fled from Pharaoh he stopped in Midian (Exodus 2:15). Midian lies on the east side of the eastern 'rabbit-ear' of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba), in present day Saudi Arabia. It has never been part of the so-called 'Sinai Peninsula'. It was at "Horeb, the mountain of God" that Moses saw the 'burning bush' (Exodus 3:1), and in verse 12 God tells Moses: "when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain". Mt. Horeb has always been in Midian. For a complete discussion please see the Appendix: "Where is Mt. Sinai?".

^e The Jerusalem of Paul's day was in slavery to Rome.

^f Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "all" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g The quote is from Isaiah 54:1—in that chapter Jehovah is telling Israel, His abandoned 'wife', that He is going to take her back, restore her, and her future felicity will make her forget the pain of rejection. However, that restoration will presumably be based on the new covenant (Jeremiah 31), as is Christ's Gospel.

^h Perhaps 8% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you' for "we" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ The quote is from Genesis 21:10, where Sarah is demanding this of Abraham, but God backs her up (verse 12).

Freedom in Christ

5 ¹Stand firm therefore in the freedom with which Christ has made us free,^a and do not be burdened again with a yoke of slavery. ²Listen! I, Paul, say to you that if you get circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³Further, I testify again to every man who gets circumcised that he is obligated to keep the whole law.^b ⁴You who are ‘being justified’ by law have been alienated from the Christ; you have fallen away from the grace.^c ⁵For we through the Spirit eagerly wait^d for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶Because in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

⁷You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. ⁹A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. ¹⁰I have confidence toward you in the Lord that you will not think differently; but he who troubles you will bear the penalty, whoever he may be.

¹¹But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that event the offense of the cross would have been removed. ¹²I do wish that those who are upsetting you would just remove themselves!^e

¹³Now you, brothers, have been called to freedom; only do not use that freedom as an opening for the flesh, but slave for one another through love. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, namely: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”^f ¹⁵But if you bite and tear at each other, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Spirit VS flesh

¹⁶I say then: walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh.¹⁷Because the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh; they oppose each other; it follows that you may not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸However, if you are led by the Spirit you are not under law.^g

^a 6-7% of the Greek manuscripts replace this first half of the verse with, “for freedom Christ has made us free; stand firm therefore” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b In the context it is clear that Paul is not decrying physical circumcision, that has an important side benefit—women with circumcised husbands don’t get cervical cancer. He is combating the idea of spiritual benefit from the practice, as claimed by the judaizers, and in particular the ‘necessity’ that they claimed. The procedure is for eight-day-old babies, not adult men.

^c They have regressed from the covenant of grace to the covenant of law.

^d “Eagerly wait for”—I love it! Those who are trying to be justified by works don’t ‘eagerly wait’ for anything; the future accounting is a source of apprehension. On the other hand, we who understand that we are justified by faith in the Christ do indeed have a hope we can ‘eagerly wait’ for.

^e It will be observed that my rendering of this verse differs significantly from that of the better known versions: they have Paul wishing that they would castrate themselves, or commit suicide! The verb is in the middle voice, hence reflexive; it means to ‘sever’ or ‘amputate’, but can also mean to ‘exclude’. I take it Paul is wishing that they would ‘amputate’ or exclude themselves from the situation—he wants them to go away and leave the Galatian believers in peace!

^f In the context Paul is referring to that part of the law that deals with interacting with other human beings (not the part that deals with interacting with God).

^g What the flesh wants is bad for you; what the Spirit wants is good for you. To be led by the Spirit is not to be under a set of rules; it is a relationship.

¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are obvious, namely: adultery,^a fornication, uncleanness,^b licentiousness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, fits of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, ²¹envyings, murders, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like; about which I am warning you beforehand, as, in fact, I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.^c

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control—against such things there is no law.^d

²⁴Further, those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.^e

²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us also conform to the Spirit.^f ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Practical instructions

6 ¹Brothers, if a man is actually caught in some wrongdoing,^g you, the spiritual ones, should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, watching out for yourself lest you also be tempted. ²Bear one another's heavy burdens, and so fulfill the law of the Christ. ³For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴Let each one test his own work, and then do his 'boasting' only within himself, never to someone else.^h ⁵For each one must carry his own normal load.ⁱ

⁶Let him who is taught the Word share all good things with him who teaches.^j ⁷Do not be deceived, God does not allow Himself to be treated with contempt; because whatever a man sows, that he will also reap ⁸—he who sows to his own flesh will reap deterioration^k from that flesh; he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from that Spirit.

⁹Let us not lose heart while doing good, for we will reap in due season, if we do not give up.^l ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do what is good toward everyone, but especially toward those who are of the household of the faith.

^a Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "adultery" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). This statement holds also for "murders" in verse 21. This is one of several lists containing both 'adultery' and 'fornication', side by side, which indicates that they are distinct concepts.

^b This appears to be a cover term for other misuses of sex; for instance, so-called 'oral sex' does not receive specific mention in Scripture, but would be included in 'uncleanness'.

^c Here is a plain statement (see also 1 Cor. 6:9-10 and Rev. 21:8). Religious communities that condone or permit such practices are deceiving their constituents; at the Judgment they will get a very nasty surprise. The list refers to what we might call rather obvious forms of sin; there are also the more subtle forms.

^d Paul was not referring to certain satanically inspired regimes, that may actually preach hate and violence.

^e Another strong statement: a dead desire does not ask to be gratified.

^f I believe the idea here is similar to that in 5:18 above. Conforming to, or perhaps seeing eye to eye with, the Spirit represents a higher level of spiritual experience.

^g He is ruling out hearsay.

^h Again, my rendering is unusual. My difficulty with the usual 'in himself' and 'in another' is that in both cases the preposition is 'into' (*εἰς*), not 'in' (*ἐν*). If someone forms an exaggerated notion about his work (verse 3) and then starts boasting out loud, he will look stupid.

ⁱ There is a contrast between "heavy burden" (verse 2) and "normal load" (verse 5). We should help each other with the really 'heavy' stuff.

^j Teachers are people; they too need food, clothes, shelter...

^k If the deterioration is never checked, guess what happens.

^l So what happens if you give up?

Boast in the cross

¹¹See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand.^a
¹²Those who want to make a good showing in the flesh are pressuring you to be circumcised, but only so as not to be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³For not even those who are circumcised keep the law themselves, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.^b ¹⁴But as for me, may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵Because in Christ Jesus^c neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.^d ¹⁶Now as for those who conform to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.^e

¹⁷Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the brand marks of the Lord^f Jesus.^g

Sign off

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

^a This verse, coupled with 4:15 above, gives credence to the idea that Paul's physical infirmity had to do with his eyes.

^b Again Paul makes clear that he is referring to the religious exercise when practiced on adults, not the physical fact (that is properly practiced on eight-day-old babies).

^c Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "because in Christ Jesus" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d If you are not a new creation, you are not saved.

^e According to Greek grammar, the repetition of the preposition 'upon' in two phrases joined by 'and' makes clear that the objects of the prepositions refer to distinct entities. Hence, "the Israel of God" cannot be a reference to the Church, assuming that "those who conform to this rule" refers to those who are "in Christ Jesus". I take "the Israel of God" to refer to sincere, devout Israelites.

^f Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, omit "Lord" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). I would say that the eclectic Greek text that these modern versions generally follow is mistaken at over eighty (80) points in Galatians, of which I mentioned only twelve (mainly the more serious ones).

^g This is an interesting claim. I suppose him to be saying that he deserves respectful treatment because of what he has suffered for Christ's cause.

The Epistle of Paul to the

EPHESIANS

Salutation

1 ¹Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus,^a that is, the faithful in Christ Jesus;^b ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.^c

Some concentrated theology*A paean of doctrinal praise*

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,^d who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms^e in Christ;^f ⁴just as He^{[F]g} chose us in Him^[S] before the foundation of the world,^h that we should be holy and blameless before Him^[F], in love,ⁱ ⁵having predestined us into an adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, into Him^[S], according to the good pleasure of His^[F] will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved; ⁷in whom we have the redemption through His^[S] blood,^j the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His^[F] grace, ⁸that He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligent design,^k ⁹having made known to us the ‘secret’ of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him^[S], ¹⁰with a view to administering the fullness of the times,^l so as to bring all things together under

^a I take it that Paul is claiming to be Christ’s apostle to them, so he is writing with specific apostolic authority. Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (demonstrably so), omit ‘at Ephesus’ [such is the basis for the nasty footnotes in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.].

^b Paul defines what he means by “saints”.

^c The alternation between “Jesus Christ” and “Christ Jesus” appears to be stylistic, without doctrinal implication.

^d The full name of Jehovah the Son is now “The Lord Jesus Christ”. Where ‘Lord’ occurs without the definite article or a possessive pronoun I often render ‘Sovereign’.

^e “In the heavenly realms” appears to be a synonym for Heaven; the blessings are there, ready to be distributed.

^f The blessings are only for those who are in Christ. Unbelievers may receive some spinoff benefits.

^g Here the pronoun refers to the Father, not ‘Christ’. Below, whenever the referent changes I will indicate this by ^[F] or ^[S], which will be good until the next change.

^h This one is difficult for our poor little finite minds to handle. If I was chosen before Creation, then I am part of a PLAN that antedates that Creation, just like the slain Lamb (1 Peter 1:19-20). So He knows who I am and calls me by name (John 10:3). When faced with a ‘God-thing’ that exceeds our understanding, we can either accept or reject—I choose to accept [there are consequences]. And let’s not forget to give thanks.

ⁱ The syntax is ambiguous: does “in love” go with the preceding clause, or the following one? If the preceding, then it would be our love for Him; if the following, His love for us. When the Text is ambiguous I like to allow for both possibilities, which is why I place a comma before and after. Since both are true, why not teach both?

^j Without the shed blood of God’s Lamb there is no redemption.

^k I take it that many people, as they contemplate the mess the world is in, doubt that the Creator [if He exists] knew what He was doing. One day we will agree that the design is marvelous.

^l The reference is not so much to chronological time as to occasions or epochs. Believe it or not, human history is being “administered”.

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one head in Christ—those on the heavens^a and those on the earth—in Him^[S], ¹¹in whom we were also assigned an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him^[F] who works all things according to the decision of His will, ¹²so that we should be to the praise of His glory,^b we who first trusted in the Christ; ¹³about whom, to be sure, we had heard the true Word^c—the Gospel of your salvation; by whom, since you also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the down payment on our inheritance until the release of the possession,^d to the praise of His glory.^e

Some doctrinal praying

¹⁵Because of this, having heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶I really do not stop giving thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷that the God of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,^f may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation^g in the real knowledge^h of Himself, ¹⁸the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, that you may knowⁱ 1)what is the hope of His^[F] calling;^j and 2)what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,^k ¹⁹and 3)what the exceeding greatness of His power into^l us who are believing, according to the demonstration of the extent of His might ²⁰which He exercised in the Christ when He raised Him^[S] from among the dead and seated Him at His^[F] right, in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above every ruler and authority and power and dominion^m—even every name that can be named, not only in this age but also in the next. ²²In short, He^[F] placed everything under

^a “On the heavens”—that is what the Text says. I take the reference to be to beings and things that are not an integral part of Heaven, temporary appendages—of course any beings and things on the earth are not an integral part of Heaven either. They all will jointly be subordinated to the Christ.

^b This is the main point of the whole exercise—the praise of His glory! (Isaiah 43:7.)

^c A majority of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have “we”, rather than the familiar ‘you’. Being unexpected, many scribes may have made the change (of one letter) almost without thinking. The Gospel of Christ is ‘the true Word’.

^d We receive “the release of the possession” in Glory. From the beginning of the epistle both the Father and the Son have been referred to repeatedly—here the Holy Spirit is introduced.

^e Verses 3-14 form a single sentence in the Greek Text, which is why I translate the same way.

^f To be the ‘Father’ of glory is to be the Source of all true glory.

^g Revelation provides us with true information, and wisdom shows us what to do with it.

^h I finally settled on ‘real knowledge’ as the best way to render *epignwsis*, the heightened form of *gnwsis*, ‘knowledge’. Real knowledge is more than mere intellectual knowledge, or even true theoretical knowledge—it involves experience. The Text goes on to say, “the eyes of your heart having been enlightened”. Real knowledge changes your ‘heart’, who you are.

ⁱ Paul wants us to know three things, that I have indicated with a number before ‘what’.

^j His calling gives us true hope.

^k We normally concentrate on ‘our’ inheritance, what we are going to get. More important is God’s inheritance, what **He** is going to get.

^l “Into us”—that is what the Text says. Note that ‘believing’ is in the present tense. Please see the note at 3:20 below.

^m It is generally understood that the reference is to the angelic hierarchy. The two thirds that remained faithful to God were never a problem, so presumably the special point is that Christ defeated Satan, with his one third, and is now (as the God/man, the second Adam) seated ‘far above’ that enemy. Please see the note at 2:6 below.

His^[S] feet, and appointed Him to be Head over everything in the Church,^a ²³which is His body, the complement^b of Him who fills everything in every way.

Our position in Christ

2 ¹He^[F] raised you up as well, when you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you once walked, according to the Aeon of this world, the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of the disobedience;^c ³among whom all of us also used to conduct ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and of the senses,^d and were by nature children of wrath,^e just like the rest. ⁴But God—being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions—made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) ⁶and raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,^f ⁷in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, through His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved, through the Faith^g—and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰You see, we are His ‘poem’,^h created in Christ Jesus for good works,ⁱ which God prepared in advance in order that we should walk in them.^j

Once far, now near in Christ

¹¹So then, remember that once you physical Gentiles—called ‘uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘circumcision’ (that made in flesh with hands)—¹²that at that

^a Would it not be wonderful if the Church recognized that Headship in practice! Where *ekklesia* refers to the whole body of Christ, as here, I render ‘Church’; where it refers to a local assembly I render ‘congregation’.

^b Just as a wife complements her husband (when things are like they are supposed to be), God’s purpose is that the Bride complement the Groom (even if we don’t understand why Someone who “fills everything in every way” needs complementing).

^c Strictly speaking the Text has “according to the Aeon of this world, according to the ruler of the domain of the air”—the phrases are parallel, so ‘Aeon’ and ‘ruler’ have the same referent, a specific person or being. This spirit is presently at work (present tense) in ‘the sons of the disobedience’. ‘Sons’ of something are characterized by that something, and the something in this case is ‘the’ disobedience (the Text has the definite article)—a continuation of the original rebellion against the Sovereign of the universe. Anyone in rebellion against the Creator is under satanic influence, direct or indirect (in most cases a demon acts as Satan’s agent, when something more than the influence of the surrounding culture is required). Anyone in rebellion against the Creator will also have strongholds of Satan in his mind.

^d This is the way people who do not belong to Christ may be expected to act. Far from being surprised, we should count on it, and our strategies (for living and evangelizing) should count on it.

^e To be in rebellion against the Creator is to be under His wrath.

^f This is tremendous! Here we have our authority. Christ is now seated at the Father’s right, “far above” (1:21) the enemy and his hosts. This verse affirms that we are there too! So in Christ we also are far above the enemy and his hosts. We should be consciously operating on that basis, but since few churches teach this, most Christians live in spiritual defeat.

^g The Text has ‘the’ faith; the reference is to a specific faith, presumably the body of truth that revolves around the person of Jesus.

^h The English word ‘poem’ comes from the Greek word here, *poiema*, and is one of its meanings. Just as each poem is an individual creation of the poet, so we are individual creations, not produced by a production line in a factory.

ⁱ We are not saved by good works, but for good works. We do good works because we are saved, and if you don’t...

^j “Prepared in advance”—I imagine that this refers to God’s moral code, the rules of conduct that everyone should follow (if everyone did we would not need jails, rescue missions, etc.).

time you were apart from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise,^a having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have come to be near through the blood of the Christ.

Two into one

¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one and broken down the barrier of separation—the law with its commandments and ordinances—¹⁵having abolished the enmity through His ‘flesh’,^b so as to mold the two [Jew and Gentile] into one new man in Himself (thus making peace), ¹⁶and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross (by which He killed the enmity).^c ¹⁷He came and proclaimed peace to us,^d being both far and near, ¹⁸because through Him we both have access to the Father, by one Spirit.^e

¹⁹So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,^f Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; ²¹in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are being built together to become a habitation of God in spirit.^g

The ‘secret’ revealed to Paul

3 ¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—²surely you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me for you, ³how that by revelation He made known to me the ‘secret’^h (as I have written briefly already, ⁴with reference to which, when you read,^a you

^a “The promise”—that is what the Text says. The various covenants recorded in the Old Testament differ considerably from each other, but one might say that there is one promise common to all: God promises to bless obedience, those who obey Him. To obey God one needs to have some contact with Him. Without such contact one has no hope.

^b “His ‘flesh’” presumably refers to Jesus’ physical body that went to the cross. Without the incarnation none of what Paul is discussing would have been possible.

^c In this paragraph Paul is dealing with the enmity between Jew and Gentile; within the Jewish ‘religion’ Gentiles were definitely second class citizens—to be saved a Gentile had to become a spiritual Jew. Within the Church of Jesus Christ that distinction is done away with; all are on the same footing, regardless of ethnic origin.

^d The Greek manuscripts are badly divided between “us” and ‘you’, so I follow the best line of transmission. Verses 17 and 18 form a single sentence, wherein Paul now handles Jew and Gentile as a unit, “we both”.

^e Up to this point in the letter the Father and the Son have been repeatedly presented as distinct persons; now the Holy Spirit is added, although introduced in 1:13 above. All three persons are in this 18th verse.

^f The truth that Paul is expounding is that in Christ Gentiles join Jews as “fellow citizens” and “members of God’s household”, part of “the whole building”. In what sense can that “building” be built upon “the foundation of the apostles and prophets”? Presumably “prophets” is short for the writings that make up the Old Testament Scriptures, or Canon. The Faith is based on revealed Truth, not individual people. Analogously, presumably “apostles” is short for the writings that make up the New Testament Scriptures, or Canon. Again, the Faith is based on revealed Truth, not individual people. Our “growing into a holy temple” (verse 21) depends upon the Holy Spirit and His Sword (not individuals whom God used).

^g There is no article with ‘spirit’; one ‘habitation’ made up of many individuals refers to the spiritual realm, not the physical. (Recall that in John 4:23-24 Jesus explained that the Father wants worship ‘in spirit’.)

^h I consider that ‘secret’ is a better rendering than ‘mystery’. The truth about the Church is not all that mysterious; it just had not been explained before.

can understand my insight into Christ's secret), ⁵which in different generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by Spirit^b to His holy apostles and prophets:^c ⁶that the Gentiles are joint-heirs, of the same body, and fellow partakers of His promise in the Christ^d through the Gospel, ⁷of which I became a servant according to the gift of God's grace, the gift given to me according to the outworking of His power.

⁸To me, the very least of all saints,^e was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to enlighten all^f as to the program^g of the secret that from the beginning of the ages has been hidden by the God who created all things through Jesus Christ;^h ¹⁰to the intent that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms,ⁱ ¹¹according to the eternal purpose that He accomplished by Christ Jesus our Lord,^j ¹²in whom we have the boldness and the access with confidence through faith in Him. ¹³Therefore I ask that you not lose heart at my afflictions on your behalf, which is your glory.

Prayer

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,^k ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its name,^l ¹⁶that He^[F] may grant you, according to the riches of His glory: 1)to be strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷2)Christ to dwell in your hearts through the Faith, having been rooted and established in love ¹⁸so that you may be fully able to grasp (with all saints) what is the breadth and length and depth and height; ¹⁹and 3)to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge—so that you may be fulfilled into all the fullness of God.^m

^a Whatever writing Paul is referring to, evidently the Ephesians had not seen it yet, but he figures they have heard about it. Paul probably wrote a variety of things that were not preserved in the New Testament canon.

^b There being no article with 'spirit', it could be either 'by Spirit' (used as a proper name) or 'in spirit' (referring to the manner). Both are true and legitimate, but I have chosen the first option in the translation.

^c An apostle, upon receiving a revelation, would also function as a prophet, but people like Mark and Luke were prophets without being apostles.

^d Instead of "the Christ", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Christ Jesus' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Paul does not always describe himself at this level of humility!

^f His explanation of the secret is for everyone, Gentile and Jew alike.

^g Instead of "program", perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have 'fellowship' (as in AV and NKJV).

^h This text joins Hebrews 1:10, John 1: 3, 10 and Colossians 1:16 in affirming that Jehovah the Son was the primary agent in the creation of our world and race. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "through Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ Don't you know that the cherubim and seraphim and other high ranking angels really wondered what the Sovereign was up to when He created the human being.

^j "The eternal purpose"—this included the Lamb with His blood shed (1 Peter 1:19-20)! Note that "accomplished" is in the past tense.

^k Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "of our Lord Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^l Here is another reference to the Son as the primary agent in the creation.

^m If it were not for verse 20 below (see note), I would be inclined to think that Paul's prayer was overly ambitious! Does he really expect us to arrive at "all the fullness of God"?! Well, we have the Trinity going for us—the Father is granting, the Spirit is strengthening our inner man and the Son is dwelling

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to the power that is working in us,^a ²¹to Him be the glory in the Church in Christ Jesus, to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.^b

Putting the theology into practice

Unity

4 ¹So then, as the prisoner in the Lord I urge you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, ²with all humility and courtesy, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³taking pains to keep the unity of the Spirit^c in the bond of the peace.^d ⁴There is one body and one Spirit (just as you also were called in one hope of your calling), ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all,^e who is over all and through all and in us^f all.

Building up the body

⁷Now to each one of us the grace according to the measure of Christ's gift was given. ⁸That is why He says, "When He ascended into the heights He captured the concentration camp, and distributed gifts to men."^g ⁹(What does 'He ascended' imply if not that He also first descended into the interior regions of the

in our hearts—an unbeatable combination (if it were not for our lack of commitment). That said, however, I must confess that I do not understand verse 18—what is Paul describing? Whatever it is, all saints are supposed to be able to grasp it, which seems rather improbable. Verse 19 offers another paradox: if the love of Christ surpasses knowledge, how can we know it? Spiritual growth is clearly a process. 2 Peter 1:3 affirms that "His divine power has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness." So whether we get there or not is up to us—those who overcome will get there in Glory, if not before.

^a Ephesians 1:19 spoke of "the exceeding greatness of His power **into** us who are believing"—note that the verb is in the present tense; having believed yesterday won't hack it, we must believe today. This tremendous power that God pours into us, as we believe, exceeds our powers of imagination. Well now, my personal horizon is limited and defined by my ability to imagine. Anything that I can't imagine lies outside my horizon, and so obviously I won't ask for it. I sadly confess that I have not yet arrived at a spiritual level where I can unleash this power—I have yet to make the truth in this verse work for me. But I understand that the truth affirmed here is literal, and I only hope that others will get there before I do (so I can learn from them), if I keep on delaying. The whole point of the exercise (verse 21) is for God to get glory [not for me to have a good time, although if I ever get there I will certainly have a great good time!], and to the extent that we do not put His power in us to work we are depriving Him of glory that He could and should have.

^b The glory that God gets from the Church will go on forever.

^c "The unity of the Spirit" presumably refers only to things that come from the Holy Spirit; it cannot include anything with which He does not agree. Note that we are not to 'create' the unity, we are to "keep" it.

^d In verses 1-3 Paul is talking about how we relate to other believers.

^e Here is the Trinity again—the Spirit in verse 4, the Son in verse 5 and the Father in verse 6.

^f Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "us" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), while another 4% read 'you' (as in AV and NKJV).

^g "He captured the concentration camp" does not sound very much like "He led captivity captive", nor does it. The point is that 'captivity' refers to people held in captivity, and they are freed. When an invading army takes a concentration camp, the prisoners are set free (usually). We have here a quote from Psalm 68:18, where the second half says, "You have received gifts from men", just the opposite of "distributed". What to do? The Targum (a Hebrew commentary) interprets as, "You have given gifts to the children of men". Upon reflection this would appear to be obvious. When you put tithes and offerings in the offering plate at church, you are giving to God, but does that money literally go to Heaven? No, it is redistributed down here—some goes to the preacher's salary, some to a missionary, some to pay the light bill, etc. God does indeed receive gifts from men, but He does not stash them in Heaven somewhere; they are redistributed down here. When done properly He gets the credit: "He distributed gifts to men."

earth?^a ¹⁰He who descended is the very one who also ascended far above all the heavens,^b that He might fill all things.) ¹¹Yes, He Himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,^c ¹²for the equipping of the saints into the work of the ministry, so as to build up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain into the unity of the faith and of the real knowledge of the Son of God, into a complete man, into the resulting full stature of Christ;^d ¹⁴so that we no longer be ‘infants’, tossed about as by waves and carried off by every doctrinal fad, through the underhanded dealings of the people who collect the fee for the error;^e ¹⁵rather, speaking the truth in love, let us

^a This is one of several texts that lead me to understand that Sheol/Hades is beneath the crust of the earth somewhere. For one of the things He did down there, see 1 Peter 3:19.

^b “All the heavens”—sounds like quite a few, more than three; and He is above all of them.

^c One might imagine that this list follows the chronological sequence of the several ministries. An apostle introduces the Gospel into an area or context; a prophet gets the people’s attention and an evangelist urges them to believe; but once people are regenerated then pastors and teachers come to the fore—they are the ones who equip the saints. However, in practice, especially in a pioneer missionary situation, there are seldom that many people around. The missionary preaches the Gospel and it is up to him to teach the first converts; he is alone. A pioneer missionary, the first one to introduce the Gospel to an ethnic group or area, has an apostolic function (whether or not he himself is an apostle). But he must also function as an evangelist and as a teacher (whether or not he has those gifts).

However, most of us live and work where there are established, functioning congregations. So what would be the function of an apostle within an established, functioning congregation? If he lives and worships in that community, probably none at all, in that specific capacity—he might function as a teacher or a prophet. In a country, or area, where there is no more pioneer missionary work to be done, the exercise of the apostolic function would be itinerant, acting as God’s special emissary, an official intervener, for disciplinary and correctional purposes.

I will take up evangelist next; what would his function be within an established congregation? Well, can you evangelize someone who is already regenerated? Evidently the function of an evangelist is directed to unbelievers, who should not be members of the congregation (although some often are). Of course an evangelist might also function as a pastor or teacher. A truly gifted evangelist will function beyond the limits of a local congregation.

As for the prophetic function, I will address the question of supernatural revelation of information not available through existing channels. (1 Corinthians 14:3 speaks of ‘edification’, ‘exhortation’ and ‘comfort’ as coming from a prophet, but I will not take up such activity here.) We understand that the Canon of Scripture is closed: God is no longer giving written revelation that is of general or universal application. But that does not mean that God no longer speaks into specific situations. Divine guidance is a type of prophecy; He is giving information not otherwise available. I myself have been contemplateed with a prophecy delivered by someone who had no idea who I was, and not in the context of a local congregation. The function of a true prophet cannot be limited to one congregation. Indeed, God may use a prophet at city, state or country level. Our world desperately needs prophetic voices.

A teacher will normally reside in a specific community, but his ministry may range beyond it. A pastor’s function is local, just as he is chosen and ordained locally. It is simply a fact of life that someone with a shepherd’s heart is not necessarily a good teacher, and an honest to goodness teacher often lacks a shepherd’s heart. The functions are supposed to be complementary, and the object is to get all true believers involved in the work of the ministry. Life in Christ is not a spectator sport!

^d Verse 13 emphasizes the truth in verse 12—every believer is supposed to grow into full stature. Just because we do not reach a goal does not invalidate that goal.

^e Before Paul wrote Ephesians, *κίβητα* always meant dice-throwing (but commentators usually don’t like that, and so take evasive action). Why do people do that? Usually for material advantage. If the dice-throwing is ‘crafty’ then it is crooked—the dice are loaded. But this has to do with doctrinal fads (‘winds’). Why do people start and push fads? To get or to keep attention, which usually involves material advantage. But who throws dice by himself? To cheat you have to have a victim. But why is the other guy playing? He hopes to make a fast buck, too. So why do people buy into doctrinal fads? Often for material advantage—the purveyor makes promises (e.g. the ‘prosperity gospel’); sometimes for ‘spiritual’ or social prestige (which can translate into material advantage). You have to make the victim think that there is something in it for him. One of the basic meanings for *μεθοδία* is ‘a method of collecting taxes’ or ‘debts’. If you want to shear the sheep, you need a method. But who would be vulner-

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in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, the Christ; ¹⁶from whom the whole body, being fitted and knit together by what every joint supplies, as each individual part does its work, promotes its own growth,^a its own edification, in love.

Put away the old, put on the new

¹⁷So then, I affirm and insist on this in the Lord: you must no longer carry on as the rest of the Gentiles do,^b in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸having been darkened in their understanding, being alienated [as a continuing condition] from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts,^c ¹⁹who, having become dead to hope, have abandoned themselves to depravity, greedily indulging in every kind of vileness.^d ²⁰Now that is not how you 'learned Christ'—²¹if indeed you have heard Him and been taught by Him (as the truth is in Jesus): ²²that you put away, concerning your former way of life, the old man^e (that keeps on being corrupted by the deceitful desires), ²³and that you be renewed^f in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and put on the new man, created in the likeness of God,^g in true righteousness and holiness.

Practical instruction

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,^h for we are members of one another. ²⁶Be angry but do not

able to any such 'method'? Only a spiritual 'infant', who still thinks he can make a fast spiritual buck, who thinks there can be shortcuts. A "perfect man" (*ανηρ*, not *αβρωακος*) is like Jesus—when Satan comes with his shortcuts he is not taken in.

Let us try to pull it together. The fad (*αρεμος*) is an error (*πλανη*), which carries a fee—the error is not free. The purveyor needs a method for collecting the fee (*μεθοδεια*) for the error he is selling. But it can not be obvious, he needs to finesse it (*κυβεια εν πανουργια*) (he wants happy, unsuspecting sheep). Someone who is mature (verse 13) knows there are no shortcuts, so is not taken in by any cheap promise. Telling the truth in love (verse 15) contrasts with selling an error for gain (verse 14).

^a Any local congregation can promote its own growth by encouraging each member to exercise his gift(s): by making room for all the gifts and promoting their use.

^b It sounds like some of them were not being altogether successful in breaking with their former way of life. Breaking free from the culture that surrounds you, so as to embrace biblical values, is not easy.

^c This works like a downward spiral: the ignorance feeds the hardening, that in turn increases the ignorance. The consequence is that they can never get out by themselves. Someone must take Christ's power to them to help them out, before they become 'dead to hope'. "Having been darkened" is passive voice: they are darkened by Satan, directly or indirectly.

^d What kind of person or being might be "dead to hope"? If someone is dead to hope, is he beyond hope, unrecoverable? And how should society defend itself against those who have "abandoned themselves to depravity"? The consequences of depravity always spill over into the surrounding society, and according to Psalm 5:5-6 the LORD hates such people, and so presumably will not 'draw' them (John 6:44). 1 John 5:16-17 teaches that certain sinners are beyond the reach of prayer, they have passed the point of no return. If someone cannot be saved, then he needs to be neutralized (because of the harm he causes to others) —we need to ask God to teach us how to do this.

^e The "old man" cannot be cured: it must be rejected in favor of the new.

^f The verb here evidently means 'renew' and not 'make new', the implication being that a depraved mind represents a departure from a former condition. When a person is regenerated by the Holy Spirit he receives a new nature, but the old one is not obliterated or expunged. We must constantly choose to use the new one.

^g Wait a minute! Was not the first Adam created in the likeness of God? So when he fell did he lose that likeness? Probably not entirely, but Satan has been working at increasing the damage ever since—he works to remake men in his own image; in those who have "abandoned themselves to depravity" (verse 19) he has been successful. For someone to receive the "new man" requires a new act of creation.

^h This is an exact quotation from Zechariah 8:16, though not presented as such.

sin;^a do not let the sun set on your angry mood, ²⁷nor give an opportunity to the devil.^b ²⁸The one who steals must steal no longer, but rather let him work, doing something good with his hands, that he may have something to share with someone in need. ²⁹Let no evil word proceed from your mouth, but only what is good for edification, as needed,^c that it may impart grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,^d with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander be removed from you, with all malice.^e ³²Rather, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Walk in love

5 ¹Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children, ²and walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma. ³But, you should not even talk about fornication or any form of moral corruption or insatiableness^f (as is fitting for saints); ⁴nor any obscenity, nor foolish talk or coarse joking (that do not belong), but rather thanksgiving. ⁵Because you can know this for sure: no fornicator, nor anyone who is morally corrupt or insatiable (actually an idolater),^g has any inheritance in the Kingdom of the Christ and God.^h ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words,ⁱ for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of the disobedience.^j ⁷Therefore do not be participants with them ⁸—even though you were once darkness, you are now light in Sovereign.

Walk in light

Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of the Spirit^k is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰approving what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not associate with the unfruitful works of the darkness, but rather expose/reprove them.^l ¹²(It is shameful even to speak of those things being done by them in secret.) ¹³Now all things, upon being exposed, are revealed by the light, for whatever reveals is light. ¹⁴Therefore He says:

^a This is an exact quotation from Psalm 4:4, though not presented as such.

^b Evil and injustice should make us angry, and legitimate anger should give rise to appropriate action. But if we do nothing except to sit and brood, we do not help the situation and we do give Satan opportunity.

^c “As needed”—part of imparting grace is knowing when to keep quiet!

^d I imagine that any sort of disobedience on our part grieves Him.

^e The focus in verses 31 and 32 is on how we treat other people. God has been good to us; we should be good to others.

^f Of course doing such things is out of the question, but why can't we talk about them? If you talk about it you will think about it, which will provide an opening for temptation.

^g To have an insatiable desire for something (say, money) is to be dominated by that something; it has become a god, an idolatry.

^h According to the grammatical construction here, “Christ and God” refer to the same person.

ⁱ Many ‘churches’ these days are making allowances for sexual immorality of various sorts (getting their values from Freud, not the Bible), but they will find themselves excluded from the Kingdom. Watch out for empty words!

^j See the note at 2:2 above.

^k Instead of “Spirit”, some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘light’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^l I could not decide between ‘expose’ and ‘reprove’, since the verb here includes both ideas. So let us do both.

“Wake up, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and the Christ will shine on you.”^a

Walk in wisdom

15See then that you walk carefully, not as unwise but as wise, **16**redeeming the time, because the days are evil. **17**That is why you must not be foolish,^b but understand what the Lord’s will is. **18**And do not get drunk on wine, which is harmful and wasteful;^c rather be filled with the Spirit,^d **19**speaking to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your hearts to the Lord; **20**always giving thanks to God the Father concerning all things,^e in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, **21**submitting to one another in the fear of God.^f

Relationships within the home

About wives

22Wives, subordinate yourselves^g to your own husbands, as to the Lord, **23**because a man is head of his wife as also Christ is Head of the Church—He also is Preserver of the body. **24**Yes, just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also the wives should be to their own husbands in everything.^h

About husbands

25Husbands, love your own wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up on her behalf, **26**in order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water: in a word, **27**that He might present her—the splendid Church—to Himself, not having a blemish or a wrinkle or any such thing, but that she be holy and blameless. **28**Just so the husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies: he who loves his wife loves himself. **29**After all, no one ever hated his own flesh; rather he nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church **30**—for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.ⁱ **31**“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and

^a This is not a direct quote of any Old Testament passage. Not all God-given prophecies, though written down and read by subsequent generations, were included in the Canon.

^b The ultimate foolishness is to not understand the Lord’s will.

^c Literally, ‘in which is dissipation’, so where did I get ‘harmful and wasteful’? Well, to dissipate is to waste, and a dictionary I have defines it as “to indulge in pleasure to the point of harming oneself”. Drunkenness always harms and wastes.

^d Observe that this is a command, so it depends on us. The Holy Spirit is waiting to fill us, if we will only yield to Him. For light to fill the room all you have to do is flip the switch.

^e We are to declare God’s goodness, faithfulness and wisdom, even when we do not like what is happening.

^f Instead of “God”, perhaps 30% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Observe that this is something she should do of her own volition, not because she is beaten into submission.

^h This “everything” obviously does not include things that God forbids.

ⁱ Less than 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “of His flesh and of His bones” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.—an easy case of ‘similar ending’). Flesh and bones are definitely physical, not spiritual: so what is Paul saying? Perhaps he is emphasizing that “His body” is just as real as a physical body.

be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”^a **32**This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

33In any case, each of you individually: let each one love his own wife as himself,^b while the wife must respect her husband.

About children

6 ¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“that it may go well with you and you may live long on the earth.”^c ⁴And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger,^d but nurture them in the discipline and instruction of Sovereign.

About slaves and masters

⁵Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ;^e ⁶not only when being watched, to please men, but as slaves of the Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷serving with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men, ⁸knowing that whatever good each one does, he will receive the same again from the Lord, whether he is slave or free.^f

⁹And masters, be the same way towards them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Spiritual warfare

¹⁰Finally, my brothers,^g be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so as to be able to stand firm against the stratagems of the devil. ¹²Because, our wrestling match^h is not against flesh and blood,ⁱ but against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of the darkness of this age, against the malignant spirits in the heavenly realms. ¹³That is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, to stand firm, with everything in place.

^a This is not just poetic language, it is a chemical reality. See Genesis 2:24.

^b Observe that ‘wife’ is singular. Although in the Old Testament men were not condemned for having more than one wife, in the context of the Church monogamy is the norm. The instruction in verse 33 is basic: if a wife does not feel loved and/or a husband does not feel respected, negative things start to happen.

^c See Exodus 20:12.

^d Unreasonable demands, harsh treatment, lack of clear guidelines—there are various ways to frustrate children and cause them to lose heart, and even give up. In today’s world they will probably cop out by going to drugs, or the Internet (both of which leave them wide open to demonic influence).

^e Observe that slavery is not condemned. The owners are not commanded to free their slaves, just to treat them right. The slaves are not told to run away, but to be even better slaves.

^f It pays to do good!

^g Only some 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “my brothers” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), but since the whole letter is written to Christians, there really is no doubt. Besides, how could an unbeliever put on the full armor of God? Note that Paul writes “our” wrestling match—apostles are also under attack, not to mention pastors, etc.

^h The word here is a noun, not a verb, and means precisely ‘wrestling match’. A wrestling match is based on violent physical contact, and the Holy Spirit, through Paul, is advising us that we are in such a match, and the opponents are malignant spirits of all ranks. The ‘doctrine’ to be found in some circles that Christians can’t be attacked by demons is totally and dangerously false.

ⁱ Even though people may indeed act as our enemies, we need to keep in mind that they are only being used by the real enemy.

EPHESIANS 6

¹⁴So stand firm, having belted your waist with truth,^a having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and having shod your feet with the readiness of the Gospel of the peace; ¹⁶above all, having taken up the shield of the faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows^b of the malignant one; ¹⁷also, grasp the helmet of the salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word spoken;^c ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, using every prayer and petition, yes being watchful to this end with all perseverance and petition for all the saints ¹⁹—on my behalf too,^d that when I open my mouth utterance may be given to me with boldness, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly,^e as I ought to do.

Closing greetings

²¹Now that you also may know my affairs, how I am doing, Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything; ²²whom I have sent to you for this very purpose: that you may know our circumstances and that he may comfort your hearts.

²³Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.

²⁴The grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.^f Amen.

^a Any lack of truth or righteousness in our lives will leave us vulnerable to attack.

^b If it is faith that quenches these arrows, then they probably come in the form of doubts and fears.

^c *hrema* (rather than *logos*)—the implication appears to be that we must speak the Word. Well, how else can you use the 'Sword'?

^d We all need prayer, even apostles.

^e If you are in prison because you spoke out, to keep on doing so does require boldness and courage.

^f Evidently "the grace" is not for everybody.

**The Epistle of Paul to the
PHILIPPIANS**

Salutation

1 ¹Paul and Timothy,^a slaves^b of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus^c who are at Philippi, together with the overseers^d and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.

How Paul prays for them

³I thank my God every time I remember you; ⁴in all my prayers for all of you I always pray with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being certain of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the Day of Jesus Christ;^e ⁷just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel you all are partakers with me of the Grace.^f ⁸God is my witness how I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

⁹This is what I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more in real knowledge^g and full discernment,^h ¹⁰for you to identify the things that really matter;ⁱ that you may be sincere and blameless until the Day of Christ,^j ¹¹having been filled^k with the fruits of righteousness that are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.^l

News and Instructions

By whatever means, Christ is preached

¹²Now I want you to know, brothers, that the events against me have actually turned out for the advancement of the Gospel: ¹³as a result, it has become evident to the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that I am in chains for

^a Paul gives recognition to his junior partner.

^b That is right, slaves.

^c Paul goes back and forth between “Jesus Christ” and “Christ Jesus” with apparently no difference in meaning.

^d This term is often translated ‘bishop’; along with ‘elder’ and ‘pastor’ it refers to a single office in the church. Note that there is a plurality of both overseers and deacons.

^e Amen!

^f That is what the Text says, ‘the’ grace. They identified with Paul and what he was doing.

^g The compound noun, *epignwsis*, is often rendered as ‘full knowledge’, but I consider that ‘real knowledge’ comes closer.

^h We have all heard that ‘love is blind’, but *agape* love is just the opposite. Lamentably, I cannot think of a single church that could be said to have “full discernment”, and many appear to have none at all.

ⁱ Yes indeed, “the things that really matter”—the point of identifying them is to concentrate our attention and energy on them.

^j In verse 6 the emphasis is on God’s sovereignty, here it is on our responsibility. “The Day of Christ” is of special relevance to Christians, and the particular aspect in view here is the accounting (see Romans 14:12,14).

^k “Having been filled”—that is what the Text says. Since the righteousness of Christ is imputed (we cannot earn it), God gives us the best possible start; as it says in 2 Peter 1:3, “His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness”. What we do with it is up to us (see 2:12 below).

^l The glory of God is the ultimate purpose of all creation (Isaiah 43:7).

PHILIPPIANS 1

Christ;^a **14**also, most of the brothers in Sovereign have been influenced by my chains to be much bolder, to speak the Word fearlessly. **15**To be sure, some are even preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will; **16**the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking to add to my affliction while in chains,^b **17**but the latter out of love, knowing that I am set here for the defense of the Gospel.^c **18**No problem: in every way, be it in pretense or in truth,^d Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice—yes, and will rejoice.

To live is Christ, to die is gain

19You see, I know that this will turn out for my deliverance (through your supplication and the support of the Spirit of Jesus Christ)^e **20**according to my earnest expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in anything but be truly bold, so that now as always Christ will be glorified in my person, whether by life or by death^f **21**—to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.^g **22**Now if I am to live on in the flesh it will mean fruitful labor for me, so I do not know what to choose. **23**I am torn between the two: I have the desire to depart and be with Christ (far better),^h **24**but to remain in the flesh is more necessary, because of you.ⁱ **25**So having been persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, **26**so that your rejoicing over me may be more abundant in Christ Jesus, through my coming to you again.^j

27Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you, or am absent, I may hear about you that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel with one soul, **28**and not being intimidated in any way by your opponents: to them this is an indicator of ruin,^k but to you of deliverance,^l and that from God. **29**For it has been

^a Paul did not hide his light 'under a bushel'.

^b Just a minute: how does insincere preaching (by others) add to his affliction? I suppose we all know 'Christian workers' who are motivated by selfish ambition, and any such would want to 'make hay' while free from Paul's 'shadow', as it were. Judging Paul by themselves, they would think he would be bothered by seeing them gaining prominence at his expense.

^c Even in prison Paul did not lose sight of the job God had given him. Some 10% of the Greek manuscripts transpose verses 16 and 17 (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The Bible is clear to the effect that the means, not just the end, must be appropriate to God's character, so this statement seems a bit strange. Within the community of faith deviations can be treated quite severely, but perhaps for what we might term 'pre-evangelism', getting people who have never heard of Him before to start thinking about Christ, there may be some leeway. Further, Matthew 20:1-16 makes clear that God is prepared to use a variety of types of worker.

^e This is presumably a reference to the Holy Spirit (see John 16:13-15).

^f Although it appears that Paul actually hoped to be freed from prison, he is prepared to die. His main concern is not to do anything that will shame his Master.

^g How can death be a gain? Only if you live for Christ.

^h This is one of a few passages that lead us to believe that when a true believer dies his spirit goes directly to be with Christ in Heaven, not to the good side of Hades/Sheol (the 'bosom of Abraham') as with the Old Testament saints.

ⁱ His commitment to the Cause is more important than his personal desire.

^j Evidently Paul had a sincere hope that he would be released from prison.

^k How shall we understand this? What is the effect of our boldness in the face of opposition—do the opponents consider that we are sealing our own fate, or do they suspect that they may be on the wrong side? Perhaps both.

^l Our confidence in God assures us of deliverance, one way or another: by life or by death.

granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe into Him,^a but also to suffer for His sake,^b ³⁰having the same struggle that you saw in me and now hear to be in me.^c

About having the mind of Christ

2 ¹Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship from the Spirit, if any tenderness and acts of compassion, ²make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard one another as being better than yourselves.^d ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own concerns, but also for what concerns others.^e

⁵In fact, let this mindset be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, existing in God's form, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped,^f ⁷but divested Himself, taking a slave's form, coming to be in the likeness of men.^g ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death^h—even death on a cross! ⁹Indeed, that is why God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of **Jesus**ⁱ every knee will bow—of those in heaven,^j those on earth^k and those under the earth^l—¹¹and every tongue will acknowledge^m that Jesus Christ is Sovereign, to the glory of God the Father.

^a The Text never has “believe ‘in’ Jesus”; we must believe into Him. Being on the outside we must change location. This involves commitment and a change of worldview or value system.

^b If you were taught to expect a ‘bed of roses’, you had a bad teacher.

^c They had seen him suffer when he first visited Philippi, and he was presently suffering in prison.

^d Personally I have a hard time with this one. But it may have more to do with social level and prestige within the congregation than with personal qualities and abilities.

^e *Agape* love is the opposite of selfishness.

^f Since Jehovah the Son was (and is) equally God, the point appears to be that He did not insist on hanging on to His prerogatives.

^g Note that to be a human being is to be a slave. We are born slaves, live slaves and die slaves. We are born slaves to self, sin and death (with Satan behind the scenes); Christ offers us the option of being slaves to God, good and life. You can't stop being a slave, but you can choose your owner.

^h Hebrews 5:8 says that Jehovah the Son “learned obedience by the things that He suffered”. He had never experienced anything like that before. So what happens to us if we have the same mindset?

ⁱ Note that it is at the name of Jesus, not Christ or even Jehovah, that every knee will bow. ‘Jesus’ is His human name—recall that in Revelation the slain Lamb (5:6,12; 7:14; 12:11) receives glory and praise along with the Father. You cannot kill God, so the Lamb is Jesus. Recall further that in John 5:22 Jesus affirmed that the Father had “committed all judgment” to Him, which means that it will be Jesus sitting on the “great white throne” (Revelation 20:11), not to mention a certain “winepress” (Revelation 19:15). Although at the moment I see no way of ‘closing the question’ (as we say here in Brazil), I verily suspect that the correct transliteration of ‘Jesus’ into Hebrew will prove to be יֵשׁוּעַ and not יֵשׁוּעָ.

^j This presumably includes the angels, whether or not they have literal ‘knees’.

^k Those actually alive on the earth when this decree is imposed: I suppose it will be during the millennial Messianic Kingdom.

^l Since Hades is inside the earth (Matthew 12:40, Ephesians 4:9, 1 Samuel 28:13), this will presumably include the wicked dead, as well as the demons in the Abyss (at least). Just suppose that God wanted to confine evil to this planet: the logical place for a ‘prison’ would be beneath its crust.

^m The verbs ‘bow’ and ‘acknowledge’ are in the subjunctive mood in the Text, so many versions render ‘should bow’ rather than “will bow”. However, the mood of the verbs is governed by the conjunction *hina*, that normally takes the subjunctive; in the context the author evidently does not intend to leave any doubt about the extent of the recognition.

Act like children of God

¹²So then, my dear ones, just as you have always obeyed (not only in my presence but now much more in my absence), keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³because God Himself is the One at work in you, both to will and to produce,^a for *His* good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or arguing,^b ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and depraved generation,^c among whom you shine as light bearers in the world,^d ¹⁶holding fast the Word of Life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor for nothing.^e ¹⁷Yes, even if I am a libation being poured on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

About Timothy

¹⁹Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be encouraged when I know how you are doing. ²⁰For I have no one else like-minded, who will be genuinely concerned about your welfare^f ²¹(for all seek their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus).^g ²²But you know the proof of him, that as a son with his father he slaved^h with me for the Gospel. ²³Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴Still, I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.ⁱ

About Epaphroditus

²⁵However, I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier; also your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷Well, he really was sick, nearly to death, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸So I sent him the more eagerly, that upon seeing him you might have joy, and I be less anxious. ²⁹Receive him in Sovereign with great joy, and hold such men in honor, ³⁰because for the work of the Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life,^j to complete what was lacking in your service toward me.

Paul's example

3 ¹Finally, my brothers, rejoice in Sovereign. For me to write the same things to you is not troublesome and for you it is the safe thing. ²Watch out for the

^a Paul places our responsibility and God's sovereignty side by side; we must consciously cooperate with Him.

^b When we grumble or argue we are rejecting the Holy Spirit's control, and the result is not purity.

^c Can there be any doubt that our generation is crooked and depraved? And it is not getting any better.

^d As we both live out and actively promote biblical values, the "Word of Life", we will stand out like a bright torch at night. The darker it is, the farther any light can be seen.

^e At the Accounting, one measure of our success will be the extent to which others bought into our commitment.

^f This statement puzzles me; wouldn't Epaphroditus qualify? Perhaps Paul had in mind a messenger who would return with news, since Epaphroditus would stay there.

^g Unfortunately, things have not changed much in 2,000 years.

^h That is what the Text says.

ⁱ Recall that Paul was writing from prison.

^j Right. That is the kind the Church and the world need to see.

‘dogs’, watch out for the bad workers, watch out for the mutilation!^a ³For it is we who are the circumcision, the ones who worship by God’s Spirit and glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in flesh ⁴(though I myself actually have basis for such confidence).

About Paul

If anyone else thinks he has basis for confidence in flesh, I even more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; with respect to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶with respect to zeal, persecuting the Church; with respect to the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.^b

⁷But such things as were gain to me, these I have considered loss for the sake of the Christ. ⁸Yes indeed, in fact I actually consider everything to be a loss for the sake of the excelling thing, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord^c—for His sake I have already lost everything^d (and consider it as trash), so that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having as my righteousness that of the Law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God based on that faith; ¹⁰so that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the sharing in His sufferings,^e becoming like Him in His death,^f ¹¹and so, somehow,^g that I may arrive into the resurrection from among the dead ¹²—not that I have

^a The repetition of the “watch out for” presumably indicates three distinct objects. Paul evidently considered that the three types of people constituted a threat, but how can we identify and distinguish them? “The mutilation” is explained, by contrast, in the next verse—it refers to those who insisted on physical circumcision, but without a change of heart. This was a heresy within the broader Christian community that had originated in Jerusalem. As for the “bad workers”, the adjective used is not ‘malignant’, that refers to aggressive evil. A bad worker produces work that is inferior, careless, or even sabotage, and in consequence can be damaging and dangerous. I suppose Paul is referring to people within the Christian community who are not really committed to Christ and His Kingdom.

As for the ‘dogs’, I am obliged to confess that I do not know who Paul was referring to, though the use of the definite article indicates a specific group that the Philippians would recognize. In Deuteronomy 23:18 ‘dog’ apparently refers to a male prostitute, a catamite, and is declared to be an abomination. In O.T. times dogs were scavengers and therefore unclean, and were generally looked down upon. In Jesus’ day Jews referred to Gentiles as ‘dogs’, but since many Gentiles are in the Church (and the church in Philippi doubtless had a large Gentile contingent) that is certainly not the intended meaning here. The ‘dogs’ in Matthew 7:6 react in an aggressively hostile manner against what is holy; I take it that they are people who are overtly serving evil, and being malignant they are aggressive. I would say that Paul certainly had a copy of Matthew’s Gospel, and may well be following the Lord’s use. This text may be referring to that sort of person, and in that event they would be outside the congregation.

^b Since Paul did not choose to be born to Hebrew parents, Benjaminites, nor to be circumcised the eighth day, these were advantages of birth. The rest was his choice. He is claiming that if Judaism could save, he was saved.

^c The most important thing in this life is to know Jesus Christ as Lord. (One is reminded of the parables of the treasure and the pearl.)

^d Since Paul was born a Roman citizen, his father was wealthy enough to buy that privilege. Had Paul (Saul) remained in Tarsus, he would probably have had an established social position.

^e The power of His resurrection is something I would really like to have, but if the price is to share in His sufferings...

^f We cannot resurrect if we have not died.

^g “And so, somehow”—this really does not sound like ‘once saved, always saved’. The writings of the Apostle Paul contain a variety of clear declarations to the effect that God is Sovereign; they equally contain a variety of clear declarations to the effect that we are responsible. In spite of having given up everything for Christ, in spite of being an Apostle, Paul is not resting on his laurels, is not taking anything for granted. He clearly recognizes his own responsibility to “press on”.

PHILIPPIANS 4

already obtained it or have already been perfected; but I press on to actually claim that for which Christ Jesus claimed me.

¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have already claimed it, but this: forgetting the things behind and straining toward those ahead,^a ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize, the upward call from God^b because of Christ Jesus.

Our citizenship is in Heaven

¹⁵So then, those of us who are mature should have this mentality, but if on some point you think differently, God will reveal that to you as well.^c ¹⁶Only, in what we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.^d

¹⁷Brothers, join together in imitating me, and having us^e as a pattern take note of those who walk in the same way.^f ¹⁸Because many are walking as enemies of the cross of Christ—of whom I told you often, and now tell you even with tears—¹⁹whose end is ruin, whose god is their stomach, and whose glory is in their shame; their mind is only on earthly things.^g ²⁰But our citizenship is in Heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly await *our* Deliverer,^h Sovereign Jesus Christ: ²¹who will transform the body of our humiliationⁱ so that it will be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working by which He is indeed able to subject all things to Himself.

4 ¹So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, do stand fast in Sovereign in this way,^j dear ones.

Concluding considerations

To individuals

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to agreement in the Lord. ³Yes, I urge you too, genuine yokefellow,^k help these women who labored with me in the

^a When Paul (he was still Saul) met Jesus on the road to Damascus he underwent a complete change of direction.

^b “The upward call from God”, that is the real prize; and the only reason the Father calls anyone is because of Jesus Christ.

^c Paul is assuming that they will be listening to the Holy Spirit.

^d Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “let us be of the same mind” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e By changing from ‘me’ to ‘us’ I suppose Paul is including Timothy.

^f I take this as a personal challenge—to be a pattern that others can use to distinguish between friends and enemies of the cross. Since the cross of Christ represents death to self, most people are not interested.

^g Apparently relativistic, humanistic materialists have been around for quite a while.

^h He will deliver us from this world scene, with emphasis upon the glorification of our bodies.

ⁱ Although, as the Psalmist says, we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14), it is also the case that our physical bodies limit us, and not infrequently that limitation reaches the point of being humiliating. Personally, I am ready and waiting for my glorified body, but in the meantime, I am very happy to be able to contribute to Christ’s Kingdom down here.

^j “This way” presumably refers to imitating Paul.

^k We have here a common word for ‘yokefellow’, and although the context seems to ask for a proper name we don’t know of any examples elsewhere of such use. Referring back to 2:25, the description of Epaphroditus makes him a good candidate. He is carrying this letter, and being from Philippi he would be familiar with the facts in the case.

Gospel, and with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.^a

Filling the mind with good things

⁴Rejoice in Sovereign always; again I say, rejoice! ⁵Let your forbearing spirit be evident to all; the Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything,^b but in everything, by prayer and petition along with thanksgiving,^c let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.^d

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are commendable—whatever is of excellent character and whatever is praiseworthy—ponder such things.^e ⁹Put into practice the things that you learned, received, heard and saw in me,^f and the God of peace will be with you.

Thanks for material support

¹⁰I rejoice in the Lord greatly that you have renewed your concern for me once again; of course you were concerned, just lacked the opportunity. ¹¹I am not saying this because of lack, since I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be restricted, and I know what it is to have an abundance; everywhere and in every way I have been initiated both into being well fed and into being hungry, both into having plenty and into having need. ¹³I can handle anything^g through Christ who strengthens me. ¹⁴Nevertheless you have done well in sharing with me in my trial.

¹⁵Now you Philippians know very well that in the beginning of the Gospel,^h when I left Macedonia, no congregation shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶Yes, even in Thessalonica, both once and again, you sent aid for my need. ¹⁷Not that I want the gift, but I want the fruit that is being added to your account.ⁱ ¹⁸I have received everything and have plenty; I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the things you sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.^j

²⁰Now to our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

^a The “Book of Life” is the place to have your name.

^b Do not be a worrywart.

^c We need to be careful not to forget the thanksgiving when we pray. Remember past blessings.

^d This is the greatest protection on the market.

^e Is this list the sort of thing you will find on television or the internet? We need to remember Psalm 101:3, “I will set nothing wicked before my eyes”.

^f Paul is forthright in offering himself as an example, which is a challenge to us to live in such a way that we can do the same. He even guarantees the blessing of “the God of peace”.

^g In the context Paul is not claiming to be all-powerful (‘I can do all things’), but God’s grace is sufficient for meeting whatever comes his way.

^h I suppose he means the beginning for them.

ⁱ When we die we cannot take any money or material goods with us, but we can send it on ahead, investing in Christ’s Kingdom.

^j 2 Corinthians 9:6-12 explains how God’s economy works.

PHILIPPIANS 4

Sign off

- ²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you.
²²All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.
²³The grace of the Sovereign, Jesus Christ, be with you all.^a Amen.

^a Instead of "you all", some 9% of the Greek manuscripts have 'your spirit' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

**The Epistle of Paul to the
COLOSSIANS**

Salutation

1 ¹Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and brother Timothy,^a ²to the holy and faithful brothers in Christ at Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.^b

Building rapport^c

³We always give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ when we pray for you ⁴(having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus^d and your love toward all the saints), ⁵because of the hope^e that is being reserved for you in the heavens, of which you have already heard through the Word of the Truth^f ⁶(the Gospel that has come to you just as also in all the world, where it is producing fruit and growing^g just as also among you, from the day in which you heard about and truly understood God's grace), ⁷even as you learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow slave,^h who is a faithful servant of Christ on yourⁱ behalf, ⁸who also reported to us your love in spirit.^j

Christ preeminent

Walk worthily of the Lord

⁹For this very reason, since the day we heard of it, we have not stopped praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the real knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, ¹⁰in order for you to walk worthily of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way,^k being fruitful in every good work and growing into the real knowledge of God:^l ¹¹being enabled with all capability ac-

^a Literally, "Timothy the brother"—Paul gives recognition to his junior associate.

^b Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts omit "and Sovereign Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Paul had never been in Colosse, so he needed to build rapport with strangers.

^d The going back and forth between "Jesus Christ" and "Christ Jesus" appears to be merely a matter of style.

^e 'Hope' in the Bible contains an element of certainty; it is not mere wishful thinking.

^f Yes, 'the' Truth—the Text has the definite article. The Lord Jesus repeatedly referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of 'the Truth', so Paul is affirming that the Gospel they heard was God's Word.

^g Although half the Greek manuscripts, followed by the *Textus Receptus*, and hence AV and NKJV, do not have "and growing", the other half, including the best line of transmission, do. (The omission could be an easy case of 'similar ending'.)

^h The Greek word here means precisely 'slave'; Paul repeatedly referred to himself as Christ's slave, as did others.

ⁱ Instead of "your", perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have 'our' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^j The Text has no article with 'spirit', so the reference may not be to the Holy Spirit, which is why I render "love in spirit". If this love was directed toward Paul, it could not be emotional, since they had never met him. This whole paragraph is a single sentence—if you feel that the syntax is a little convoluted, you are right.

^k This reminds me of John 5:19 and 12:49-50; the Lord Jesus was filled with this knowledge and understanding (and evidently we are supposed to be as well).

^l Getting to know God is a process.

COLOSSIANS 1

ording to the strength that resides in His glory,^a for all endurance and steadfastness.^b

¹²*Nor have we stopped* giving thanks joyfully to the Father who has qualified us^c for the share in the inheritance of the saints in the Light;^d ¹³who delivered us out of the dominion of the darkness^e and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have the redemption through His blood,^f the forgiveness of our sins.

The supremacy of Christ described

¹⁵He is the visible representation of the invisible God,^g ‘Firstborn’ over all creation,^h ¹⁶because by Him all things were createdⁱ—those in the heavens and those on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities^j—all things have been created through Him and for Him.^k ¹⁷Yes, He is before all, and in Him all things subsist.^l ¹⁸Also, He is the Head of the body, the Church.

He is Beginning,^m the firstborn from among the dead,ⁿ so that He may be preeminent in everything, ¹⁹because in Him all the Fullness was pleased to dwell^o ²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself,^p having made peace through

^a His glory reflects who He is, and He is all powerful; that power can “enable” us “with all capability”.

^b This is a great prayer to pray for anybody. Note, however, that the emphasis is on enduring and being steadfast—sounds like tough times.

^c The Father declares us to be qualified, based on the Son’s work. Instead of “us”, perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘you’ (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d Yes, ‘the’ Light—the Text has the definite article. John 1:7 refers to Jesus as ‘the Light’, and in John 8:12 Jesus calls Himself ‘the Light’ of the world. What sort of person will enjoy basking in the Light?

^e “The darkness” refers to Satan’s kingdom, and since there are only the two spiritual kingdoms in this world, everyone is in either one or the other (Luke 11:23).

^f “Through His blood” is omitted in some 40% of the Greek manuscripts, but the 60% include the best line of transmission. Without the shed blood of God’s Lamb, we would have neither redemption nor forgiveness. Praise God for the Blood!

^g Remember Jesus’ answer to Phillip in John 14:8-9.

^h In that culture the ‘firstborn’ had the preeminence.

ⁱ Although the Trinity was presumably involved in the Creation, this verse plainly states that the Son was the principal agent (see also Hebrews 1:10 and John 1:10).

^j “Those in the heavens” would include angelic beings, including high ranking ones—they owe their existence to the Son.

^k Most inhabitants of planet Earth do not understand that God created them for Himself, so they live out their existence here without knowing why they are here. That is why Sovereign Jesus commanded that His Gospel should be proclaimed to everyone.

^l “Subsist” could also be rendered ‘hold together’—maybe that is why molecules, with their contrary magnetic charges, do not fly apart.

^m There is no article with “beginning”, so I consider that it functions like a proper name.

ⁿ This is an interesting (even if unpleasant) figure of speech; death is viewed as a huge womb, pregnant with all the deceased, and Jesus was literally the first one out, the first one to be ‘born’, the first one to resurrect with a glorified body. He was the first, but only the first! Because He conquered death we can also escape that ‘womb’.

^o I take the point to be that while Jehovah the Son was confined to a human body the Father and the Holy Spirit were with Him to such an extent that it could be said that the Godhead was dwelling in Him.

^p It is difficult to know whether the pronoun refers to “the Fullness” (the Godhead) or to Christ—either makes sense.

the blood of His cross^a—through **Him**, whether things on the earth or things on^b the heavens.

The truth applied

²¹So now He has reconciled you as well (you who once were alienated and hostile in your mind because of your wicked works),^c ²²by His physical body^d through His death, so as to present you before Him holy and blameless and above reproach^e—²³if, that is, you continue in the Faith established and firm, not drifting away^f from the hope of the Gospel, that you heard and that was proclaimed in all the creation under the heaven,^g of which I, Paul, became a servant.

What Paul does and why he does it

Present everyone perfect in Christ

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings^h on your behalf and supplement in my fleshⁱ the things lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church, ²⁵of which I became a servant according to the stewardship from God that was given to me towards you, to complete the Word of God.^j ²⁶the secret^k that has been hidden from past ages and generations, but now has been revealed to His saints; ²⁷to whom God resolved to make known who is the wealth of the glory of this secret among the nations,^l namely Christ in you, the hope of glory;^m ²⁸whom we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man with all wis-

^a This is reminiscent of Isaiah 53:5, “The chastisement for our peace was upon Him”. But the cost was terrible: the shed blood of God’s Lamb.

^b That is what the Text says, “on”. Beings and things that are an inherent part of Heaven do not need ‘reconciling’, so Paul uses this means to indicate the non-inherent ones that do need it (but do not ask me for a list).

^c Are wicked works the cause of the alienation, or its result? I suspect that they keep ‘feeding’ each other, so it is both.

^d Note that Jesus’ physical body receives emphasis: you can’t have blood without a body.

^e What a marvelous purpose, what a marvelous prospect, but we have to “continue in the Faith” (verse 23).

^f God has done His part, but we must do our part, which includes ‘continuing’ and not drifting.

^g I wonder how and when this took place.

^h I confess that I have not yet arrived at this spiritual level, to rejoice in suffering.

ⁱ Evidently the ongoing well-being of the Church requires suffering on our part (we cannot add to the saving work of Christ), the enduring of affliction—Satan and his minions are very active in this world.

^j I take it that Paul was aware that he was writing new Scripture, expounding Truth that had been withheld from Old Testament saints (verse 26).

^k I consider that ‘secret’ is a better rendering than ‘mystery’. The truth about the Church is not all that mysterious, it just had not been explained before.

^l Although God’s saving interest has always included the whole world (“all the families of the earth”—Genesis 12:3), throughout the O.T. God worked mainly through His specially chosen people, Israel. Now the Bride of Christ includes Jews and non-Jews on an equal footing.

^m Christ is ‘the wealth of the glory’, but He must be in us for us to have any hope of sharing in that glory; and we must proclaim Him to the nations for them to have any hope.

COLOSSIANS 2

dom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.^a ²⁹It is to this end that I labor, striving according to His working that works through me with power.^b

A wealth of confident understanding

2 ¹I want you to know how great is my concern for you and those in Laodicea, even all who have not met me personally,^c ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being united in love and into a great wealth of confident understanding,^d into a real knowledge of the mystery of the God and Father and of the Christ,^e ³in whom all the treasures of the wisdom and the knowledge are hidden.^f

⁴Now I say this so that no one may deceive you with specious arguments. ⁵For although in fact I am physically absent, yet my spirit is with you, rejoicing as I observe^g your orderliness and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Christian responsibility

⁶So then, keep on walking in the Christ, Jesus the Sovereign, just as you received Him, ⁷having been rooted and being built up in Him^h and being established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.

Christ VS 'the world'

⁸Be careful that no one captures you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the basic principles of the world and not according to Christ.ⁱ ⁹Because all the Fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him in bodily form, ¹⁰and you are complete in Him who is the head over all rule and

^a In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) Christ commanded His followers to 'make disciples' (which involves a whole lot more than just 'winning souls'), and Paul declares that to be his objective. Instead of "Christ", perhaps 60% of the Greek manuscripts have 'Christ Jesus' (as in AV and NKJV). I follow the best line of transmission.

^b If we want to see God manifesting His power through us, we must subordinate ourselves to His working.

^c Paul plainly states that he has yet to visit Colosse and Laodicea.

^d To have a confident understanding of God's Truth is indeed a great treasure (but it is not for the lazy).

^e Some 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "and Father and of the" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f As the primary agent in the creation of our world, the Son is the Source of all true wisdom and knowledge relative to life on this planet.

^g The basic meaning of the verb rendered 'observe' is to observe with the physical eye, which implies being within range and with no obstacles. But Paul obviously was not there as he wrote, in fact had never been there. He affirms that it is his spirit that is doing the seeing and rejoicing. The Protestant Reformation was a result, in part, of the Renaissance, with its emphasis on reason, so Protestants in general have had trouble understanding the spirit world. So the tendency of commentators has been to 'spiritualize' Paul's statement, rather than take it literally. Of course they have done the same with 2 Kings 5:26 (where Elisha says his spirit went with Gehazi) and 6:12 (where Elisha listens in on the king of Syria), not to mention John 1:48 (where the Lord Himself saw Nathanael when not physically present). Here in Brazil we have many former Spiritists and Satanists who have been converted and they affirm that they used to project their spirits outside their bodies and go all over the place—several of my former students, now genuinely converted, have told me they used to do it—but they could do so only with the assistance of a fallen angel (demon). Satan's 'thing' is to be like the Most High, so he is always trying to imitate Him; perhaps God's servants used to know how to do this, only without such assistance [I have heard of a few in our day who still do].

^h "Having been rooted" refers to what has already happened; "being built up" refers to the ongoing process.

ⁱ The "basic principles of the world", including the academic community (and the media, and commerce, etc.), are controlled by Satan, and are contrary to the values of Christ's Kingdom. Unfortunately very few churches give adequate teaching on this subject.

authority.^a **11**In Him you were also ‘circumcised’ by the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh, not with a circumcision done by hands but with the circumcision of the Christ, **12**having been buried with Him in the baptism.^b In Him you were also raised together through your faith in the productive power of the God who raised Him from among the dead.^c

13Yes you, though being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh—He has made you alive together with Him; having forgiven us all our trespasses;^d **14**having wiped out the written record about us that was against us (based on the ordinances),^e indeed He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; **15**having stripped the principalities and the authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, having triumphed over them by it [the cross].^f

Don't be disqualified!

16So do not let anyone judge you about food or drink, or with respect to a feast day or a new moon or Sabbaths, **17**which things are but a shadow of those to come, while the body is Christ's. **18**Nor let anyone disqualify you,^g taking pleasure in a subservience and devotion to the angels, ‘taking possession’ of things that he has not^h seen, being puffed up by his carnal mind to no useful purpose, **19**and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, supported and held together by its joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

20Now then, since you died with Christ away from the basic principles of the world, why, as though still living in it, are you subjecting yourselvesⁱ to regulations **21**—Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!—**22**(all of which result in corruption through overuse)^j according to the commands and teachings of men? **23**Such things do indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and

^a Wow! There is a human body (glorified) seated at the Father's right, and anyone who is in Christ is there too (Ephesians 2:6).

^b I find it curious that Paul, writing to non-Jews, uses a very Jewish figure, which the non-Jews probably would not understand without instruction on the subject (although there would be converted Jews in the congregation). I am in doubt as to the precise identity of “the baptism” here, but it has to do with genuine conversion.

^c Without the resurrection there is no Gospel of Christ, and hence no hope for us. It is the resurrection that guarantees our future.

^d This paragraph is made up of a series of participial phrases wherein Paul switches from the 2nd person, in the independent clause, to the 1st person, making inclusive statements.

^e The “written record” has generally been understood to refer to the Law in some way, but I believe it makes better sense to take it as the record of what each of us has done (remember ‘the books’ in Revelation 20:12), which of course is negative. Having been forgiven, the record is nailed to the cross, and that is very good news.

^f This verse gives an important aspect of Christ's victory by the cross and resurrection. Jehovah the Son took on human form in order to destroy Satan (Hebrews 2:14), and He succeeded. A victorious Roman general would bring back a certain number of the conquered soldiers and parade them, naked and in chains, before the Roman populace—total humiliation. Colossians 2:15 says that Christ did something similar to Satan and the high ranking angels that fell with him.

^g If you release your hold on “the Head” to get involved in the sorts of things mentioned, you will be disqualified. An athlete who is disqualified does not win. Have you ever heard teaching on the subject of ‘taking possession’? Be careful!

^h Some 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “not” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ They are doing this voluntarily, but they shouldn't.

^j Actually, there are things that it is better not to taste or handle, but the overuse of such restrictions will give negative results.

subservience and asceticism, but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.^a

Things above VS things below

3 ¹Furthermore, since you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right; ²set your mind on the things above, not on those upon the earth, ³because you died and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.^b ⁴Whenever Christ, our^c life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.^d

⁵Therefore put to death your members that are on the earth:^e fornication, filthiness, passion, evil desire, and the greediness that is idolatry.^f ⁶Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of the disobedience,^g ⁷in which things you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸But now you must also rid yourselves of all these—anger, rage, malice, slander, obscene speech—out of your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old man with his practices ¹⁰and have put on the new one, who is being renewed into real knowledge according to the image of his Creator, ¹¹where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.^h

Relationships among believers

¹²Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, put on hearts of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience; ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving each other, if anyone should have a complaint against another—just as the Christⁱ forgave you, so you also must do. ¹⁴And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.^j

¹⁵Let the peace of God^k rule in your hearts, into which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

^a “The flesh” is used to refer to our ‘old man’ or sin nature, not the meat on our bones. Asceticism and legalism tend to make people feel self-righteous, which the ‘old man’ loves.

^b What does it mean to have one’s life “hidden” in God? I imagine it has to do with protection and security.

^c Instead of “our”, perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘your’ (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d I suppose that this refers to Christ’s second coming to set up His Messianic (Millennial) Kingdom.

^e A curious turn of phrase, ‘members on the earth’; perhaps the point is that the things listed belong to this earth and cannot leave it. There will be nothing of the sort in Heaven.

^f That is what the Text says, “the greediness that is idolatry”, which leads me to suppose that there may be a greediness that is not, but I do not know which it might be.

^g “The sons of the disobedience” is a Pauline phrase that he also uses in Ephesians 2:2 and 5:6. The reference is to people who are characterized by disobedience to God; they have deliberately chosen the side of evil, and therefore are worthy candidates for God’s wrath. Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “upon the sons of the disobedience” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^h ‘Nationalism’ has no legitimate place in the Church. There will be no ‘Americans’, ‘Brazilians’, ‘Russians’, ‘Chinese’, etc. in Heaven—there will only be true disciples of Sovereign Jesus.

ⁱ Instead of “Christ”, perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Lord’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j *Agape* love is unselfish, genuinely concerned for the other’s wellbeing.

^k Instead of “God”, some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

¹⁶Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing with grace in your heart to the Lord,^a with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.^b

¹⁷Whatever you may do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.^c

Household relationships

¹⁸Wives, subordinate yourselves to your own husbands,^d as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.^e

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, because this is well pleasing in the Lord.^f

²¹Fathers, do not provoke your children so that they lose heart.^g

²²Slaves, obey your masters (according to the flesh) in all things, not just when they are looking, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.^h

²³And whatever you do, give it all you've got,ⁱ as to the Lord and not to men,

²⁴knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the inheritance as a reward; because you serve the Lord Christ. ²⁵(But he who does wrong will be repaid for this wrong, and there is no favoritism.)^j

4 ¹Masters, provide your slaves with what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in the heavens.^k

Redeem the time

²Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving, ³at the same time praying for us, that God may open to us a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ (for which I am also in chains), ⁴that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. ⁵Behave wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. ⁶Let your word always be with grace, seasoned with salt,^l to know how you ought to answer each one.

^a Instead of "the Lord", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have "God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Our singing is supposed to reflect "the Word of Christ". Indeed, all of our teaching and admonishing should be based on that Word.

^c We thank God for the privilege.

^d In these verses we have a series of verbs in the imperative mood; they are commands. A woman who subordinates herself to her husband will be doing herself a favor (it makes it easier for him to love her).

^e Right on! That is just how men tend to react, being frustrated by women's wiles and quite different way of thinking. But a man who has the good sense to give value to that different way of thinking will come out ahead.

^f So of course such commands must not be contrary to God's moral code.

^g Unreasonable demands, harsh treatment, lack of clear guidelines—there are various ways to frustrate children and cause them to lose heart, and even give up. In today's world they will probably cop out by going to drugs, or the internet (both of which leave them wide open to demonic influence).

^h Notice that slavery is not condemned; a slave who converted to Christ could not expect to go free; rather he was expected to be a better slave! Instead of "God", perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have "the Lord" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ If a human owner is to be served in this way, how much more a divine Owner!

^j Being saved does not mean we get a free ride.

^k This is a good thing for all of us to remember.

^l I wonder what "seasoned with salt" means. At least what we say should not be "insipid", pointless.

Concluding remarks

⁷Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow slave in the Lord. ⁸I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstances and encourage your hearts, ⁹with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you; they will tell you everything that is happening here.

¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him),^a ¹¹and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have been a comfort to me.

¹²Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ,^b greets you; he is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.^c ¹³I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and for those in Laodicea and those in Hierapolis.

¹⁴Luke the beloved physician^d greets you, also Demas. ¹⁵Greet the brothers who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the congregation at his^e house.

¹⁶Now when this letter has been read among you, see that it is also read in the Laodicean congregation,^f and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.^g

¹⁷And say to Archippus, “See to it that you complete the work that you received in the Lord.”^h

Sign-off

¹⁸This greeting is in my own hand: Paul.ⁱ Remember my chains. The Grace be with you. Amen.

^a Evidently Barnabas succeeded in ‘recovering’ Mark, which Paul here recognizes.

^b Instead of “Christ”, perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ Jesus’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c We need more people like Epaphras, and that is a great way to pray.

^d Presumably this is where we get that title for Luke.

^e Perhaps 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘her’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Paul expected his letters to have a wide circulation.

^g We have no copy of this letter, so presumably it was not inspired, and therefore not preserved. It is possible, even probable, that Paul wrote other letters that were not preserved.

^h This personal word is unusual in a letter to the church. Since Paul had never been to Colosse, he must have known Archippus from somewhere else, but happened to know that he was in Colosse at that time. However, that exhortation is good for all of us. The older I get, the larger that exhortation looms in my mind.

ⁱ The letter was dictated to a scribe or secretary, but Paul wrote the last line himself; this was his signature, authenticating the letter.

The First Epistle of Paul to the

THESSALONIANS

Opening Considerations

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, Silvanus and Timothy,^a to the congregation^b of Thessalonians in God the Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.^c

The Thessalonians are praised

²We always give thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers, ³continually remembering before our God and Father your work for the Faith and your labor coming from the Love and your perseverance based on the Hope, our Lord Jesus Christ being their source,^d ⁴knowing as we do, brothers loved by God, that you are chosen.^e

They became examples

⁵You see, our Gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit^f and with complete certainty^g (of course you know what sort of men we proved to be among you for your sake).^h ⁶Yes you became imitators of us and of the Lord,ⁱ having received the Word with the Holy Spirit's joy,^j in spite of severe affliction, ⁷so that you became examples^k to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. ⁸That is because the Word of the Lord sounded out from you, not only

^a Paul gives recognition to the junior members of the team.

^b The first image that the term 'church' evokes in the minds of many is that of a building; what is in view here is a group of people, and a very particular group of people.

^c To the 'western' mind the repetition of the full form, "God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ," may seem unnecessary, if not stylistically poor, but this letter was written by a Hebrew. By switching from 'the' to 'our' Father he claims a personal relationship. Some 7.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d We are used to the rendering: 'work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ'. However, "faith", "love", "hope" and "Lord" all have the definite article and are in the genitive/ablative case. If we translate the definite articles it changes the 'flavor'; we are looking at a particular faith, a particular love, a particular hope, and the three qualities either belong to the Lord or proceed from Him. The genitive/ablative case in Greek is quite 'versatile', and so just to render 'of' all the time is so ambiguous as to leave the precise intent undefined. (However, I can't guarantee that my attempt to 'disambiguate' is correct.)

^e They are loved and chosen by God, marvelous privilege—verse 3 describes their appropriate response, which I suppose is how Paul 'knew' that they were chosen.

^f In verses 1 and 2 it is clear that the Father and the Son are distinct persons; here Paul adds the Holy Spirit.

^g Powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit do have a way of adding certainty to the spoken word; they also help to face affliction with joy (next verse).

^h Why "for your sake"? They were giving an example to be followed.

ⁱ To imitate the messengers was to imitate the Lord; their walk with God presumably had something to do with the powerful manifestations.

^j "The Holy Spirit's joy" in the soul is an unanswerable proof of the reality of true conversion; it also enables you to face "severe affliction" with equanimity.

^k They bought into the messengers' life style of total commitment to Christ and His Kingdom.

I THESSALONIANS 2

in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place^a—your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we do not need to say anything.

Their hope

⁹They themselves report about you^b what kind of entrance we had to you,^c and how you turned to God from idols to be slaves to the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for His Son *coming* out of the heavens^d (whom He raised from among the dead)^e—Jesus, who preserves us from the coming wrath.^f

Paul's ministry in Thessalonica

2 ¹Now you yourselves know, brothers, that our entrance to you did not happen without purpose. ²Rather, in spite of having already suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, we made bold in our God to speak to you the Gospel of God, in the face of strong opposition.^g ³Further, our exhortation does not spring from delusion or impurity, nor is it in deception, ⁴but we speak precisely as those who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel,^h not so as to please men, but to please the God who evaluates our hearts.ⁱ ⁵Further, you well know that we never used words to flatter, or to disguise greed (God is witness), ⁶or to seek glory from men (whether from you or from others)^j—as apostles of Christ^k we could have been 'heavy', ⁷but we were gentle among you, like a nurse^l cherishing her own children.

Paul's devotion to them

⁸Yearning over you in this way, we were well pleased to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become dear to

^a For something to resound far and wide requires a sufficient cause. Their response to the Gospel was sufficiently vigorous that it caused widespread comment, comment about their transformed lives and the Message that could produce such transformation.

^b Instead of "you", perhaps 60% of the Greek manuscripts have 'us', as in most versions. I follow the best line of transmission.

^c Paul did not have to 'toot his own horn'.

^d Verses 9-10 give a good picture of true conversion. It involves turning your back on all the 'idols' that governed your life to trust in the true God; but the only acceptable way to truly relate to the Sovereign of the universe is as a slave = total commitment; this gives a valid hope for a bright future.

^e Resurrection has to do with bodies (it is the body that is resurrected, to be reunited with the spirit), so the Son will return with a visible body. As the angels said, He will return 'in like manner' (Acts 1:11).

^f Which expression of the Wrath is this? Jesus delivers us from the ultimate wrath, the Lake of fire, but based on 4:13-18 below I imagine that this refers to a pre-wrath Rapture.

^g They deliberately chose to pay a personal price to reach the Thessalonians. Are we prepared to do the same for the increase of Christ's Kingdom today?

^h They knew who they were and what they were about. They deny any form of delusion or hidden agenda—they were honest and aware. To be entrusted with the Gospel is a serious privilege.

ⁱ There it is: if you want to be a serious servant of God, His approval must be more important to you than that of the people around you.

^j Wow! If all Christian workers could say the same—no impurity, no deception, no flattery, no greed, no seeking glory—the church and the world would be different than they presently are.

^k By his use of the plural, Paul is saying that Silvanus and Timothy were also apostles, presumably.

^l The basic meaning of the noun is 'nurse', but the reference to 'her own children' has led some to translate it as 'mother'. I take the point to be that whereas a professional nurse is supposed to take good care of anyone in her charge, she will be especially careful with her own children.

us. ⁹Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and exertion, because working night and day, so as not to burden any of you,^a we proclaimed the Gospel of God to you.

¹⁰You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹indeed, you know how we treated each one of you as a father does his own children, exhorting and comforting you, ¹²insisting that you conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.^b

Their conversion

¹³Another reason we give thanks to God continually is that when you received from us the spoken Word of God, you welcomed it not as the word of men but, as it actually is, the Word of God, which is indeed operative in you who believe.^c ¹⁴For you, brothers, became imitators of God's congregations in Christ Jesus, the ones in Judea,^d in that you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen that they did from the Jews ¹⁵(the ones who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, who have persecuted us, who do not please God and are hostile to everybody,^e ¹⁶trying to prevent us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved—so as to fill up the measure of their sins. They have received the full impact of the Wrath).^f

Paul's concern for the Thessalonians

A sense of bereavement

¹⁷Now we, brothers, having been bereaved of you for a short season (in presence, not in heart), made every effort to see your face, from intense longing.^g ¹⁸(We actually tried to come to you—I, Paul, time and again—but Satan thwarted us.)^h ¹⁹For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Is it not precisely you, in

^a It is clear that they supported themselves financially by working (making tents, or whatever). Between working, evangelizing and discipling (teaching), their sleeping time was probably short. So when could they be alone with God? In prison Paul had lots of time for contemplation (and writing letters), but not in Thessalonica. God places us in different situations at different times, and those situations place different demands upon us.

^b They really involved themselves in the lives of their converts, a deliberate (and costly) investment, that produced remarkable results. God is calling us into His Kingdom and glory.

^c Whether written or spoken, any word from God is powerful, and changes lives.

^d Israel was God's congregation, but not in Christ Jesus.

^e I take it that by "the Jews" Paul is referring to the leaders (John used the phrase in the same way).

^f I did the best I could with this last sentence, but the concept seems difficult. The verb is in the past and it is the wrath (not just any old wrath). I get the impression that 'the Jews' described here had passed the point of no return (like Pharaoh and the plagues—at first he hardened his own heart, but after a while God hardened it and his doom was sealed) and were just making their accounting worse and worse, 'filling up the measure'—from God's perspective the "full impact" had already been decreed. When someone passes the point of no return, Satan takes over, and they just get worse and worse. (If you think about it, you can probably come up with some examples.)

Ephesians 4:19 speaks of persons who 'have abandoned themselves to depravity, greedily indulging in every kind of vileness'. And how should society defend itself against those who have 'abandoned themselves to depravity'? The consequences of depravity always spill over into the surrounding society, and according to Psalm 5:5-6 the LORD hates such people, and so presumably will not 'draw' them (John 6:44). 1 John 5:16-17 teaches that certain sinners are beyond the reach of prayer, they have passed the point of no return. If someone cannot be saved, then he needs to be neutralized (because of the harm he causes to others)—we need to ask God to teach us how to do this.

^g I find the degree of emotional attachment described here to be surprising—perhaps a natural consequence of having poured himself into them as he did.

^h I, for one, would like to know just how the enemy managed it.

the presence of our Lord Jesus^a at His coming?^b ²⁰Indeed, you are our glory and our joy.

Concern leads to action

3 ¹So when we could not stand it any longer, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone ²and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, also our fellow worker^c in the Gospel of Christ, to confirm you and encourage you concerning your faith, ³that no one be unsettled by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.^d ⁴For indeed, when we were with you we kept telling you in advance that we were going to be afflicted;^e just as it happened, in fact, as you know. ⁵Yes, that is why, no longer standing it, I sent to find out about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had *successfully* tempted you^f and our labor come to be for nothing.

⁶But now that Timothy has come to us from you and brought us glad news of your faith and love, and that you have good memories of us always, longing to see us, just as we also long to see you ⁷—because of this, brothers, in all our affliction and distress we were encouraged about you by your faith; ⁸for now we live, if you are standing firm in the Lord.^g

Paul's desire to go to them

⁹With what thankfulness can we repay God for you, for all the joy with which we are rejoicing in the presence of our God because of you;^h ¹⁰praying most earnestly night and day, that we may see your face and complete the things lacking in your faith?

¹¹Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus Christⁱ direct our way to you. ¹²And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love toward each other and toward all, just as we also do toward you, ¹³so as to establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ^j with all His holy ones.^a

^a The Greek manuscripts are evenly divided between “Jesus” and “Jesus Christ”. I follow the best line of transmission.

^b The Thessalonian believers represented “the fruit of their labor”, evidence that they had been faithful servants, to be presented to the Lord at the Accounting.

^c Instead of “minister of God, also our fellow worker”, just two Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have “fellow worker of God”, to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

^d We are appointed to affliction in this life. How many sermons have you heard on this topic? If the Son learned obedience through suffering (Hebrews 5:8), how about us? “Whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). Have you ever been scourged, literally? I have—I didn’t enjoy it.

^e It was all a calculated risk. The messengers had their eyes open and wanted to make sure their hearers went into their new life with their eyes open—there were no misleading promises of peace and prosperity!

^f Paul was well aware that Satan would not leave them alone.

^g Again, I find the level of Paul’s involvement with them to be surprising. (It would be physically and emotionally impossible to be this involved with every church he started.) But as a responsible father, he is properly concerned for their growth and well being (verse 10).

^h To see our spiritual children growing in their walk with God is a source of considerable joy.

ⁱ Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

Holiness pleases God

4 ¹Finally then, brothers, we urge and exhort you in the Lord Jesus: as you received from us how you ought to behave and please God,^b do so even more ²— you know what instructions we gave you through Sovereign Jesus.^c

Sanctified sex

³Now this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you stay away from fornication;^d ⁴that each of you know how to gain possession of his own ‘vessel’ in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in lustful passion (like the heathen who do not know God); ⁶that no one trespass and defraud his brother in this matter,^e because the Lord is the avenger of all such behavior,^f as, indeed, we have already told you and warned you. ⁷Because God did not call us for uncleanness, but by holiness.^g ⁸So then, the rejecter is not rejecting man, but God, the very One who gave you^h His Holy Spirit.ⁱ

An impressive life style

⁹Now about brotherly love you do not need to be written to, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰because in fact you are doing so toward all the brothers throughout Macedonia.^j Still, we exhort you to do even more, brothers, ¹¹to make it a point to be peaceable and to mind your own business, to work with your hands (as we instructed you), ¹²so that outsiders may be well impressed by your life style, and that you may have no lack.^k

Christ’s second coming*The Rapture^l*

¹³Now then, brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who have ‘fallen asleep’,^m so that you do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴Because since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, just so will God bring

^a Another reference to the Accounting: a heart “blameless in holiness” is the ticket. But just what is the picture here: is the Son presenting us to the Father? Might Hebrews 2:13^b (Isaiah 8:18) be a reference to this? In that event, “all His holy ones” are being presented to the Father.

^b Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘as indeed you are behaving’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Paul keeps insisting that he is God’s spokesman, and as such should be obeyed (see also verse 8 below).

^d “Fornication” refers to any sexual activity outside the marriage bond (distinct from adultery): it includes prostitution, rape, anal sex, sex with an animal; in short, sex without commitment and responsibility (sex that disregards the Creator’s intention).

^e I take it that this clause clarifies the interpretation of ‘vessel’; verse 4 refers to getting a wife. The term ‘defraud’ is quite strong, so I imagine it refers to courting (not to mention usurping) the affections of a girl already promised, if not betrothed, to another.

^f To behave so as to make yourself the object of God’s vengeance does not sound like a good idea.

^g Called “by holiness” and to holiness—‘without which no one will see the Lord’ (Hebrews 12:14).

^h Instead of “you”, perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘us’ (as in AV and NKJV).

ⁱ Paul is writing to people who have the Holy Spirit.

^j They evidently had a strong sense of community in Christ.

^k Throughout the Bible, laziness and idleness are proscribed.

^l This paragraph defines the Rapture: Jesus comes down into the atmosphere of this planet (‘clouds’) and collects all those who belong to Him; the bodies of those who have died physically will be resurrected and reunited with their spirits; those still living will not have to die (death is separation); all their bodies will be glorified; the Christ will have His Bride.

^m This is a metaphor for dying.

with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. ¹⁵For this we say to you by a word of the Lord,^a that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will absolutely not precede those who have fallen asleep; ¹⁶because the Lord Himself—with a commanding shout,^b with the archangel's voice^c and with God's trumpet—will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first; ¹⁷then we who are still alive, who are left, will be snatched up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. In precisely this way we will always be with the Lord.^d ¹⁸So then, comfort one another with these words.

The Day of the Lord

5 ¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you do not need to be written to, ²for you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord comes just like a thief in the night. ³For whenever they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction is standing near them, like labor pains to a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.^e

Live as sons of light

⁴But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this Day should come upon you like a thief. ⁵You are all sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night, nor of darkness. ⁶So then, let us not sleep,^f like the rest, but let us stay alert and sober;^g ⁷because those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night; ⁸but we being of day, let us be sober, putting on a breastplate of faith and love, and a helmet of hope of salvation.^h ⁹For God did not appoint us to *undergo* wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,ⁱ ¹⁰who died for us so that whether awake or asleep we may live together with Him.^j ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, as in fact you do.

Concluding instructions

Esteem spiritual leaders

¹²Now we urge you, brothers, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

^a Paul is claiming inspiration.

^b One is reminded of Jesus' words in John 5:25-29. In verse 25 He says 'now is', so He is speaking of the spiritually dead who need to listen to Him and receive spiritual life. But in verse 28 He speaks plainly of those 'in the graves'—all the dead will be resurrected at Jesus' command, including the lost, who will then be condemned to the Lake. I take it that here in 4:16 Jesus resurrects only the "dead in Christ", and He uses a commanding shout. To raise Lazarus He gave a loud shout (John 11:43), that might have carried half a mile; this one will be heard around the globe.

^c There is only one archangel or top angel; once Lucifer, now Michael.

^d After the Rapture we will never again be separated.

^e The destruction will not necessarily strike when they speak. Just as a pregnant woman knows she will have labor pains (no Caesarean section)—the only uncertainty is when, not if—so the destruction will be inescapable.

^f Here the reference is to physical sleep or mental lethargy, not death.

^g If the Rapture is 'partial' (Matthew 25:1-13), only the 'alert' will escape.

^h Faith and love for the heart, hope for the head.

ⁱ I suppose this refers to both manifestations of the Wrath: the Tribulation and the Lake.

^j Here is the bottom line: to be with the Creator throughout eternity.

A variety of instructions

¹⁴Now we exhort you, brothers: admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, be supportive of the weak, be patient toward all.^a ¹⁵See that no one pays back bad for bad to anyone,^b but always pursue the good, both for one another and for all.^c ¹⁶Rejoice always! ¹⁷Pray continually! ¹⁸Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.^d ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit!^e ²⁰Do not disdain prophecies, ²¹but test everything;^f hold on to the good. ²²Keep away from every form of evil!^g

Complete sanctification

²³Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body^h be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

Farewell

²⁵Brothers, pray for us. ²⁶Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. ²⁷I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the holy brothers.ⁱ ²⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

^a Notice that the response is appropriate to the occasion, or the need.

^b The term 'bad' is less strong than the term for malignant evil, so the reference is not to malignant activity.

^c The verb 'pursue' does not suggest a passive attitude; we should be actively promoting the good for the society at large wherever we live. The result will be a better place to live.

^d There are those who say we should give thanks for everything, as distinct from in everything. I doubt that our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane gave thanks for the suffering He was facing and already enduring. To give thanks in a distressful situation is a declaration of confidence in God and His disposition of our affairs.

^e When you quench a lighted candle, you put out its light. To quench the Spirit is presumably to 'put out' or refuse His light, to suppress or ignore His voice when He speaks to us—this would include any rejection of the revealed will of God.

^f All prophesy should be tested, but not disdained or rejected.

^g The evil here is aggressive, or malignant.

^h I take it that the grammatical structure of this phrase, "the spirit and the soul and the body" (in Greek), demands a tripartite/trichotomous view of the human being. I confess that I have trouble imagining complete sanctification for the body, in this life.

ⁱ To adjure by the Lord that the letter be read is tantamount to claiming inspiration for it. By extension, does not "all the holy brothers" include us?

The Second Epistle of Paul to the

II THESSALONIANS

Opening Considerations

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, Silvanus and Timothy,^a to the congregation^b of the Thessalonians in God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.^c

Commendation and encouragement

³We are obligated to always give thanks to God about you, brothers, and properly so, because your faith is really growing, and the love of each and every one of you towards each other keeps increasing; ⁴so that we ourselves boast about you among God's congregations, referring to your steadfastness and faith in the midst of all your persecutions, and the tribulations that you are enduring^d ⁵—the above is evidence that God's judgment is right,^e to the end that you be considered worthy^f of the Kingdom of God, on behalf of which you are actually suffering; ⁶since to God it is right to pay back affliction to those who are afflicting you^g ⁷and rest (along with us) to you who are being afflicted,^h at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful angels in blazing fire,ⁱ ⁸inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,^j ⁹who will pay a penalty: everlasting ruin,^k away from the face

^a Paul gives recognition to the junior members of the team.

^b The first image that the term 'church' evokes in the minds of many is that of a building; what is in view here is a group of people, and a very particular group of people.

^c To the 'western' mind the repetition of the full form, "God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ," may seem unnecessary, if not stylistically poor, but this letter was written by a Hebrew.

^d Paul boasts of their steadfastness and faith. Evidently the believers in Thessalonica were passing through tough times—the adversity caused their faith to grow and their love for each other to increase. This equation appears to be a norm within the Kingdom of God.

^e Presumably God's judgment in choosing them (see 2:13 below).

^f Wait a minute! If salvation is by grace, where does 'being worthy' come in? Well, again we are faced with the paradox of the coexistence of God's sovereignty and human responsibility. "God's judgment" = sovereignty; suffering to be "considered worthy" = responsibility. The gift of life in Christ is indeed free; we do not deserve it and cannot buy it or earn it. To live for Christ costs everything, and not a few have backed out.

^g Payday is coming; those who mistreated God's people are not going to like it.

^h There is a rest for the people of God (Hebrews, chapters 3 and 4), but the full realization of that rest comes only when we are glorified.

ⁱ The syntax allows "in blazing fire" to go either with the angels or the vengeance; it seemed more natural to me to put the phrase with the angels—in that event the "revelation" will be an impressive sight.

^j It is clearly implied that they could have known God and could have obeyed the Gospel; if they had no way of knowing and never ever heard, "vengeance" would seem to be too strong. So what about the millions of individuals born into cultures where no representative of the Creator has ever gone? Romans 1:18-25 makes clear that all have the light of creation. Since all human knowledge is based on the principle of cause and effect, any rational creature must conclude that there has to be a sufficient Cause for the marvelous creation he sees all around. Each one is also born with a conscience. No doubt anyone who responds correctly to the light of creation will receive more light. That said, however, one gains the impression that there will be degrees of punishment, according to the amount of light rejected. Perhaps 40% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^k The lost do not cease to exist; they are eternally separated from the Source of all good; they are condemned to never achieve/realize their potential—everlasting ruin. That said, however, it is presumably

of the Lord and from the glory of His might, ¹⁰whenever He comes to be glorified by His saints,^a yes to be marveled at by all who have believed (because our testimony to you was believed);^b in that Day.^c

A model prayer

¹¹To this end we also pray always for you, that our God may count you worthy of the calling^d and fulfill^e with power every desire of usefulness and work of faith,^f ¹²so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ^g may be glorified in you,^h and you in Him,ⁱ according to the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.^j

The Day of Christ

2 ¹Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him,^k we urge you ²not to be quickly shaken from your conviction or disturbed, whether by a spirit^l or a word or a letter as from us,^m as though the Day of Christⁿ has come.

the case that those who hate God would react to “the face of the Lord” and “the glory of His might” as being intolerable torture, worse even than hell-fire.

^a There is a stark contrast between the saved and the lost: the saved will rejoice and glory in Christ’s presence; the lost will be excluded from it, a basic ingredient in the ruin. If we have emotions, it is because God had them first—He will enjoy being glorified and marveled at.

^b Paul includes them in that sanctified throng (and takes a little personal credit).

^c Verses 3-10 form a single sentence in the Greek Text, which is why I followed suit.

^d I suppose that “the calling” here is to have an active part in bringing about God’s Kingdom in their context; as they are counted worthy, God will work with them to introduce goodness and works of faith into that context.

^e God does the fulfilling.

^f The declared objective of the prayer in verse 11 is given in verse 12: “that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you”; so it would be in God’s own interest to aid any desire on our part to be useful and to do works of power with a view to that glory.

^g Perhaps 55% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). I follow the best line of transmission.

^h Note that the point of the manifestations of God’s power is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; and they do add force and credibility to our Message.

ⁱ When we glorify the Lord there is reciprocation.

^j I take “our God and Lord, Jesus Christ” to be the best rendering of the precise turn of phrase here.

^k The reference is to the Rapture, presumably.

^l Attention! Paul is saying (and the Holy Spirit through him) that Christians may receive misinformation from evil spirits. Those ideas that just ‘pop into your head’ need to be evaluated as to their source.

^m Evidently there were people fraudulently using Paul’s name, even in writing. Fraud has been around for a very long time.

ⁿ Instead of “Christ”, some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Lord’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.); the 85% that have “Christ” (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. I remember one day in a Greek exegesis class, the professor stated that one reason he preferred the ‘critical’ text (that reads ‘Lord’ here) is that it fit better with his view of eschatology—the ‘Day of Christ’ is usually associated with the Rapture and blessing of the saints, while the ‘Day of the Lord’ is usually associated with heavy judgment upon the world and unrepentant Israel, including the outpouring of wrath just before and after the Second Coming of Christ, when He returns in glory to establish His Millennial Messianic Kingdom. The perceived difficulty here would appear to be that while verses 1, 6 and 7 evidently relate to the Rapture, verses 3-4 and 8-10 evidently relate to the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming. What to do? Look carefully at the Text.

In verse 2, why would the Thessalonian believers be “disturbed”? Someone was teaching that the Rapture had already happened and they had been left behind—I would be disturbed too! So “Day of Christ” is precisely correct with reference to the content of verses 1 and 2. The trouble comes in verse 3 because a clause is elided; as an aid to the reader translations usually supply a clause, preferably in

II THESSALONIANS 2

The man of sin

³Do not let anyone deceive you by any means; because *that day cannot come* unless the rebellion^a comes first and the man of sin^b is revealed, the son of ruin,^c ⁴who opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called a god or an object of worship, to the point of taking his seat as God^d in God's sanctuary,^e proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵(Don't you remember that I used to tell you these things while still with you?)^f

The Restrainer

⁶So now you know what is restraining, to the end that he^g may be revealed at his own time. ⁷For the mystery of the lawlessness is already at work;^h only He who now restrains *will do so* until He removes Himself.ⁱ ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and abolish by the splendor of His coming;^j ⁹that one's coming is according to the working of Satan with all power^k and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all

italics, to show that it is an addition, as in NKJV—“*that Day will not come*”. But that would put the Rapture after the revelation of the man of sin and the ‘abomination of desolation’—definitely not congenial to certain eschatological systems. An easy ‘solution’ would be to change ‘Christ’ to ‘Lord’ in verse 2, but that would put the Rapture within the ‘Day of the Lord’—also not congenial. I submit that fine-tuning our view of eschatology is preferable to tampering with the Text.

If the ‘Restrainer’ in verses 6-8 is the Holy Spirit (which seems to me to be the only adequate identification), then the Rapture happens before the ‘abomination’, and may be viewed as its ‘trigger’. But if the ‘Day of Christ’ includes the Rapture, then verse 3 would appear to place the Rapture after the ‘abomination’. So where does that leave us? Although my own training was strongly ‘pre-trib’, I have moved to a ‘meso-trib’ position. If the Rapture follows immediately upon the ‘abomination’, then the ‘surprise’ factor remains untouched. If the ‘abomination’ and the Rapture happen within minutes of each other, then from God’s point of view they form a single ‘package’, and the actual sequence is not important—for all practical purposes they happen at the same time.

^a There has been no end of rebellion down through the centuries, but this one will be worse (the rebellion in the so-called ‘western world’ is getting nastier by the day).

^b Instead of “sin”, some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘lawlessness’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.), but the 95% (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. Yes, ‘the’ man of sin—there have been no end of evil men down through the centuries, but this one will be really bad.

^c He is characterized by ruin; he ruins everything he touches (like Midas).

^d Some 9% of the Greek manuscripts omit “as God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e If this refers to God’s temple in Jerusalem, it has yet to be rebuilt. (All the pieces are ready, and with modern technology it can be erected in 24 hours.)

^f Evidently eschatology was in the roster of subjects that Paul normally covered in his teaching.

^g The man of sin.

^h Why “mystery” and why “the lawlessness”? After Christ’s victory on the cross, demonstrated by His resurrection, and His taking back the ‘keys’ (Revelation 1:18), Satan had to go ‘underground’. He is behind all human lawlessness and foment it in all sorts of ways, but his master plan is under wraps, hence a “mystery”.

ⁱ Perhaps more literally, ‘gets Himself out of the middle’ (the verb *ginomai* is inherently middle in voice). I would say that the Holy Spirit is the only one who satisfies the description.

^j Note that “His coming” is subsequent to the revelation of the man of sin and the events he will usher in, and that revelation is subsequent to the departure of the Restrainer (even if virtually simultaneous). So if the Rapture is linked to the Restrainer’s departure, the Lord’s “coming” (here in verse 8) is a distinct, subsequent occurrence.

^k When Satan fell he did not lose his power.

wicked deception among those who are wasting themselves,^a because they did not receive the love of the truth^b so that they might be saved.^c

Believing 'the lie'

¹¹Yes, because of this God will send them an active delusion^d so that they will believe the lie^e ¹²and so that all may be condemned who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in wickedness.^f

To be Saved is Different

¹³Now we are obligated to always give thanks to God about you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning^g God chose you into salvation, through sanctification of spirit and belief in truth, ¹⁴to which^h He called you through our gospel, so as to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.^a

^a The verb here, *apwllumi*, often rendered 'to perish' (John 3:16 in KJV), is used in a variety of contexts, but I take the core meaning to be 'waste'. The participial form here is ambiguous as to voice, either middle or passive, but the basic form of the verb is middle. Ephesians 1:5-14 makes clear that a basic objective of our redemption is that we be 'to the praise of His glory', which was part of the original Plan (Isaiah 43:7). Only as we live for the glory of God can we realize or fulfill our potential, our reason for being. If you live for any other reason, you are wasting yourself.

^b The use of the verb 'receive' clearly implies an act of volition on their part; that love was offered or made available to them but they did not want it; they wanted to be able to lie and to entertain lies told by others. But the consequences of such a choice are terrible; they turned their back on salvation.

^c Since there are only two spiritual kingdoms in this world, that of Sovereign Jesus and that of Satan, "those who are wasting themselves", in this text, are still in Satan's kingdom and therefore wide open to his "wicked deception". The Text states plainly that they are wasting themselves "because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved". They are not saved.

^d Notice the sequence: first they reject the love of the truth; it is as a consequence of that choice that God sends the delusion. The implication is that there is a point of no return; God sends the delusion so that they may be condemned. The only intelligent choice is to embrace the truth!

Consider with me the consequences of the facts enunciated in verses 10-12 for a whole nation, like Brazil, where I now live. We have many thousands of local churches that call themselves Christian. But I know of almost none that could be characterized as 'loving the truth'. No one wants a Bible with objective authority. Humanistic, relativistic, materialistic values have taken over the churches. Biblical values are no longer acceptable. In consequence, Satan has control of the government, of education, of health services, of commerce, of the entertainment industry, in short, of the whole culture. The churches that have rejected biblical values are part of the problem—since they have rejected "the love of the truth", they have been taken over by "active delusion".

Note that God Himself sends that delusion with the declared objective of condemning all those who believed the lie. If God Himself visits "active delusion" upon a whole country, what possible escape is there? The only possible 'medicine' is "the love of the truth". Those of us who consider ourselves to be true subjects of Sovereign Jesus need to appeal to Him to show us how to promote the love of the truth to the churches and to the society at large. Here in Brazil it may be too late, but if God's grace still offers us a window of opportunity, we must devote ourselves to promoting the love of the truth by all possible means.

^e Perhaps "the lie" is best illustrated in our day by the theory of evolution: 'There is no Creator'—so there will not be any accounting; so you can do what you feel like. How terrible will be the awakening!

^f "Taking pleasure in wickedness" involves rejecting the Truth of a moral Creator who will demand an accounting, or even overt rebellion against that Creator (like Lucifer/Satan).

^g Instead of "from the beginning", perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts have 'firstfruits' (as in some versions).

^h Our versions typically have 'sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth', but the Text has no article with 'spirit' or 'truth'; further, the relative pronoun 'which' is neuter in gender, while the most likely antecedents are either masculine ('sanctification') or feminine ('salvation' and 'belief'). But when the antecedent is a phrase the pronoun is typically neuter, so I take the antecedent to be "through sanctification of spirit and belief in truth". The human spirit must be sanctified. In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter

II THESSALONIANS 3

¹⁵So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions^b that you were taught by us, whether by word or by letter.

Another model prayer

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort^c and good hope, by grace, ¹⁷encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good word and work.^d

A request for prayer

3 ¹Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, as also with you, ²and that we may be delivered from evil and malignant men; for not all have faith.^e

³But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and guard you from the malignant one.^f ⁴We have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you both do and will do the things we command.^g ⁵Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the perseverance of Christ.^h

Instructions

Don't be irresponsible or lazy

⁶Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who behaves irresponsibly and not according to the tradition that theyⁱ received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we did not behave irresponsibly among you; ⁸neither^j did we eat anyone's bread without paying; rather we worked night and day, with difficulty and hardship, so as not to be a burden to any of you; ⁹not because we do not have the right, but in order to offer ourselves to you as a model for you to imitate. ¹⁰Yes, because when we were with you we gave you this command: "If anyone does not want to work,^k neither let him eat!" ¹¹Yet we hear that some among you are behaving irresponsibly; not working, just meddling. ¹²Now to such individuals we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.

includes all three persons of the Godhead in the process of our salvation; the part of the Holy Spirit is to 'set us apart' (He works in our minds to encourage or predispose us to obey).

^a Note that our salvation is not only about forgiveness of sins, it is also about obtaining glory, our Sovereign's glory.

^b Some traditions are good.

^c "Eternal comfort"—I love it.

^d Notice again that it is not 'word' alone, it is "word **and work**".

^e Since everyone believes something, has a worldview, the reference is presumably to faith in God.

^f 'The' malignant one is Satan.

^g Observe that Paul considers that he is in a position to command.

^h As Paul makes clear in the opening paragraph, they are already manifesting love and perseverance, so I take the point of the prayer to be progress into God's kind of love and Christ's kind of perseverance. They have made a good start, they are on the right road; Paul asks God to help them on toward the goal.

ⁱ There were several of them.

^j The distinction implied here indicates that the irresponsible behavior covered a wider area than just idleness or freeloading.

^k "Does not **want** to work"—the reference is not to those who want to work but cannot find a job; it is to the lazy.

Isolate the disobedient

¹³But as for you, brothers, do not lose heart in well doing. ¹⁴If anyone does not obey our word in this letter, take note of him and do not associate with him, that he may be shamed; ¹⁵yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.^a

Conclusion

Benediction

¹⁶Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you the peace^b during every situation, in every way.^c The Lord be with you all.

Sign-off

¹⁷The greeting of Paul, with my own hand, which is the 'trademark' in every letter that I write.^d ¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

^a The discipline is to be corrective, not punitive. Note that Paul clearly claims authority; he expects to be obeyed.

^b "The peace": there is no lack of counterfeit 'peace', but the reference here is presumably to 'the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding' (Philippians 4:7)—and only "the Lord of peace" can give it.

^c Since they were being actively persecuted, this was a very appropriate blessing.

^d I take the clear implication to be that Paul dictated his letters to an amanuensis, or secretary, but 'signed' the letter by writing the last line himself.

The First Epistle of Paul to

TIMOTHY

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the command of God our Savior and Sovereign Jesus Christ^a our hope,^b ²to Timothy, true son by faith: Grace, mercy, peace from God our^c Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Opening considerations*Paul refers to their last conversation*

³You recall that I urged you to remain in Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, in order that you should command^d certain persons to stop teaching a different doctrine ⁴and occupying themselves with myths and endless genealogies,^e which cause disputes rather than the godly training which is by faith.^f ⁵Now the goal of that command is love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith;^g ⁶some having strayed from these have been turned aside^h to empty talk, ⁷desiring to be teachers of the law, not understanding either what they say or the things that they affirm.ⁱ

What law is for

⁸Now we know that the law is good if one uses it correctly, ⁹knowing that law is not made for a righteous person but for lawless and rebellious ones, for ungodly and sinners, for unholy and profane, for father-smiters and mother-smiters, for murderers,^j ¹⁰for fornicators, for sodomites,^k for kidnappers,^l for liars, for perjurers, and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine ¹¹as defined by the Gospel^m of the glory^a of the blessed God, with which I was entrusted.^b

^a There is no article with 'Sovereign/Lord', so I take the phrase to be acting as a proper name. Perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Sovereign" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b The Father saves, the Son is our hope, and they chose Paul together—I wonder what the implications are.

^c Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "our" (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^d Evidently Paul deputized Timothy, giving him the authority to give commands, and the local elders would need to be informed about it.

^e This sounds like Gnosticism.

^f 'Disputes' are conducted on the basis of logic/reason, not faith, and God requires that we respond to Him in faith (see Hebrews 11:6).

^g This is a beautiful picture, surely: a love that emanates from pure heart, good conscience and sincere faith will probably be quite similar to God's love.

^h The verb is in the passive voice; once they strayed they came under outside influence (see Ephesians 2:2).

ⁱ This is typical of people whose ambition exceeds their mental ability—they end up faking it.

^j I follow the best line of transmission, as well as a plurality of the Greek manuscripts, in rendering "father-smiter" rather than 'father-killer'. Since patricide and matricide are types of murder, why cite 'murder' three times? A normal list does not repeat items.

^k The reference is specifically to those who play the role of the male in homosexual intercourse (anal sex), as distinct from catamites (1 Corinthians 6:9), who play the role of the female. From the Creator's point of view both are unacceptable forms of human behavior, and carried the death penalty (Leviticus 20:13).

^l Or, 'slave-dealers'.

^m Notice that law is supposed to be based on God's Word. Only the Creator is competent to legislate morality. In a country run by Satan's servants, the judiciary is usually perverted so as to protect the crimi-

The grace of God

12I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who enables me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into a ministry; **13**I, who was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant; but I was shown mercy, because being ignorant^c I did it in unbelief; **14**the grace of our Lord overflowed, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.^d **15**Here is a trustworthy word, worthy of total acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am chief; **16**precisely for this reason I was shown mercy, that in me, the ‘chief’, Jesus Christ might display all his forbearance, as an example for those who are going to rely on Him into eternal life.^e **17**Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise,^f be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

A charge to Timothy*Wage the good warfare*

18Son Timothy, I am giving you this charge in accordance with the prophecies about you that lead the way,^g that in them you may wage the good warfare, **19**holding on to faith and a good conscience^h (whichⁱ some having rejected have suffered shipwreck concerning the Faith; **20**of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander—whom I have handed over to Satan that they may be taught^j not to blaspheme).

About prayer

2 **1**Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men^k **2**—on behalf of kings and all

nal and punish the honest citizen. They often go further, declaring biblical values to be ‘hate crimes’. Have you ever noticed that in such countries hating Jesus and hating Christians is never considered to be a crime? On the contrary, it is protected and encouraged.

- ^a The Gospel reflects God’s glory, and may even be said to be about that glory, since it reflects His character.
- ^b If you are entrusted with something you are supposed to take care of it and protect it. Paul demonstrates this attitude.
- ^c Paul was highly instructed in the Jewish religion, but was ignorant where it really mattered.
- ^d I take it that Paul is saying that he received an outpouring of faith and love, as well as grace. Well, to transform Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle to the nations no doubt required a little ‘extra’.
- ^e If God could save Paul, He can save anybody—there is hope for any sinner; which calls for a doxology (next verse).
- ^f Most modern versions, following 2% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality), omit “wise”, leaving ‘the only God’. To be sure, the God of the Bible is the only true God, so the shortened form is theologically correct, but He is also the only One who is totally wise, and that information should not be omitted on such poor evidence.
- ^g “Lead the way” is in the present tense, and so does not refer to the past. Evidently those prophecies were of such a nature that they gave direction to Timothy’s ministry, but he had to choose to follow them. The content of the “charge” is developed in chapter 2.
- ^h When a person starts faking it he rejects a good conscience.
- ⁱ “Which” is singular and refers to the good conscience, presumably: if you are not honest with the Faith, you lose it.
- ^j The verb here is in the passive voice, which makes Satan the teacher! But I wonder how this works—if you are under Satan’s tutelage, what are your chances? Unless it be that Paul is not talking about recovering them, but about making them see the extent of their stupidity (and as an object lesson to others). See Hebrews 6:6.
- ^k The term “men” here is generic and can include women and children = all people. By putting four synonyms in a row Paul achieves an unusual emphasis on the importance of praying for everybody.

I TIMOTHY 2

who are in authority, that we may live a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.^a ³Because this is good and pleasing to our Savior God, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come into a real knowledge of Truth.^b ⁵For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men—a man!^c—Jesus Christ, ⁶who gave Himself as a ransom on behalf of all people (to be testified in its own seasons),^d ⁷to which ransom I was appointed^e a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying^f—a teacher of nations^g in faith and truth.

⁸So I desire that the men in every place pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument.^h ⁹Similarly the women also, dressing themselves in appropriate clothing, with modesty and good sense; not with braided hairⁱ or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good works, which is appropriate to women who profess godliness.

About women

¹¹Let a woman learn in silence, in full subordination. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.^j ¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve.^k ¹⁴Also, Adam was not deceived; rather, the woman, being deceived, became a transgressor.^l ¹⁵However, she will be saved through the Childbirth^a—if they^b continue in faith, love and holiness, with self-control.^c

^a This is what God would like to see. War, turmoil and distress are not God's desire for mankind but result from men's bad choices. If everyone would obey God's laws we would have paradise on earth.

^b When people are in the middle of distress and turmoil it is difficult to pause and reflect on spiritual things. People who live in a tranquil society where godliness is promoted have every chance to come into "a real knowledge of Truth".

^c Wonder of wonders! God has provided a **man** to represent us! Of course He is also God, so He can represent both sides with complete competence—the best of all possible mediators!

^d Although Jesus Christ "gave Himself as a ransom on behalf of all people", obviously the exact time when a given people heard about it has varied considerably down through the last two millennia, and some have yet to hear! I take it that Paul is saying that God has a 'time' (*kairos*) for each people to hear, unless he is just saying that different people hear at different times.

^e Recall from 1:1 above that he was appointed by both Father and Son.

^f I wonder why he felt the need to say this to Timothy—or did he know that it would be read by many others? Perhaps 15% of the Greek manuscripts omit "in Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Through his epistles he has taught many hundreds of ethnic nations—no wonder both Father and Son were involved in the appointing.

^h When a number of men are together, any competition tends to take place in the realm of ideas, often producing more heat than light; when a number of women are together, any competition tends to involve physical appearance. This sort of thing can happen even when people gather to pray (supposedly).

ⁱ Presumably the reference is not to simple braids, but adding fancy things to the hair in the braid.

^j The crucial factor here is authority, and the underlying need is to protect the structure of the home, the foundational unit of society, including the church. If a woman teaches her husband in church, crossing the street to their house will not make her want to submit to him; human nature does not work that way.

^k Paul appeals to God's purpose in Creation. God created the man first and gave him the responsibility to administer the earth. Later on He created the woman, using a part of the man's body, for the declared purpose of being his assistant (Genesis 2:18). An assistant does not give orders to the boss; nor does he make policy decisions on his own. The first woman did make a policy decision on her own, with catastrophic consequence.

^l As a general rule (there are exceptions) a man tends to think things through before reaching a decision, so he can defend his choice on the basis of logical argument. A woman tends to be more intuitive and will decide on that basis, without being able to defend the choice logically (which tends to frustrate men no end). Whether that was why Eve could be so easily deceived, I am not prepared to say, but Paul

Qualifications*Of overseers*

3 ¹Here is a trustworthy word: if a man aspires to the position of overseer,^d he desires a good work. ²Now then, it is obligatory for the overseer to be above reproach, a one woman man,^e temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, good at teaching, ³not a drinker, not a bully, not corrupt [financially],^f but gentle, peaceful, not greedy; ⁴one who rules his own house well, having children^g who obey him with due respect ⁵(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how can he take care of God's congregation?); ⁶not a recent convert, lest being puffed up he fall into the same judgment that the devil did.^h ⁷Also, it is necessary for him to have a good reputation with those who are outside *the congregation*, so as not to fall into reproach and the devil's snare.ⁱ

Of deacons

⁸Similarly, deacons must be respectable, not deceitful, not heavy drinkers,^j not corrupt [financially]; ⁹holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰But let these also first be tested; then, if they are blameless, let them serve as deacons.

uses that susceptibility as an argument in his case against allowing women to teach. Doctrine must be based on reason, not intuition—to teach is to define. Paul affirms that Adam was not deceived, so his choice was deliberate. To disobey the Creator was a policy decision that Eve, as assistant, had no business making—she rebelled against the role that the Creator assigned her. Her *fait accompli* left Adam with a difficult decision—let her die alone, or die with her. It is idle to speculate on why he decided as he did, but it was Adam's choice (not Eve's) that condemned the race to 'death through sin' (Romans 5:12-21).

^a Note that 'she' refers to Eve, she is the antecedent. Neither Eve nor any other woman is saved by bearing a child. 'Childbirth' is accompanied by the definite article, in the Text, so it is "the childbirth". There is only one childbirth that could result in salvation for Eve, and the rest of us, the birth of the Messiah.

^b Paul breaks the rules of grammar and switches from 'she' to 'they' in the middle of the sentence—what is true of Eve is applied to all women. Well, strictly speaking, since "they" has no antecedent I suppose it could include men as well, everybody (unless someone wants to argue that women are saved on a different basis than men [which I think would run afoul of other passages]). Still, the paragraph is about women. Any sisters in Christ who have been troubled by this verse, thinking they must bear a child, may relax on that score.

^c So what happens if they do not "continue"?

^d The term here is usually rendered 'bishop', but today a bishop is one who has authority over a number of other pastors/presbyters/elders, whereas in the New Testament these four terms evidently refer to a single office in the church.

^e That is what the Text says, strictly speaking, emphasizing the quality—a man who has only one wife, but has a wandering eye, would not qualify. However, the term 'woman' can also mean 'wife', and because of the reference to children in verse four most versions render 'wife'. The term "man" here refers exclusively to males: there is no room here for a female overseer.

^f Some 30% of the Greek manuscripts omit "not corrupt [financially]" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). Who wants to offend those with the means to make substantial contributions to the church coffers? So why talk about shady dealings? The omission is surely inferior.

^g Presumably adults who have left the 'nest' are not in view here.

^h Pride brought about Lucifer's downfall (Isaiah 14:13-14).

ⁱ When a pastor is well known and respected in a community, any attempt to discredit him through false accusations will probably fail: the people know it isn't true. On the other hand, a new arrival is an easy target.

^j An elder should not 'drink' (verse 3), while a deacon may, just not heavily! However, if he hopes to one day be an elder...

Of 'deaconesses'

¹¹Similarly, women^a must be respectable, not slanderers, temperate, trust-worthy in everything.

Of deacons, again

¹²Let deacons be one woman men, ruling their children and their own houses well. ¹³For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and considerable confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.^b

God in flesh

¹⁴Although I hope to come to you shortly, I am writing these things to you ¹⁵in case I am delayed, so that you may know how it is necessary to conduct oneself in God's household, which is the Church of the living God, pillar and foundation of the truth.^c ¹⁶Yes, the mystery of *our* religion is confessedly great:

God was manifested in flesh,^d
 was vindicated in spirit,
 was revealed to angels,
 was proclaimed among nations,
 was believed in the world,
 was received up in glory!

About doctrine*Things taught by demons*

4 ¹Now the Spirit says explicitly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceiving spirits and to things taught by demons ²—through hypocritical liars whose own consciences have been cauterized,^e ³who forbid to marry and to eat foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and really know the truth. ⁴For every

^a That is what the Text says, just "women"—no article and no possessive pronoun. Because Paul returns to the deacons in verse 12, most versions take the reference here to be to their wives, but the grammatical construction of verse 11 is parallel to that of verse 8, which is parallel to verse 2. I take it that the grammar obliges us to see a third office in the congregation, one filled by women—deaconesses, or something of the sort. Counseling women can be dangerous for a man: certain matters are best handled by a mature, sanctified woman; if she has an official standing in the congregation, so much the better.

^b They become natural candidates for the office of elder.

^c My first impression would be that the truth should be sustaining the Church, not vice versa. But it is the Church that has the responsibility to promote and defend the truth in the society at large—in education, health, commerce, government, everywhere.

^d Instead of 'God', 1% of the Greek manuscripts (of objectively inferior quality) read 'who', and most modern versions follow this 1%. But 'who' is nonsensical (in the context), so most of them take evasive action: NEB and NASB have 'he who'; Phillips has 'the one'; NRSV, Jerusalem, TEV and NIV render 'he'. Berkley actually has 'who'! In the Greek Text the relative pronoun has no antecedent, so it is a grammatical 'impossibility', besides being a stupidity—what is so mysterious about someone being manifested in flesh? All human beings have bodies. In the absence of concrete evidence, the claim that this is a note lifted from a known hymn or poem becomes no more than a desperate attempt to 'save' a choice that besides being stupid is also perverse (because of the theological consequences). The pronoun can be accounted for as an easy transcriptional error, a simple copying mistake, so why not stay with the 98.5% (there are other variants)? "God was manifested in flesh"—now there you have a mystery! For a more detailed discussion, please see my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text IV*, footnote 3, on pages 115-117.

^e Be not deceived, the churches (with exceptions, of course) are filled with a variety of 'doctrines' of demonic origin. The enemy uses a certain type of person to 'sell' them.

creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ^abecause it is consecrated through the Word of God and prayer.^a

A good servant of Jesus Christ

⁶If you instruct the brothers in these things you will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, brought up in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have faithfully followed.^b ⁷But reject godless myths and old-wives' tales; rather, exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸Now physical exercise has some value,^c but godliness has value in all things, holding promises^d for both this present life and the one to come.

A trustworthy word

⁹Here is a trustworthy word, worthy of total acceptance ¹⁰(which is also why we labor and suffer reproach):^e We have set our hope on the living God, who is 'Savior of all men',^f especially of those who believe.^g

Watch your life and doctrine

¹¹Command and teach these things. ¹²Let no one look down on your youthfulness,^h but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit,ⁱ in faith, in purity. ¹³Until I come give attention to public reading [of Scripture], to exhortation, to teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that is in you,^j which was 'given' to you through prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the body of elders.^k ¹⁵Cultivate these things; give yourself wholly to them, so that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take pains with yourself and the doctrine; persevere in those things,^l because by doing so you will save both yourself and those who hear you.^m

^a I gain the impression that the dietary regulations in the Mosaic Law have been superseded. I may enjoy a pork chop if I first consecrate it. (The trouble is that many of us forget about the consecrating.)

^b To get to be a "good servant of Jesus Christ" is a process.

^c Since a sick body definitely slows us down, we should give some attention to keeping physically fit.

^d I follow 60% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading the plural, "promises"—there are promises for down here and others for up there.

^e Instead of "suffer reproach", perhaps 7% of the Greek manuscripts have 'strive' (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^f This involves an exclusivist claim, which continues to give rise to opposition. If our God is "Savior of all men" then there cannot be any other 'saviors', at least not legitimate ones. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). For preaching that exclusivist claim Paul suffered reproach, and anyone who follows his example today will also suffer.

^g "Savior of all men" is a potentiality; for the salvation to become effective, one must believe.

^h As a professor of mine once said, "Your youth is not the problem; it's the immaturity that goes with it".

ⁱ Some 9% of the Greek manuscripts omit "in spirit" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j The obvious implication is that a gift can be neglected.

^k According to 1 Corinthians 12:11 the Holy Spirit distributes gifts as He chooses, but it is to 'each one'. The impression I gain is that many (most?) Christians are not aware that they have a gift (or perhaps their church will not allow them to use it). But a prophetic declaration, backed by the authority of the body of elders, should remove all doubt. Note that "elders" is plural.

^l Paul refers back to the "these things" at the beginning of verse 15.

^m Paul here emphasizes human responsibility. If Timothy goes astray, those who trust him in spiritual matters will also go astray; if he remains firm those who follow him will too. This reminds me of James 3:1. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."

Relationships

5 ¹Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity.

Honor true widows

³Give financial support to widows who are really ‘widows’. ⁴But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them learn first to demonstrate piety in their own household by repaying their parents, for this is pleasing^a to God. ⁵Now she who is really a widow and desolate has set her hope on God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶But she who indulges in pleasure is dead while she lives.

⁷You should even command these things, so that they may be blameless. ⁸But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.^b

⁹No widow should be enrolled unless she is at least sixty, a one man wife, ¹⁰known for good works—she brought up children, she lodged strangers, she washed saints’ feet, she relieved the afflicted, she devoted herself to every good work.^c

About younger widows

¹¹As for younger widows, do not enroll them; because whenever they are controlled by sensual desires rather than by Christ, they want to marry, ¹²coming under judgment because they have broken their first commitment.^d ¹³Not only that, they learn to be idle, going around from house to house; and not only idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to.^e ¹⁴So I want the younger widows to marry, to bear children, to manage the home, to give the adversary no occasion for caustic comments. ¹⁵(In fact, some have already turned aside after Satan.)^f

¹⁶If any man or^g woman who is a believer has widows, let them relieve them and not burden the congregation, so that it may relieve those who are widows indeed.^h

^a Instead of “is pleasing”, perhaps 15% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘is good and pleasing’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^b This is reminiscent of our Lord’s word in Mark 7:9-13.

^c Wow! How is that for a ‘job description’?

^d What “first commitment”? Looking carefully at verses 11 and 12, I take it that Paul is arguing as if some younger ones have already been enrolled—in order to be enrolled they would have had to commit themselves to a certain life style, which they would subsequently break.

^e The young have more energy than the old, and if that energy is not put to good use, it will be put to bad use; and the congregation should not finance such bad use.

^f It is not clear to me to whom the “some” refers, although the first ‘candidate’ would appear to some younger widows.

^g Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “man or” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The omission is obviously an inferior reading, and could be an easy case of ‘similar beginning’.

^h Here is the ‘bottom line’ in this discussion about widows. The congregation would have limited material resources, and these should be reserved for the more needy cases. (Any semblance to a ‘gravy train’ is to be avoided.)

Honor elders

¹⁷Let the elders who lead well be counted worthy of a double honorarium, especially those who labor in word and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out grain,” and “The worker is worthy of his wages.”^a

¹⁹Do not entertain an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. ²⁰Those who are sinning rebuke publicly, so that the rest also may be in fear.^b

Watch your step

²¹I charge you in the presence of God and Sovereign^c Jesus Christ and the elect angels^d that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality. ²²Do not lay hands [in ordination] hastily on anyone, do not *thereby* participate in the sins of others.^e Keep yourself pure.

²³Stop drinking only water; use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent infirmities.^f

²⁴The sins of some men are obvious, leading the way into judgment,^g while those of others trail behind. ²⁵So also the good works are obvious; even the ones that are not, cannot be hidden.

Slaves honor owners

6 ¹As many as are under the yoke of slavery should consider their own owners to be worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and doctrine not be slandered. ²Those who have owners who are believers must not disregard them because they are brothers; instead they must serve them even better, because those receiving the good service are believers and beloved.^h

Conclusion to ‘Relationships’

Teach and exhort these things. ³If anyone teaches differently and does not consent to sound words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine that accords with godliness, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing. Rather he is obsessed with controversies and hair-splitting word battles, from which come envy, strife, slanderings, evil suspicions, ⁵constant wranglings of men with

^a The part about the ox is a quote from Deuteronomy 25:4, definitely Scripture, but the part about the worker is a quote from Luke 10:7! Now this is very instructive. Paul, a former Pharisee, presumably ascribed the highest level of inspiration to the five books of the Law, so we expect him to call Deuteronomy Scripture. But for him to place Luke on a par with Moses is little short of incredible. Although there may have been close to twenty years between the ‘publishing’ of Luke and the writing of 1 Timothy, Luke was recognized and declared by apostolic authority to be Scripture not long after it came off the press, so to speak. But if Paul wrote this letter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as I believe, then God Himself is declaring Luke to be Scripture!

^b It appears that Timothy was to act as a ‘deputy apostle’ (something like a deputy sheriff).

^c Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Sovereign” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d I wonder what the angels have to do with it. Might the “elect” angels be a special class?

^e The point seems to be that if we are responsible for ordaining somebody, we become accomplices of what he subsequently does, at least in part.

^f A little homemade wine can be effective against diarrhea, which was presumably Timothy’s ‘infirmity’. And at that time not all drinking water would be pure.

^g I take the point to be that some sins are judged already in this life, but all will be judged at the final accounting.

^h Observe that there is no indication that a slave who converts to Christ should expect to be freed from that condition, even if the owner is a Christian.

I TIMOTHY 6

corrupted minds and destitute of the Truth,^a who suppose that godliness is a means to financial gain.^b Keep away from such people.^c

Concluding considerations

Godliness with contentment

⁶Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷We brought nothing into the world and it is certain that neither can we take anything out.^d ⁸So having food and clothing we will be content with that. ⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful desires, that plunge people into ruin and loss; ¹⁰because the love of money is a root^e of all kinds of evil; in their greediness some have been led away from the faith and have impaled themselves on many distresses.^f

Lay hold on eternal life

¹¹But you, O man of God, flee these things; rather pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life into which you were called^g—indeed, you confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.^h ¹³In the presence of the God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate,ⁱ I charge you ¹⁴to keep this commandment without spot, blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,^j ¹⁵which He will manifest at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and the Lord of lords; ¹⁶who alone has immortality, residing in unapproachable light;^k whom no man has seen or can see; to whom be honor and eternal power. Amen.

To the rich

¹⁷Command^l those who are rich in this present world not to be haughty, nor to rely upon the uncertainty of riches but on the living^m God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy; ¹⁸they are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be

^a The clear implication is that these people have not been regenerated, and are being used by the enemy. There is no lack of such people in the churches.

^b The religious mercenaries are with us still.

^c Less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit this last sentence (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d But if you belong to Christ you can send it on ahead, by investing in God's Kingdom here.

^e That is right, a root, not 'the' root. Love of money is only one of the causes that lead men to do evil.

^f As the Text says, "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Proverbs 13:15). Recall that the Sovereign said, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Someone who switches from God to 'mammon' will probably never switch back.

^g "Flee", "pursue", "fight", "take hold"—these are things that are up to us; Paul is emphasizing human responsibility here.

^h Might this have been when he was baptized with water?

ⁱ So just what was that "good confession"? The Lord demonstrated absolutely no fear, and told Pilate plainly that he could only do what the Father allowed.

^j Evidently Paul considered that the "appearing" could happen during Timothy's lifetime.

^k But once we have been glorified I believe we will be able to approach and endure, even enjoy! Oh praise God!

^l Paul commands Timothy to issue a command to the rich (see James 5:1-3).

^m Some 7% of the Greek manuscripts omit "the living" (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

generous sharers^a ¹⁹—storing up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, so that they may lay hold on the eternal life.

A closing exhortation

²⁰O Timothy, guard the deposit!^b Turn away from the godless, empty chatter and inconsistencies of what is falsely called ‘science’ ²¹—by professing it some have erred concerning the Faith.^c

The Grace be with you. Amen.

^a Whenever God blesses us with material abundance, it is not for us to hoard or squander on ourselves—it is to be invested in the Kingdom (there are various ways of doing that).

^b What does Paul mean by “the deposit”? I suppose it would be the sum of revealed truth surrounding the person and work of Jesus Christ—a synonym of ‘the Faith’.

^c For many generations the theory of evolution has been foisted on the populace at large as ‘science’. It dominates the schools, the media, the marketplace, the government. The spiritual damage has been incalculable—multiplied millions will spend eternity in the Lake because of it.

**The Second Epistle of Paul to
TIMOTHY**

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life^a that is in Christ Jesus,^b ²to dear son Timothy: Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul addresses Timothy's spiritual crisis

Paul encourages Timothy

³I give thanks to God, whom I serve with a clear conscience like my forefathers did,^c as I constantly remember you in my prayers, night and day, ⁴longing to see you (recalling your tears),^d that I may be filled with joy; ⁵while I call to mind the unfeigned faith that is in you—it resided first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, in you also. ⁶For this reason I am reminding you to rekindle^e the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷Because God did not give us a spirit of cowardice,^f but of power and of love and of self-control.

Don't be ashamed to suffer for Christ

⁸So do not be ashamed to identify with our Lord or with me His prisoner, but join in suffering for the Gospel according to the power of God^g ⁹—the One who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which^h was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,ⁱ ¹⁰but has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who by means of the Gospel destroyed the death^j and brought life and immortality to light; ¹¹to this Gospel I was appointed as a proclaimer, an apostle and a teacher of nations.^k ¹²That is why I am suffering these things, yet I am not

^a The “life that is in Christ Jesus”—that is what it is all about. As He Himself said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

^b The going back and forth between “Jesus Christ” and “Christ Jesus” appears to be merely a matter of style.

^c So why does Paul bring his ancestors into the picture? I suppose to set up a parallel with Timothy and his ancestors (verse 5). One’s heritage is important.

^d From what follows I take it that Timothy was going through a spiritual crisis when Paul last saw him, hence the tears. Paul did what he could to help, but is anxious to know how Timothy is doing.

^e Timothy had received a ‘charisma’ from God through Paul, but the verb “rekindle” indicates clearly that the use of the gift is up to him, and he has been neglecting it.

^f Timothy must not retreat, must not give up; rather he should make use of the resources God has placed at his disposal—and so should we. Anytime we are attacked by fear, we may calculate that it is not from God.

^g Living out the Gospel in this world has everything to do with the power of God.

^h It is hard to determine whether the pronoun refers only to “grace” or to both “purpose and grace”.

ⁱ Really; the Lamb’s blood was shed before this world was created (1 Peter 1:19-20).

^j That is what the Text says, “the death”; I take it that the reference is to Satan’s kingdom. Indeed, is that not what Hebrews 2:14-15 declares? “Since, then, the children have flesh and blood as their share, He Himself likewise partook of the same, in order that through His death He might abolish the one who had the power of death—that is, the devil—and set free these [the children] who during their whole lifetime were subject to slavery through fear of death.” See also 1 John 3:8.

^k About 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “of nations” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ashamed because I know in whom I have believed and am certain that He is able to guard my deposit^a until that Day.^b

Be loyal—the example of Onesiphorus

¹³Hold fast the standard of sound teaching that you heard from me, through the faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.^c

¹⁵This you know, that all those in Asia have been turned away from me,^d including Phygellus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorous, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain;^e ¹⁷rather, when he arrived in Rome he searched diligently for me until he found me ¹⁸(may the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord in that Day); you also know very well in how many ways he served in Ephesus.

Be strengthened

2 ¹So you, my son, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²Also, the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit the same to faithful men who will be competent to teach others also.^f

³You therefore are to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.^g ⁴No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the affairs of *civilian* life; he wants to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵Further, if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules ⁶—the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive of the fruits.^h ⁷Ponder what I am saying; may the Lord indeed give you understanding in it all.ⁱ

Encouragement by example

⁸Keep thinking of Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of David's seed; this is my gospel,^j ⁹for which I am suffering to the point of being in chains like a criminal, but the Word of God is not chained. ¹⁰This is why I endure it all: for the sake of the chosen ones,^k that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹This is a trustworthy word:

^a That is right, "my deposit"; by dying to himself and living for Christ's kingdom he is building up a 'savings account' in Heaven.

^b The Day when we face God's bar and give an accounting (see verse 18 below).

^c "Hold fast the standard", "guard the good deposit"—again Paul is emphasizing our responsibility, but we must rely on the Holy Spirit's enabling.

^d "Turn away" is in the passive voice; someone was working against Paul, with success.

^e Although Paul was granted the privilege of having his own house (Acts 28:16), he wore a chain.

^f The future of the Church depends on this.

^g When we complain about our circumstances, are we forgetting that we are soldiers?

^h I believe the verse could be just as well translated as, 'the hardworking farmer must first receive of the fruits', the point being that he has to have seed before he can plant the subsequent crop.

ⁱ To succeed requires commitment, dedication, whether you are a soldier, an athlete or a farmer.

^j This brief statement evokes much of the essence of the Gospel. "David's seed" recalls that the Creator really became human, with David's genes, and fulfills the prophecies about the Messiah. "Raised from the dead" recalls everything connected with His death and resurrection. Thinking about Jesus is a good antidote to discouragement.

^k They are "chosen" but Paul has to suffer so that they may obtain. See 2 Corinthians 1:5-7, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24 and 1 Peter 4:13.

II TIMOTHY 2

If, indeed, we died together,^a
we will also live together;
12if we endure,
we will also reign together;
if we deny,
He will also deny us;^b
13if we are faithless,
He remains faithful^c
—He is incapable of denying Himself.^d

14Keep reiterating these things, exhorting them^e before the Lord^f not to argue about words to no useful purpose^g—it just ruins the hearers.

Approved and disapproved

15Make every effort to render yourself approved by God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, handling the Word of the Truth correctly. **16**But shun godless, empty chatter, because *those who do it* will become increasingly godless,^h **17**and their word will spread like gangrene—among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, **18**who have wandered away from the Truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred; and they overturn the faith of some.ⁱ

19Nevertheless, the solid foundation of God stands firm, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,”^j and let everyone who claims the name of the Lord^k keep away from unrighteousness. **20**Now in a large house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some, to be sure, are for honor, but some are for dishonor. **21**So if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor,^l sanctified and useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

^a We must really identify with Christ’s death, which involves commitment and a change of life, a change of worldview.

^b Although most versions supply ‘with Him’ in verses 11-12, it is only in this last clause that the pronoun actually occurs, but because it does, the ‘with Him’ is correctly understood. Notice the heavy emphasis on human responsibility—if we endure (but only if) we will reign; if we deny Him, He will certainly deny us.

^c Since He remains faithful, He picks us up when we stumble; but not if we deny Him.

^d There are at least two things that God cannot do: deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13) and lie (Titus 1:2—which would be a form of denying His nature).

^e I suppose that the antecedent of this pronoun is to be found in 2:2 above.

^f Instead of “the Lord”, perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘God’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g This would not include a serious discussion of an important doctrinal point.

^h Comparing this with what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-37, those who speak godlessly do so because their heart is godless; and the more they do it the worse they get, because they continually reinforce their godlessness.

ⁱ Surely; if the resurrection has already happened and you are still here, what hope have you?

^j See Numbers 16:5.

^k Instead of “the Lord”, perhaps 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^l The analogy here is not clear to me, but I take the point to be that the believer should avoid contamination from those who are dishonorable.

The true source of opposition

²²Flee the lusts of youth;^a but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.^b ²³Refuse foolish and ignorant arguments, knowing that they breed quarrels. ²⁴Now a slave of the Lord should not quarrel but be gentle towards all, skillful at teaching, forbearing,^c ²⁵correcting courteously those who oppose him, in hopes that God may grant them repentance leading to a real knowledge of Truth, ²⁶and that they may retrieve their senses^d out of the devil's snare (having been taken captive by him to do his will).^e

Paul addresses Timothy's future ministry

What relativistic humanism produces

3 ¹Now understand this: In the last days there will be grievous times; ²because people will be self-lovers,^f money lovers, boasters, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³without family affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴betrayers, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;^g ⁵wearing a form of godliness while having denied its power!^h

You must avoid such people; ⁶because they are the sort that pressⁱ into households and 'capture' gullible women loaded down with sins, who are led along by various lusts, ⁷always learning yet never being able to come to a real knowledge of truth.^j ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres^a opposed Moses, so also these

^a Do not play with it, to see if you are strong enough to resist—just run!

^b This requires fellowship with others of like mind.

^c I take the basic meaning of this term to be to handle opposition with maturity.

^d Without our help they almost certainly will not.

^e Verses 23-26 provide a perspective that is not generally understood. At least some (most?) [all?] of the time that people oppose Biblical values they do so because of satanic influence in their minds. Since Satan is the 'father of lies' (John 8:44), he is behind any and every lie. So whenever anyone embraces a lie (materialism, humanism, relativism, spiritism, animism, whatever) they invite Satan into their minds. Once there he goes about setting up strongholds. As Ephesians 2:2 says, he is actively at work in the 'sons of the disobedience'—when you embrace a lie you reject the Truth; but then you are taken captive by the lie and wind up doing Satan's will. This process goes area by area, which explains why people can be good in one area and bad in another (the reference is not to physical skills). So when someone opposes God's truth and His values, we need to understand and remember how the person got that way; actually, they are being used. To lash out at them will not help them. A gentle, courteous probing of their presuppositions just might. More to the point, we have access to spiritual authority whereby we can break Satan's strongholds, but that gets us into the area of biblical spiritual warfare (extremely important, but too extensive to expound here). At one time I did a lot of study and work in this area and have some material that is available from my site: www.prunch.org.

^f Recent studies indicate that the vast majority of young people in North America (and presumably also elsewhere) are now 'narcissists'—they are totally self-centered, with no concern for others. They have been 'programmed' through their portable access to TV and the Internet.

^g Verses 2-4 give a terrifyingly accurate description of contemporary society; two thousand years ago Paul gave a prophetic description of what relativistic humanism produces.

^h "Having denied" is in the perfect tense; they start out by not believing in true godliness and hence deny that it would have any power. But living in a culture that still has vestiges of a former godliness, they find it useful to pretend.

ⁱ The description of such persons, given in verses 2-5, does not agree with 'sneaking' or 'worming'—they enter openly, exuding confidence and competence. I follow the best line of transmission, albeit a minority reading (20% of the Greek manuscripts, here).

^j Who are these 'little women'? Hardworking mothers and homemakers in families that are struggling to make ends meet have no leisure to indulge in a variety of lusts or to spend time listening to purveyors of high-sounding nonsense. Where do arrogant lovers of money, pleasure and self go? They go where

II TIMOTHY 4

oppose the truth—men of depraved mind, disqualified as regards the faith^b—⁹but they will not advance any further because, as in the case of the former, their folly will become evident to all.

“Continue in the things you have learned”

¹⁰You, however, have carefully followed my doctrine, my lifestyle, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance; ¹¹the persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured; yet the Lord delivered me out of them all. ¹²In fact, any one who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted;^c ¹³while malignant men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

¹⁴But you, continue in the things you have learned and to which you were committed,^d knowing from whom you learned, ¹⁵and that from infancy you have known the Sacred Scriptures which are able to make you wise into salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed^e and is valuable for teaching, for reproving, for correcting, for training in righteousness,^f ¹⁷so that the man of God may be fully competent, thoroughly equipped for every good work.^g

Proclaim the Word!

4 ¹Now then, in the presence of God and the Lord^h Jesus Christ, who is about to judge both living and dead, with a view to His appearing and His Kingdom, I give you this charge:ⁱ ²Proclaim the Word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and exhort, with lots of patience and teaching.^j ³Because the time will come when they will not tolerate the sound doctrine; rather, they will accumulate for themselves a great many teachers who will tickle their ears according to their lusts ⁴—yes, they will turn their ears away from the Truth and

the money and pleasure is, the high society. So the reference is probably to high society dames who have the money and leisure to indulge themselves, but enough conscience left to be bothered by it. But they don't really want to give up their lifestyle.

^a Paul got these names from an extra-biblical source that was nonetheless accurate history.

^b The reference is clearly to servants of the enemy.

^c If no one is persecuting you, why not?

^d In the next verse Paul harks back to Timothy's childhood and the influence of his mother and grandmother; just as we dedicate our children to God, Timothy was doubtless so dedicated. “To which you were committed” fits the context very nicely—I follow the best line of transmission, albeit a minority reading (20% of the Greek manuscripts, here).

^e Paul coins an expression to describe the intimate connection between God and His written revelation: it is like His very breath.

^f Notice the sequence: 1) the Scripture provides objectively true information; 2) then the Holy Spirit uses His Sword to convict of sin; 3) this leads to repentance and conversion; 4) then the Word is our food and water for spiritual growth. As we grow, we can help others move through the sequence.

^g Access to Scripture is necessary for spiritual growth and work.

^h Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “the Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ The charge that Paul gives Timothy is “with a view to His appearing and His Kingdom”.

^j If Timothy obeys this charge, he will at least slow down the process described in verses 3-4. And if we also obey this charge we should produce at least some improvement in our own context.

be turned aside to fables.^a ⁵But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.^b

Timothy will no longer have Paul to help him

⁶For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.^c ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Now the crown of the righteousness is reserved for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that Day; and not only to me, but also to all those who have longed for His appearing.^d

Concluding remarks

“Please come quickly”

⁹Do your best to come to me quickly; ¹⁰for Demas, loving this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica—Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.^e ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.^f ¹²Tychicus I sent to Ephesus. ¹³Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.^g ¹⁴Alexander the coppersmith did me a lot of harm; may the Lord repay him according to his deeds.^h ¹⁵You also guard against him, because he strongly opposed our words.

People will disappoint you

¹⁶At my first defense no one came to help me, but all deserted me. May it not be held against them.ⁱ ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the nations might hear.^j Also, I was delivered out of a lion’s mouth;^k ¹⁸and the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and save me into His heavenly Kingdom;^l to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

^a Notice the progression: first they choose to turn away from the Truth, but after that someone else takes over and leads them into ever greater stupidities.

^b In view of his own impending death Paul urges Timothy to get, and stay, serious.

^c Evidently God told Paul he was about to die.

^d If we are afraid of what might happen, we will not “long” for that “appearing”. The implication is that they also are fighting the good fight and keeping the faith.

^e I take it that what is said of Demas does not apply to Crescens or Titus, just that they traveled.

^f Comparing this statement with Acts 15:37-39, it appears that Barnabas was right in investing in Mark, and Paul here recognizes his success. It is possible that Paul wanted Mark to wait on him personally.

^g The parchments may have been a subset among the books, possibly being O.T. Scriptures; in that event the other books might have been N.T. Scriptures, but we can only speculate.

^h He is not asking God to forgive the man.

ⁱ Note the difference in attitude toward these people and toward the coppersmith in verse 14.

^j I suppose that Paul wrote some of his letters after this first trial, and thus “the nations” are still ‘hearing’.

^k I suppose this is literal: someone tried to have him condemned to face a lion in the arena, but the plan was foiled.

^l To get **into** the “heavenly Kingdom” is the goal.

II TIMOTHY 4

Farewell

19Greet Prisca^a and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. **20**Erastus stayed in Corinth, while I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.^b **21**Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

22The Lord Jesus Christ^c be with your spirit. The Grace^d be with you.^e Amen.

^a It is generally considered that 'Prisca' is an alternate spelling, or shortened form, for 'Priscilla'.

^b Evidently Paul was not able to heal him.

^c Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Jesus Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d 'Grace' occurs with the definite article = 'the grace'; so I capitalized it.

^e "Your spirit" is singular, referring to Timothy, but the "you" here is plural—I take it that Paul knew the letter would be read by others.

The Epistle of Paul to

TITUS

Greeting

1 ¹Paul, a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's elect and a real knowledge of the Truth that accords with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life^a—which life God, who cannot lie,^b promised before the ages of time^c ³but has manifested by a proclamation of His Word at chosen times, which word was entrusted to me by the command of our Savior God;^d ⁴to Titus, a true son in a common faith: Grace, mercy,^e peace, from Father God and Sovereign Jesus Christ,^f our Savior.

Qualifications for elders

⁵I left you in Crete^g for this reason, that you should set in order the things that were lacking and appoint elders in every town as I directed you ⁶—if a man is blameless, a one-woman man,^h having childrenⁱ who believe and who are not open to the charge of being wild or disobedient. ⁷Because as an administrator under God the overseer^j must be blameless; not self-willed, not hotheaded, not given to wine, not a bully, not avaricious; ⁸but rather hospitable, a lover of what is good, prudent, just, holy, disciplined; ⁹holding fast the trustworthy Word as taught, so that he may be competent^k both to exhort with the sound doctrine and to correct those who oppose it.

They must face opposition

¹⁰Because there really are lots of rebels, loudmouths and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group, ¹¹who must be silenced—they are ruining

^a Paul frankly states his motivation; he wants eternal life, and the only way to get there is to be a slave of God. Since Jehovah the Son endured the cross with a view to the glory on the other side (Hebrews 12:2), Paul is in good company. We have the same opportunity.

^b This is one thing that God cannot do, being contrary to His nature, His essence.

^c How did Paul know this? Presumably it was revealed to him, perhaps when he was caught up to the third heaven. (See also 1 Peter 1:18-20.) Perhaps it refers to a promise made by the Father to the Son. The suggestion here is that 'time' is a concept limited to this planet, being irrelevant to an eternal Being.

^d Paul is plainly claiming to be in the line of those whom God chose down through the ages to proclaim His Word, the implication being that it is a new proclamation, not just an exposition of what has already been written. The "hope of eternal life" has been proclaimed at chosen times throughout human history.

^e Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit "mercy" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f I take it that "Father God" and "Sovereign Jesus Christ" act here as proper nouns. Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Sovereign" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g When was this? We know that Luke and Aristarchus were with Paul on the boat that took him to Rome; he isn't mentioned, but might Titus have been there too? And when the boat stopped at Fair Havens, Crete, Paul may have sent Titus ashore. (Paul already knew that he would suffer shipwreck.)

^h I take it that Paul is speaking of a quality, a kind of person. Many men have only one wife, but have wandering eyes—they would not qualify.

ⁱ Presumably adults who have left the 'nest' are not in view here.

^j If we are going to represent God in an official capacity, we need to be clean.

^k Unfortunately, this competence in the use of God's Word is in rather short supply these days.

TITUS 2

whole households, teaching things that they ought not, and for dishonest gain!^a
¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”¹³This testimony is true.^b Therefore correct them rigorously,^c that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴not paying attention to Jewish fables or to commands of men who are rejecting the truth.^d ¹⁵To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; in fact, both their minds and their consciences are defiled.^e ¹⁶They profess to know God, but by their actions they deny Him, being detestable, disobedient and disqualified for any good work.

Qualities to be taught

2 ¹Now you, speak the things that suit sound doctrine: ²older men are to be sober, dignified, prudent, sound in the faith, in love and in endurance; ³similarly older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of what is good ⁴—so that they may instruct the young women^f to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be prudent, pure, good homemakers, subordinating themselves to their own husbands, so that the Word of God not be maligned.

⁶Similarly, exhort the young men to be self-controlled,^g ⁷in all things presenting yourself as an example of good works:^h showing integrity, dignity and incorruptibilityⁱ in your teaching ⁸—healthy speech, beyond reproach—so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing slighting to say about us.^j ⁹Exhort slaves to subordinate themselves to their own owners, to be well pleasing in all

^a Apparently those people were not acting out of strong personal conviction, but just for material gain. Pitiful. Unfortunately, such people are still very much with us.

^b Nothing like telling it like it is! (Paul had evidently not heard about being ‘politically correct’.)

^c Ingrained habits and cultural characteristics cannot be changed with a single rebuke; Paul is talking about a sustained effort to bring about a change in their attitudes and cultural values.

^d Before listening to someone, you need to check out their presuppositions.

^e I am reminded of Matthew 6:22-23, words of the Sovereign Creator while He walked this earth: “The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has “eye” in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real ‘eye’)—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. ‘Evil’ here has the idea of malignant—aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to every thing he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. That is what it says here in Titus 1:15; to someone who is defiled **nothing** is pure. With a defiled mind and conscience such a person is simply incapable of giving a decent interpretation to anything at all in this whole wide world. That is why Paul goes on to say in the next verse that such a person is disqualified for any good work. Surely, if you are full of evil, how can you do good?

^f Note that the young women are to be instructed by older women, who can do a much better job on that particular front than can male pastors.

^g Curiously the young men get only one requirement—self-control.

^h Again, if we are going to represent God in an official capacity, we need to be clean.

ⁱ Some 17% of the Greek manuscripts omit “incorruptibility” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j A significant minority of the Greek manuscripts (20%) have ‘you’ (as in AV and NKJV), but the majority (including the best line of transmission) has “us”. Since Titus’ message and authority derive from Paul, it is properly first person.

things, not talking back, ¹⁰not pilfering^a but showing total trustworthiness, so as to adorn the doctrine of our Savior God in everything.^b

Saving grace

¹¹For the saving grace of God has appeared for all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live prudently, righteously and godly in this present age,^c ¹³looking for the blessed hope,^d even the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave Himself for us, so that He might redeem us from all lawlessness^e and purify for Himself a special people, zealous for good works.^f

¹⁵Speak these things, whether you exhort or reprove, with all authority. Let no one disdain you.^g

The difference the Gospel makes

3 ¹Remind them^h to subordinate themselves to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ²to slander no one, to be peaceable, gentle, demonstrating true humility to all men. ³Because we ourselves were also foolish at one time, disobedient, being deceived, being enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, detestable,ⁱ hating one another.^j

What a marvelous salvation!

⁴But when the kindness of our Savior God and His love toward mankind manifested itself,^k ⁵He saved us—not because of righteous deeds that we ourselves had done but according to His mercy, by means of the bath of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit,^l ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that having been justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

^a A slave could doubtless find opportunity to pilfer, and could convince himself that he was justified in so doing. An observant owner could figure out who did and who didn't.

^b Notice that Paul does not incite slaves to revolt or rebellion. Perhaps it is especially in adverse circumstances that we can "adorn" the doctrine of God.

^c God's saving grace has been made available for everyone, but most people have not heard of it. If they are to hear, we must live godly lives.

^d If we are to live "looking", then we regard it as something that could happen in our lifetime (otherwise there is no point in 'looking').

^e Since any 'law' that God promulgates derives from His character, I take the point here to be that God wants to deliver us from anything and everything that is not in conformity to His character.

^f There is repeated emphasis on doing what is good, not just professing correct doctrine.

^g The problem here could be his youth, but as Paul's delegate he represents apostolic authority.

^h The Text just has the pronoun, but the reference is evidently to the Christians in Crete.

ⁱ Hey, there is hope! 'Detestable' is repeated from 1:16 above, so if people who are now regenerated were once that way, then they can be changed; there is a way out, through the Gospel. (Actually in the Text the terms are different, synonyms, but the point is the same.)

^j This description is very up-to-date; it fits contemporary society very well. So those who were saved out of that milieu should be gentle with those who are still in it. Those who have always been protected from the world may find it difficult to be gentle.

^k Remember John 3:16.

^l The regenerating and renewing are performed by the Holy Spirit. In verse 6 the "He" who does the pouring is the Father, based on the saving work of the Son—here we have an overt reference to the Trinity.

TITUS 3

So let's do good

⁸The above is a trustworthy statement and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be concerned to take the lead in good works.^a These things are good and profitable for mankind.^b ⁹But avoid foolish arguments and genealogies and contentions and disputes about the law, because they are unprofitable and useless.^c

¹⁰Excommunicate a divisive man after a first and second admonition, ¹¹knowing that such a person has been perverted^d and is sinning, being self-condemned.

Farewell

¹²As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there.^e ¹³Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way without delay,^f that they may lack nothing. ¹⁴And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet pressing needs, that they not be unfruitful.^g

¹⁵All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith.^h Grace be with you all.ⁱ Amen.

^a I take that to be the normal meaning of the Text—Christians should take the lead in their communities with projects that are for the common good.

^b If everyone in the world lived according to Biblical principles it would be a much better place! There would be no need for jails, police departments, armies, rehabilitation centers, most hospitals, etc.

^c Some people like to argue for the sake of arguing, but Sovereign Jesus said we will be judged for every idle word (Matthew 12:36).

^d The passive voice indicates that the person was perverted by an outside force, in this context presumably by Satan; but he went along with the process, allowed it to happen (or he would not be “self-condemned”). So now he is on Satan’s side, and if he refuses to listen to two warnings, he does not want to change. The next best thing is to excommunicate him, not allow him to work within the community, because of the damage he causes.

^e For Paul to write this, he could not be in prison. Either he was freed after Acts 28:31 or this letter was written before his trip to Jerusalem that resulted in his imprisonment.

^f How did Paul know about those men being in Crete? Believers who traveled would transmit information.

^g By meeting the needs of God’s servants we share in the fruit of their labors.

^h The Text does not have ‘the’ faith, just ‘faith’. Perhaps the reference is to those who have never met Paul, but love him anyway.

ⁱ “You all” is obviously plural, so evidently Paul expected that the letter would have a wider circulation than just Titus.

The Epistle of Paul to

PHILEMON

Greeting

¹Paul, a prisoner for Jesus Christ,^a and brother Timothy, to the beloved Philemon, our fellow worker, ²and to the beloved^b Apphia and our fellow soldier Archippus, and to the congregation at your (sg)^c house: ³Grace to you (pl) and peace from God our Father and Sovereign Jesus Christ.

Paul commends Philemon

⁴I always thank my God as I make mention of you (sg) in my prayers, ⁵hearing of your love and faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus, and for all the saints, ⁶so that the sharing of your (sg) faith may become powerful through a full understanding of every good thing that is among you (pl) who are in Christ Jesus;^d ⁷yes, we have much thanksgiving^e and encouragement because of your (sg) love, in that the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.

Paul intercedes for Onesimus

⁸Now then, though I have all boldness in Christ to order you (sg) to do what is right,^f ⁹I—being none other than Paul the old man and now also a prisoner for Jesus Christ—would rather appeal to you, for love’s sake. ¹⁰I appeal to you on behalf of the son whom I begot while in my chains, Onesimus,^g whom I am sending back ¹¹—formerly he was unprofitable to you, but now he is profitable, both to you and to me.

¹²So receive^h him, who is my very heart ¹³—I would have liked to keep him with me, so that he might minister to me in your place, while I am in chains for the Gospel, ¹⁴but I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that your contribution might be voluntary, not as an imposition. ¹⁵Perhaps this is why he

^a Since Paul elsewhere calls himself a slave of Jesus, he would also be a prisoner of Jesus, but in this context I understand him to be saying that he is in prison because of Jesus.

^b Instead of “beloved”, some 5% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘sister’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). In any case, Apphia is a woman.

^c Since English is ambiguous as to whether the second person personal pronoun is singular or plural, and since Paul mixes both in this letter, it becomes necessary to let the reader know which is which. The congregation met in Philemon’s house.

^d Verse 6 probably reads quite differently in your version of the Bible. Were you aware that the “your” refers to Philemon while the “you” refers to the congregation? [The MSS evidence is about evenly divided between “you” and ‘us’, but I follow the best line of transmission, as in AV and NKJV.] The verse usually ends with “you/us in Christ Jesus”, but the preposition is properly “into”, which does not make for smooth English. The reference is to those who have believed into Jesus (as He Himself invariably said)—they were outside but have moved inside. So Paul is referring to a group of regenerated people and to the aggregate of ‘good things’ to be found among them; which I assume would certainly include the gifts of the Spirit, as well as His fruit. As Philemon’s understanding of these resources increases, the sharing of his faith will become more powerful, and for this Paul prays. At the end of the verse, perhaps 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “Jesus” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e Instead of “thanksgiving”, some 12% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘joy’, as in most versions.

^f Paul starts out by asserting his authority, but softens it with an emotional appeal, appealing to Philemon’s emotions in various ways.

^g When not a proper name, the word is an adjective meaning ‘useful’.

^h Some 1.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “receive”, as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc., which obliges them to adjust their rendering accordingly.

PHILEMON

was removed^a for a while, so that you would have him forever ¹⁶—no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, very much to me but even more to you, both in flesh and in the Lord.^b

Paul asks for obedience

¹⁷So if you consider me a partner, receive him as if it were me.^c ¹⁸If he wronged you or owes anything, charge it to me. ¹⁹I, Paul, am writing with my own hand, “I will repay” (rather than say to you that you actually owe me your very self!).^d ²⁰Yes brother, let me have *this* benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord.^e

²¹Being confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you (sg) will do even more than I say. ²²But meanwhile, do prepare a guest room for me, because I hope that through your (pl) prayers I will be graciously bestowed on you (pl).^f

Farewell

²³Epaphras, my fellow prisoner for Christ Jesus, greets you (sg), ²⁴as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.^g

²⁵The grace of our Lord Jesus^h be with your (pl) spirit.ⁱ Amen.

^a “Removed” is passive; Paul implies that God was behind the flight of Onesimus.

^b What does “both in flesh and in the Lord” mean? Onesimus is now a brother in the Lord, but was he also Philemon’s physical brother? But if a brother, how did he become his slave? I don’t know. If I had to guess I would imagine that Philemon’s father begot Onesimus of a slave woman. Whatever the messy consequences of people’s lives without Christ, this letter illustrates nicely how the Gospel can straighten things out.

^c Verses 17-19 are often used as an illustration of substitutionary atonement, wherein Philemon would represent the Father, Paul the Son, and Onesimus the sinner—what Onesimus owes is charged to Paul, so Onesimus can go free. (Of course the second half of verse 19 doesn’t fit: the Father doesn’t owe His life to the Son.)

^d Dear me, Paul builds such a strong case that there is really no way that Philemon can refuse!

^e Instead of “the Lord”, some 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Might verse 22 be a veiled threat, that Paul could show up to check up on Philemon? Note that Paul implies that his physical presence will be a blessing.

^g Evidently Epaphras was also in prison, but not the others. If Mark was there as a result of the request in 2 Timothy 4:11, then this letter was written some time later.

^h I follow the best line of transmission (albeit representing only some 20% of the Greek manuscripts here) in not adding ‘Christ’. Being a very personal letter, Paul is less formal.

ⁱ Since ‘spirit’ is singular, is it that of the congregation?—or does Paul mean the spirit of each one of the individuals? Even though regenerated we still need grace, and a congregation certainly needs it.

The Epistle [of Paul] to the

HEBREWS

The supremacy of the Son

1 ¹God, having spoken to the fathers through the prophets in many parts and in various ways, in the past, ²has at the end of these days spoken to us by **Son**,^a whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages;^b ³who being the projection of His glory and the very image of His essence, and sustaining all things by the expression of His^{[S]c} own power,^d when He had by Himself^e provided purification for our^f sins^g He sat down on the highest Majesty's right,^h ⁴having become so much superior to the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they have.

He is superior to the angels

⁵For to which of the angels did He^[F] ever say,

“You are my Son,
today I begot you,”ⁱ

and again,

“I will be ‘Father’ to Him,
and He will be ‘Son’ to me?”^j

⁶Again, when He introduces the Firstborn^k into the inhabited earth^l He says,

“Let all God's angels worship Him^[S].”^m

⁷Further, about the angels He^[F] says,

^a I take it that ‘Son’ is being used like a proper name (there is no definite article with it). The Son is the ultimate revelation to us of who God is and what He is like.

^b That is what the Text says, although most versions render ‘worlds’, which seems to make better sense, at least at first glance. But let us stop and think a minute—since God is eternal, the concept of ‘time’ may be part and parcel of this Creation, limited to it and perhaps be a defining characteristic, along with space. But ‘ages’ is plural, and how does one distinguish one age from another? Presumably by the events of history—in other words, the Son controls the history of this planet.

^c Here the pronoun refers to the Son; the previous occurrences refer to the Father. Below, whenever the referent changes I will indicate this by [F] or [S], which will be good until the next change.

^d Why do not molecules, with their opposing electrical charges, burst apart? The Creator holds them together—the Son was not only the primary agent in the Creation, He is also the maintainer and redeemer.

^e Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit “by Himself” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “our” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Just as the Son paid the price for our salvation “by Himself”, for those who reject or make light of that terrible price He will Himself tread ‘the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God’ (Revelation 19:15). It is not wise to presume upon God's grace.

^h “He sat down”—evidently He had the right to do this, and no one challenged Him.

ⁱ See Psalm 2:7.

^j See 2 Samuel 7:14.

^k In Hebrew culture the firstborn son usually inherited the lion's share of the father's estate (so as not to splinter the estate) and was thus the boss, so the expression ‘firstborn’ took on the extended meaning of ‘preeminent’, which I take to be the intended meaning here. But as the God-man Christ was both only-begotten and firstborn.

^l I assume that this must have happened at the incarnation of the Son.

^m See Psalm 97:7.

HEBREWS 2

“Who makes His angels winds,^a
His servants flames of fire”;^b

⁸while to the Son He says:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;^c
‘Scepter of Uprightness’^d is the scepter of Your kingdom.
⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness,
therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
with the oil of exultation beyond Your companions.”^e

¹⁰Also:

“You, LORD,^f in the beginning, laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are works of Your hands;

¹¹they will perish but You continue on
—they will all grow old like a garment;

¹²You will roll them up like a cloak and they will be changed,
while You stay the same and Your years will never end.”

¹³On the other hand, to which of the angels did He ever say,

“Sit on my right until I place your enemies
as a stool under your feet”?^g

¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits being sent^h to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

Do not neglect the great salvation

2 ¹So then, we really must pay the utmost attention to the things we have heard, so that we not drift away.ⁱ ²For if the word spoken through angels became binding, and every violation and disobedience received a deserved penalty,^j ³how shall we escape if we are careless about that tremendous salvation?—it received its beginning through the Lord’s declaration and was confirmed to us by

^a The Greek word here also means ‘spirits’, but ‘winds’ fits the Hebrew parallelism better.

^b See Psalm 104:4.

^c The author is saying that the Father declares this to the Son. If the Father declares something, that is the way it is.

^d I take ‘Scepter of Uprightness’ to be a proper name (like the sword ‘Excalibur’).

^e See Psalm 45:6-7.

^f The quote is from Psalm 102:25-27, and in that context it is Jehovah who is being addressed, Jehovah the Son. This is one of several passages in the New Testament that contradict the heresy of the ‘Jehovah’s Witnesses’ and Mormons that denies that Jesus Christ is Jehovah. From this passage, and a few others, we may understand that the Son was the primary agent in the creation of our planet.

^g See Psalm 110:1. In Matthew 22:44 Jesus Himself makes use of this verse.

^h This participle being in the present tense, I take it that this is an ongoing activity. So who will ‘inherit salvation’? True believers, and if we are among them, then we have angels serving us. I submit that we probably have a lot to learn about how to best take advantage of that service.

ⁱ Drifting is gradual, easy to do.

^j Verse 2 is reminiscent of the closing charge in Stephen’s defense: “You who received the Law as ‘ordinances of angels’ and have not kept it!” (Acts 8:53). I confess that I do not understand where the angels come in to the giving of the Law.

those who heard Him^[S],^a **4**God adding His^[F] attestation by signs, wonders, various miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.^b

Temporarily lower than the angels

5Because it is not to angels that He has subjected the coming inhabited earth,^c about which we are speaking; **6**rather, there is a place where someone testified^d saying:

“What is man that You are mindful of him,
or son of man that you care for him?”

7You made him lower than the angels, for a little while;^e
You crowned him with glory and honor,^f

8You subjected all things under his feet.”

It follows that in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not so subjected. However, we do not yet see everything subjected to him, at present.

9But we do see Jesus, who ‘was made lower than the angels, for a little while’^g (in order to suffer death), ‘crowned with glory and honor’—this, by the grace of God, so that He^[S] might taste death on behalf of everyone.^h

“Bringing many sons into glory”

10Because it was appropriate to Him^[F], for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory,ⁱ to complete the Author of their salvation through sufferings.^j **11**For both He^[S] who is sanctifying and those

^a By expressing himself in this way the author lets us know that he was not one of the Twelve.

^b Verses 3 and 4 overtly refer to all three persons of the Godhead. For more on the “distributions” see 1 Corinthians 12:11.

^c The new earth that follows this one will not be administered by angels, so who will do the administering? I agree with those who hold that this life is a classroom wherein the redeemed are being prepared for their functions in the new earth, and some of those functions will be administrative. That future is part of our “tremendous salvation”!

^d I find this turn of phrase to be curious; the author knew his Old Testament well, and presumably knew he was citing a Psalm (8:4-6)—why such a roundabout reference?

^e The human being is superior to the angelic being in essence; we bear God’s image and they do not, and once glorified that superiority will be obvious, but only for the redeemed. Those who serve Satan subordinate themselves to him, and thus can never rise above him. If Lucifer’s rebellion was provoked, as I suppose, by the creation of a being superior to him, he is doing very well at getting his ‘revenge’, by depriving the vast majority of humanity of that superiority (and so the next verse does not apply to them).

^f Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts add, “and set him over the works of your hands”, as in TR, AV, NKJV.

^g Instead of “lower than the angels, for a little while”, AV, NKJV and some other versions have ‘a little lower than the angels’, both here and in Psalm 8. The Greek adjective here is ambiguous, it can refer either to duration or to quantity (and so for the Hebrew adjective in Psalm 8). In this context the duration is clearly better, or so I deem.

^h “Everyone” is not a synonym for ‘the elect’. The death of Christ is adequate, sufficient to provide salvation for all human beings, and is there for them; of course not all actually avail themselves of it (most never even heard about it)—in fact, Sovereign Jesus referred to them as ‘few’ in His day (Matthew 7:14).

ⁱ This contrasts with the many more who will never see the glory.

^j As it says in 5:8 below, “He learned obedience by the things that He suffered.” As God, what could He know about suffering and obedience, except in theory? While in human form Jesus literally learned obedience. To be a compassionate High Priest He had to feel it like we feel it.

HEBREWS 3

who are being sanctified are all from One, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them 'brothers', ¹²saying,

“I will declare Your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing praise to You.”

¹³And again,

“I will put my trust in Him^[F]”;

and again,

“Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”^a

¹⁴Since, then, the children have flesh and blood as their share, He^[S] Himself likewise partook of the same, in order that through His death He might abolish the one who had^b the power of death—that is, the devil—¹⁵and set free these [the children] who during their whole lifetime were subject to slavery through fear of death.^c ¹⁶(Now surely He does not assist angels,^d but He does assist Abraham's seed.) ¹⁷That is why He was obliged to become like those 'brothers' in all respects, so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest, in what concerns God, with a view to making propitiation^e for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For in that in which He Himself endured suffering, having been tested,^f He is able to assist those who are being tested.

The Apostle and High Priest of our confession

3 ¹So then, holy brothers, you who share in the celestial calling, do contemplate the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,^g Jesus Christ!^h ²who was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as also was Moses in all His^[F] house. ³For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than was Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself ⁴—every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God—⁵also, Moses was indeed faithful as a servant in all His house, providing evidence of those things that would later be spoken,ⁱ

^a See Psalms 22:22, 2 Samuel 22:3, Isaiah 8:17-18—the author knew his Old Testament.

^b “Had”, not ‘has’ (as in NIV, etc.)—in Revelation 1:18 the glorified Christ affirms that He now holds the ‘keys’. Although the participle of the verb ‘to have’ is in the present tense, that indicates that it is simultaneous with the time of the finite verb to which it is subordinate, which in this case is ‘to partake’, which is in the past tense. Here we have one of a few overt statements giving the purpose of the Incarnation—to abolish Satan. See also Romans 14:9, 2 Corinthians 5:15 and Philippians 2:8-11.

^c The fear of death is a bad master; it drives people to do incredibly stupid things.

^d Angels are simply God's servants, so the term ‘assist’ is not appropriate for them.

^e ‘Propitiation’ is a theological term: God's righteous character has been outraged by human sin, and something must be done to ‘satisfy’/‘pacify’ that outraged character. Christ's sacrifice propitiated God, satisfied/pacified His outraged character. The resurrection is the proof that the Father accepted the sacrifice, that He declared Himself to be satisfied.

^f The Greek word here covers both ‘to test’ and ‘to tempt’ (to tempt is to test one's moral fiber), the choice in English being guided by the context. Jesus was not tested only in the area of morals; He was tested physically as well. We too are tested in a variety of ways.

^g To ‘confess’ is much more than to ‘profess’, it involves commitment.

^h Here we have the first indication as to the addressees; the missive is addressed to Christians. Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ A curious statement—he provided evidence before it was called for, as it were. Of course Moses is referred to many times in the Scriptures written after his day.

⁶but Christ is faithful as a Son over His house, whose house are we, if, that is, we hold fast the confidence, even the boast,^a of the Hope^b firm to the end.^c

The Holy Spirit's warning

⁷Therefore—just as the Holy Spirit says:^d

“Today, if you would hear His voice,

⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
during the time of the testing^e in the desert,

⁹where your fathers tested me,
proved me and saw my works for forty years.

¹⁰In consequence I became very angry with that generation
and said, “Their heart always leads them astray;
they have not known my ways.”

¹¹So I took an oath in my wrath,
‘As if they will ever enter my rest!’^f

—¹²take care, brothers, that there not be a malignant heart of unbelief in any of you, so as to go away from^g the living God; ¹³rather, exhort yourselves^h every day, while it is called ‘today’, so that none of you be hardened through sin’s deceitfulness. ¹⁴For we have become associates of the Christ, if, that is, we hold fast the beginning of the Endeavorⁱ firm to the end, ¹⁵while it is *still* being said, “Today,^j if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶So who were they who, upon hearing, rebelled? Really now, was it not all those who came out of Egypt by Moses?^k ¹⁷And with whom was He^[f] angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert? ¹⁸Or to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.^l

4 ¹Therefore we should fear, since a promise of entering His rest still stands, lest any one of you should expect to have come short of it.^m

^a I suppose that a sincere boasting is an exaggerated form of confidence.

^b I take it that the Hope has to do with eternal life. To still be part of the “house” at the end, one must never give up “the confidence”.

^c Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “firm to the end” (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

^d The author is affirming that Psalm 95 was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

^e In the context the people were testing God, not vice-versa.

^f See Psalm 95:7-11.

^g Notice the direction. The term ‘malignant’ implies Satanic influence.

^h The pronoun here is reflexive, not reciprocal, but being plural probably includes both ideas—each one should exhort himself, but we should also exhort each other.

ⁱ I take it that the Christian life or walk with God is called “the Endeavor” (much like ‘the Way’); people usually start with confidence and enthusiasm, but frequently slow down as the going gets rough.

^j There comes a time when the window of opportunity is closed, and there are no more ‘todays’.

^k Strictly speaking, since the Original Text did not use question marks, this verse could be translated as a statement: ‘For some, having heard, did rebel, but not all who came out of Egypt by Moses.’ However, since those who did not rebel were very few, a minuscule fraction of the people, most versions treat the verse as a question, as I have done.

^l The implication is clear: if we disobey it is because we do not really believe—see 4:6 below.

^m This verse is a continuation of the whole preceding paragraph that emphasizes the need to persevere in faith, so as to enter the rest. If someone decides he has already fallen short, he will likely give up, stop trying.

There is still a promised rest

²Really, because we are continually hearing Good News^a just like they did, but the word that they heard did not profit them, since they were not intimately united with the faith of those who obeyed. ³Now we who have believed do enter that rest, just as He has said, “So I took an oath in my wrath, ‘As if they will ever enter my rest!’”—His works were certainly finished from the foundation of the world, ⁴because somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day like this, “And on the seventh day God rested from all His works,”^b ⁵while again, in this place, “As if they will ever enter my rest!”^c ⁶Therefore since it remains for some to enter into it, and those who formerly had the Good News proclaimed to them did not enter because of disobedience, ⁷He again designates a certain day, after such a long time,^d saying through David: “Today” (as was stated above), “Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸Because if Jesus^e had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day. ⁹So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰Further, the one having entered into His rest has himself also rested from his own works,^f just as God did from His.

We must give an account

¹¹Therefore, let us take pains to enter into that rest so that no one may fall through the same pattern of disobedience. ¹²Because the Word of God is living and efficient, and sharper than any two-edged sword, actually penetrating to the point of separating soul and spirit,^g joints and marrow; in fact, it is able to evaluate a heart’s reflections and intentions.^h ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight; rather all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.ⁱ

^a Strictly speaking it should be “we are continually being good-newsed / evangelized”, but to try to make a verb out of ‘good news’ is awkward; on the other hand ‘evangelize’ has the connotation of preaching the Gospel to an unbeliever, which is not the point here. I take the “Good News” here to be God’s Truth, on any and all topics.

^b See Genesis 2:2.

^c Dear me, this is the third citation of the oath! When He took it, God was “very angry” (3:10 above); is the author implying that 1,500 years later God is similarly angry with those who insist on disobeying? Then it will still be true in our day (another 2,000 years later). [The syntax of these verses is rather convoluted—reminds one of Paul.]

^d About 500 years.

^e Beyond question, the Greek Text has ‘Jesus’, as in the AV, but most modern versions put ‘Joshua’. I suppose that ‘Jesus’ was judged to be an anachronism, and so ‘Joshua’ was elected to relieve the situation. To be sure, the Septuagint we know (based on inferior Alexandrian manuscripts) uniformly spells ‘Joshua’ as *Iηουος* (Jesus) [as a linguist I wonder why the translators transliterated ‘*Iehoshua*’ as ‘*Jesus*’], and perhaps in consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as ‘Jesus’ [it was not his purpose to correct the LXX]. However, looking carefully at the context in Psalm 95:7-11, Joshua just does not fit. Consider: it is presumably Jehovah the Son who is speaking (“Jehovah our Maker”, verse 6), and since the reference is to those who fell in the wilderness during the forty years, Joshua cannot be in view. It was precisely Jesus, Jehovah the Son, who did not allow that generation to enter the ‘rest’. For further discussion please see the Appendix: “Jesus’ or ‘Joshua?’”.

^f We enter God’s rest through faith in Christ’s Work, not through our own works.

^g If soul and spirit can be separated, they obviously cannot be the same thing, just as joints and marrow are not the same thing.

^h Meditating on God’s Word can be uncomfortable; it is a ‘mirror’ that tells us the truth about ourselves.

ⁱ We must give an account to a Judge who knows ALL the facts. This knowledge really ought to turn us into serious people, diligent seekers of God, but...

We have a Great High Priest

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,^a Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the Confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but He was tested in all points, in similar ways, without sin. ¹⁶So let us approach the throne of grace^b with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace, for timely help.

Qualifications for high priesthood

5 ¹Now every high priest taken from among men is appointed *to act* on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, ²being able to deal gently^c with those who sin in ignorance and go astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³Because of this he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well, just as he does for the people's. ⁴Also, no one receives this honor on his own, but upon being called by God, just like Aaron.^d

Christ meets the qualifications

⁵So also Christ did not exalt Himself to become High Priest, but it was He^[F] who said to Him^[S],

“You are my Son;
today I have begotten You.”^e

⁶Just as He^[F] also says in another place,

“You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek.”^f

⁷He^[S], in the days of His flesh, having offered up both prayers and supplications, with a loud cry and tears, to the One who was able to save Him from death, and having been answered because of His godly fear,^g ⁸although being SON, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹And having been completed^h He became the Source of eternal salvation for all those obeying Him,ⁱ ¹⁰having been designated by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek’;

^a “Heavens” is plural, so He passed through at least two of them, so God’s throne must be in the third heaven (unless there are still more in between).

^b Now precisely which, or whose, throne might “the throne of grace” be? I imagine it would be the throne that Jesus is presently occupying at the Father’s right. Notice that it is up to us to “approach” and ask.

^c A gentle priest is a comfort.

^d Aaron’s descendants receive the honor by virtue of birth, not choice.

^e See Psalm 2:7.

^f See Psalm 110:4.

^g I believe the reference is to Gethsemane. Note that there was a single loud (desperate?) cry (that should have roused the drowsy disciples). His anguish was so severe that Jesus literally passed blood through the pores in His skin—normally fatal (Luke 22:44). I suspect that the fear mentioned here was the fear that He would die prematurely, there in the garden. He came to die, certainly, but it had to be on the cross. So the Father sent angels to strengthen Him, to keep Him from dying prematurely.

^h His qualifications to become High Priest were completed. As God, what could He know about suffering and obedience, except in theory? While in human form Jesus literally **learned** obedience—He had to feel it like we feel it.

ⁱ That is what the Text says; we must obey Him.

HEBREWS 6

¹¹concerning whom we have much to say, but it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing.^a

“Let’s move on toward perfection”

¹²Really, because although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary principles of God’s oracles all over again; you have come to the point^b of needing milk, not solid food! ¹³Surely; whoever lives on milk is an infant, and therefore unskilled in the Word of righteousness. ¹⁴On the other hand, solid food is for the mature, those who by habitual use have trained their senses to distinguish good from bad.^c

6 ¹Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us move on toward perfection, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and trust in God, ²of teaching about baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.^d ³We will do this, that is, if indeed God should permit it.^e

No one kills Jesus twice

⁴Because, it is impossible to bring back into repentance those who were once for all enlightened, who have partaken^f of the heavenly gift and were made sharers in the Holy Spirit,^g ⁵who have experienced God’s good event^h and capabilities of the coming age,ⁱ ⁶and yet have fallen away—they would be crucifying the Son of God all over again, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt.^j

⁷Now the ground that drinks in the rain that frequently falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whom it is really cultivated receives blessing from God; ⁸but should it bear thorns and thistles, it is disqualified, almost a curse, whose destiny is a burning.^k

A word of encouragement

⁹For all that, dear ones, we are confident of the better things concerning you—things that accompany salvation—even though we speak like this. ¹⁰Because God is not unjust so as to ignore your work, even the labor of love you have invested in His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and continue to

^a The ‘difficulty’ is not so much in the subject matter, but in the spiritual condition of the hearers. This would seem to indicate that the author has a specific audience in view.

^b The implication is that they are going backwards.

^c Expressions like “habitual use” and “trained their senses” indicate directed, conscious effort on our part.

^d Note that the topics mentioned are stated to be “elementary”. Note also that “baptisms” is plural.

^e The author is not at all sure that God will, indeed, permit it!

^f The verb here—whether ‘to taste’, ‘to partake’, ‘to obtain’ or ‘to come to know’—has to do with experience.

^g It seems clear enough that the reference is to people who have the Holy Spirit.

^h I take it that “God’s good event” refers to regeneration.

ⁱ Eternal life is a quality of life; it begins down here for those who have been regenerated.

^j No amount of theological shifting and squirming can nullify the plain meaning of this verse. The only way to crucify Jesus **again** is if you have already done so once before. No one is going to kill Jesus twice; if the first time was not good enough for you, you have had it! Anyone who holds Jesus “up to contempt” can expect wrath.

^k This ground was cultivated, not an unplowed weed patch, and planted with good seed; if it still produces thorns and thistles there is something wrong with it. Thistle seeds need to be burned, not plowed under.

do so. ¹¹You see, we really do want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so as to fulfill the hope; ¹²so that you not become lazy, but rather imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.^a

Our secure anchor

¹³Now when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself ¹⁴saying, “Indeed, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”^b ¹⁵And so, after he had been patient,^c he obtained the promise.

¹⁶Because since men swear by the greater, and for them the confirming oath puts an end to every dispute, ¹⁷similarly God, being determined to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchanging nature of His purpose, guaranteed it by an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unalterable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we should have a strong encouragement, we who have taken refuge by grasping the hope set before us; ¹⁹which hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both certain and secure,^d actually entering the inner *sanctuary* behind the curtain, ²⁰where Forerunner Jesus has entered on our behalf, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek, priest and king

7 ¹Now this Melchizedek—king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ²to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all (first, his name means ‘king of righteousness’, and then again ‘king of Salem’, which means ‘king of peace’), ³without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but having been made like the Son of God^e—remains a priest continually.

Melchizedek greater than Abraham

⁴Now consider how great this personage was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils:^f ⁵You see, those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a command, according to the Law, to collect a tithe from the people—that is, from their brothers—even though they *too* came out of Abraham’s body; ⁶but he whose descent is not counted among them collected a tithe from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷Now without dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. ⁸Also, here men who die receive tithes, but there he of whom it is testified that he lives ⁹—in a word, even Levi, who receives tithes, paid the tithe through Abraham, ¹⁰because he was still in the reproductive system of his fore-father when Melchizedek met him.^g

^a We inherit the promises through faith and perseverance—the author keeps insisting: we have to persevere, hang on, stay with it, whatever, until the end of our earthly life.

^b I did not want to lose the Hebrew idiom: a freer rendering would be, ‘Indeed, I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply you greatly’—the “multiply” refers to descendants. See Genesis 22:17.

^c Well, his ‘patience’ was an up and down thing (Ishmael, and all that), but he never gave up altogether.

^d Oh, praise God! With an “anchor” like that we have every reason to persevere.

^e One wonders if Melchizedek was not some sort of theophany, perhaps Jehovah the Son, Himself.

^f Why would Abraham give a tenth of the spoils to a stranger? Something about Melchizedek was very impressive. When Jehovah the Son appeared to Abraham to announce the destruction of Sodom, he knew who He was.

^g This is instructive. The inspired author affirms that Levi was in Abraham and also paid the tithe to Melchizedek, but when Abraham met Melchizedek not even Isaac had been born yet, much less Jacob

Melchizedek greater than Aaron

¹¹Now then, if there could be perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people had received the Law), what further need would there be for a different kind of priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than being called according to the order of Aaron? ¹²(Because when the priesthood is changed there is also a change of law, of necessity.) ¹³For He of whom these things are said belongs to a different tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord arose out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵And it all becomes clearer still if a different kind of priest, in the likeness of Melchizedek, appears, ¹⁶who has come, not on the basis of a law about a physical rule but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.^a ¹⁷Because He testifies:

“You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸You see, there is an annulling of the former rule because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the Law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Our eternal High Priest represents us eternally

²⁰Further, inasmuch as it was not without the taking of an oath ²¹—they indeed had become priests without an oath-taking, but He^[S] with an oath by Him^[F] who said to Him^[S]:

“The LORD has sworn and will not change His^[F] mind;
you are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek”^b

—²²by so much Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. ²³Also, there have been many priests because death prevented them from continuing *in office*; ²⁴while He^[S], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵Therefore He is able to save absolutely^c those who come to God through Him, since He always lives and can intercede on their behalf.

²⁶Now such a High Priest was fitting for us—holy, innocent, undefiled, having been set apart from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens—²⁷who, unlike those high priests, does not need to offer up daily sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people; because He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸The Law appoints as high priest men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, that came after the Law, appointed **Son**, forever perfect.^d

and Levi. So the human spirit, the ‘image’ of the Creator, is transmitted by the male sperm. This agrees with Romans 5:12-21, where we are informed that Adam’s sin contaminated all his descendants. When Eve sinned, she sinned alone. When Adam sinned, we did too.

^a “An indestructible life”—that is how come He can be “a priest forever”.

^b Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “according to the order of Melchizedek” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c Wonderful! He is always ‘there’ for us.

^d The Text has, literally, ‘having been perfected’ (or ‘completed’, or ‘consecrated’); the result of ‘having been perfected’ is to be perfect, and it is the result that is eternal, not the process.

Priest and Mediator of a better covenant

8 ¹Now the main point of the things we are saying is this: We do have such a High Priest, who sat down^a at the right of the Majesty's throne in the heavens, ²Minister of the Holy Places, that is, of the true Tabernacle which the Lord set up, not man. ³Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices (it follows that it is necessary for this One also to have something He might offer) ⁴—if He were on earth He would not be a priest, there already being priests who offer the gifts according to the Law;^b ⁵who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things^c (that is why Moses was warned by God when he was ready to assemble the Tabernacle: “See to it,” He says, “that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain”)—⁶but now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, just as He is Mediator of a better covenant, which was enacted as law on the basis of better promises.^d

A new covenant

⁷Now if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for a second one; ⁸but finding fault with them^e He says:

“Listen! Days are coming,” says the LORD,
 “when I will establish a new covenant
 with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah^f
 —⁹not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers
 in the day when I took them by the hand
 to lead them out of the land of Egypt,^g
 because they did not abide by my covenant
 and so I disregarded them,” says the LORD.
¹⁰“Now this is the covenant that I will make
 with the house of Israel after those days,” says the LORD,^h
 “I will put my laws into their mind
 and write them on their hearts;
 and I will be their God
 and they will be my people.
¹¹Further, not one of them will teach his neighbor
 and not one his brother saying, ‘Get to know the LORD!’
 because they all will know me,
 from the least of them to the greatest of them.

^a He took His seat; it was His prerogative.

^b This presumably indicates that this missive was written before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, when the sacrifices ceased.

^c The Tabernacle assembled by Moses was but a ‘shadow’ of the real thing; which probably means that the spiritual realm is more ‘real’ than the physical one—which is difficult for us to believe, so very few live on that basis.

^d Wow! How is that for convoluted syntax—verses 3-6 form a single sentence. It almost feels ‘Pauline’!

^e That is right, the people, since they did not live up to the covenant. The following quote is from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

^f The author equates the second covenant, inaugurated by Christ, with Jeremiah’s new covenant, so the reference to ‘the house of Israel’ and ‘the house of Judah’ means that there are no ‘lost’ tribes—God knows who they are and where they are (see Revelation 7:4-8).

^g “I took them by the hand”—recall that they were led by the column of cloud/fire from the very first.

^h “The house of Israel” is not the Church! I would say that verses 10 and 11 here will be fulfilled during the Messianic Millennial Kingdom. Notice “they will be my people”.

¹²For I will be merciful to their wrongdoings;
I will not at all remember their sins and their lawless deeds.”^a

¹³By saying ‘new’ He has made the first one ‘old’; and what is obsolete and aging is near the end.

The earthly sanctuary

9 ¹Now that first covenant did indeed have regulations for divine service and the earthly sanctuary. ²Yes, a tabernacle was set up: the first part, which is called the Holy Place, in which were the lamp stand, the table and the showbread; ³and behind the second curtain an area called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having a golden censer^b and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold—in it were a golden jar holding the manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant; ⁵while above it were cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (this is not the place to go into detail about them).^c

The service of the sanctuary

⁶Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests continually went into the first part, performing the divine services, ⁷but into the second one only the high priest could go, once a year and only with blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins of ignorance;^d ⁸the Holy Spirit was making clear that the way into the Most Holy Place was not yet open to the public while the first tabernacle was still in existence. ⁹It was a figure during the time then present, a time when both gifts and sacrifices were being offered that were incapable of clearing the conscience of the worshipper— ¹⁰they were only about foods and drinks and various ceremonial washings and physical regulations, things imposed until the time of restructuring.^e

Christ serves in the heavenly sanctuary

¹¹But Christ entered once for all into the real Holy Places, having obtained eternal redemption—He had come as High Priest of the good things that are about to be, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, ¹²and with His own blood, not that of goats and calves. ¹³For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who had been ceremonially defiled, restored ceremonial purity to the body, ¹⁴how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit^f offered

^a Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “and their lawless deeds” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b The normal meaning of the Greek word here is precisely ‘censer’, but unfortunately modern versions like NIV, TEV, LB, NASB render ‘altar of incense’, thus setting up a contradiction with the Old Testament. According to Exodus 30:6 the altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies, and so it was in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies. The only reference to this particular censer appears to be in Leviticus 16:12, where it was to be used behind the second curtain to hide the Ark with smoke. Since that censer would only be used once a year (on the day of atonement), it may well have been stored just behind a corner of the second curtain (where the high priest could retrieve it without looking in) and thus the author of Hebrews would be correct in saying that the censer was behind the second curtain, whereas the altar was in front of it. In any event, evidently that censer was only used within the Holy of Holies, and so it would be appropriate to say that the area ‘had’ a golden censer.

^c Oh, but I wish he had!

^d There was no sacrifice for deliberate sin.

^e Or, ‘the time of getting it right’.

^f We are accustomed to ‘the Eternal Spirit’, an attractive reading; I have followed the best line of transmission, albeit supported by only some 30% of the Greek manuscripts, plus the Latin tradition.

Himself^a unblemished to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵For this reason He is mediator of a new covenant, so that those who have been called^b may receive the promised eternal inheritance—since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.^c

The earthly sanctuary inaugurated with blood

¹⁶Now where there is a will, the death of the one who made it must be established; ¹⁷because a will is in force after men are dead, since it never takes effect while the one who made it lives. ¹⁸Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood; ¹⁹because when every commandment of the Law had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself^d and all the people, ²⁰saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has decreed to you.”^e ²¹Then he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the divine service with the blood in the same way. ²²In fact, according to the Law nearly everything is cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.^f

The heavenly sanctuary inaugurated with Christ's blood

²³So then, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with such, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than those.^g ²⁴For Christ did not enter into Holy Places made by hands, mere copies of the true ones,^h but into Heaven itself, now to appear in God's presence on our behalf; ²⁵but not in order to offer Himself repeatedly, like the high priest who entered the Most Holy Place year by year with another's blood ²⁶—otherwise He would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world; but now, once for all at the end of the ages, He has been revealed to nullify sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷Also, inasmuch as men are destined to die but once, after which the judgment,ⁱ ²⁸so the Christ also, having been offered once for all to bear the sins of many—He will appear a second time to those who are eagerly waiting for Him, apart from sin, into salvation.^j

Animal blood is insufficient

10 ¹You see, the Law is but a shadow of the good things to come, not their

^a If Christ “offered Himself”, He was both High Priest and Lamb. The Holy Spirit was with Him all the time. Verse 14 overtly mentions all three persons of the Trinity.

^b “Who have been called”—the author alludes to God's sovereignty.

^c All the animals sacrificed under the first covenant could not redeem; their effect was temporary. The salvation of all Old Testament saints depends upon the shed blood of God's Lamb.

^d Some of the Law had already been written down.

^e See Exodus 24:8.

^f “Without shedding of blood there is no remission”—an important statement.

^g Dear me, how could anything in Heaven be in need of cleansing? Well, Satan (Lucifer) had been there, and probably did some contaminating before his open rebellion. In fact, he still appears before God's throne.

^h The ‘real’ world is the spirit world, not the physical.

ⁱ This verse contradicts any notion of ‘reincarnation’. We only die once, physically.

^j I suppose this is a reference to the Rapture, but however we receive our glorified bodies, at that point we receive our definitive transferal “into salvation”.

actual matter, so it can never perfect those who approach with the same sacrifices that they offer endlessly, year after year. ²Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers would have had no more consciousness of sins, having been cleansed once for all? ³However, those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.^a

“I have come to do Your will, O God”

⁵Therefore, upon coming into the world He^(S) says:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
but You prepared a body for me;^b

⁶with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased.

⁷Then I said, ‘Yes indeed, I have come to do Your will, O God
—thus it is written about me in the scroll of the book.’^c

⁸First He says, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor were You pleased with them” (which are offered according to the Law), ⁹then He says, “Yes indeed, I have come to do Your will, O God.”^d He removes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰By that will^e we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.^f

Christ perfects forever

¹¹Now every priest has stood ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices that can never take away sins; ¹²but He Himself, having offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, sat down at God’s right. ¹³Since that time He is waiting until His enemies are placed as a footstool for His feet, ¹⁴because by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.^g

¹⁵Now the Holy Spirit also testifies to us *about this*, after having foreseen it:

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days,’ says the LORD,

‘I will put my laws on their hearts
and I will write them on their minds,

^a The author’s reasoning here is both interesting and important: they could never stop, because they never felt clean.

^b When Jehovah the Son accepted the ‘prepared body’ He accepted the whole Plan—the humiliation of being limited to a human body, being born as a helpless baby, living on this sin-cursed planet for 33 years, being rejected, the death on the cross—the works. Would not the humiliation of being confined to a human body be worse than the humiliation on the cross? When I participate in the ‘Lord’s Supper’, since the bread represents His body, I thank Him for accepting that body. As a personal application, I am challenged to accept the ‘body’ prepared for me—God’s plan for my life in its daily outworking, complete with the unpleasant circumstances. Every day I renew my own commitment: “I am here to do Your will, O God”.

^c See Psalm 40:6-8. Instead of “body”, the Hebrew Text has ‘ears’. You cannot have ears without a body, and the purpose of the body was to work out the commands heard by the ears. The Holy Spirit was at perfect liberty to make the point clearer in this quote.

^d Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts omit “O God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

^e God’s sovereignty, again.

^f You cannot have blood without a body.

^g Our sanctification is a process, but it is based on, and made possible by, Christ’s ‘once for all’ sacrifice.

¹⁷and I will not at all remember
their sins and lawless deeds.”^a

¹⁸Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.^b

Hold fast the confession of the Hope

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, having courage to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way that He inaugurated for us, through the curtain, that is to say, His flesh, ²¹and having a Great Priest over the house of God, ²²let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled^c from an evil conscience and our body having been washed with clean water.^d ²³Let us hold fast the confession of the Hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us contemplate one another, for the stirring up of love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves (like some are doing), but exhorting one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

A severe warning

²⁶Because, if we deliberately keep on sinning after having received the real knowledge of the Truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷just a certain fearful anticipation of judgment and fierce fire that is ready to consume the hostiles. ²⁸Anyone who rejected Moses’ law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be deemed worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,^e and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is up to me,” says the Lord,^f ‘I will repay.’” And again, “The LORD will judge His people.”^g ³¹It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!

A word of encouragement

³²However, remember those earlier days in which, having been enlightened, you endured a great struggle of sufferings: ³³partly being publicly exposed to both insults and oppression, and partly siding with those who were so treated. ³⁴Indeed, you also shared in the suffering of my chains;^h you even accepted the plundering of your possessions with joy, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and enduring possession in the heavens.

^a See Jeremiah 31:33-34.

^b Once all sins have been paid for, there is no further need for an offering.

^c Sprinkling indicates cleansing.

^d I suppose most people take a bath before going to church, but how about in our daily devotions?

^e “By which he was sanctified”, that is what the Text says. “His people” presumably refers to people who belong to Him. Verse 31 is not talking about the ordinary consequences of ordinary sin—the clear implication is that God is especially unhappy! To “trample the Son of God under foot” refers to a public repudiation in insulting terms; the reference is to a former Christian who is in open rebellion against God.

^f Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit “says the Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g See Deuteronomy 32:35-36.

^h I wonder if Paul is referring to the two years he was a prisoner in Caesarea, since he is evidently writing from Rome (13:24 below). The chief priests doubtless had spies there to make a note of anyone who helped him.

³⁵So do not throw away your confidence, which has a great recompense.
³⁶You need perseverance so that, having done the will of God, you may receive the promise. ³⁷For in a very little while:

“He who is coming will come and will not delay.

³⁸Now the righteous one will live by faith,
 yet if he backs away, my soul has no pleasure in him.”^a

³⁹But we are not of those who back away into ruin,^b but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

About faith

11 ¹Now faith is a realization of things being hoped for, an evidence of things not seen.^c ²By it the ancients were approved. ³By faith we understand that the ages^d were created by a word from God, so that the things that are seen were made out of things invisible.

Abel, Enoch, Noah

⁴By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than did Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous,^e God testifying concerning his gifts; and by means of it he still speaks, even though being dead. ⁵By faith Enoch was transferred so as not to see death, and could not be found because God had translated him; before his translation he had obtained witness that he was pleasing to God.^f

⁶Now without faith it is impossible to please Him, because the one approaching God must believe that He exists and that He becomes a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.^g ⁷By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen,^h moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith.ⁱ

Abraham and Sarah

⁸By faith Abraham, upon being called to go forth to the place that he would receive as an inheritance, obeyed and went, though not being acquainted with where he was going.^j ⁹By faith he migrated into the land of promise as into a

^a See Habakkuk 2:3-4.

^b The emphasis here is on human responsibility. To “back away” from one’s commitment to Christ and His Kingdom is to return into the ruin from which he had been delivered.

^c Such faith is a great deal more than mere wishful thinking; it makes things happen.

^d That is what the Text says, “ages”; see the note at 1:2 above.

^e Although Genesis does not mention it, I assume that God had given instruction to Adam about the necessity of blood sacrifice.

^f His contemporaries probably looked down on Enoch as being a little ‘odd’, altogether too ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’.

^g When we get serious with God, He answers.

^h It had never rained during the 1600 years since the creation of the world. Noah believed God’s word against all human experience up to that time. Don’t you know that Noah was the laughingstock of the surrounding society for the 100+ years it took him to build the Ark. (But he got the last laugh.)

ⁱ Note that this was centuries before Abraham.

^j But his obedience was not complete; he took his father, and that cost him 15 years in Haran; and from there he took Lot, the bad consequences of which lasted for centuries (indeed, for as long as there were Moabites and Ammonites).

foreign country, dwelling in tents, along with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise; **10**for he was waiting expectantly for the city with the real foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

11By faith Sarah herself also received power to conceive seed, and she bore a child^a when she was past the normal age, since she judged Him faithful who had promised. **12**And so from one man, actually an impotent,^b were begotten descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Seeking a heavenly homeland

13These all died believing—not having received the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, thus confessing that they were aliens and sojourners on the earth. **14**Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **15**If they were actually remembering that land from which they had departed, they would have had opportunity to return. **16**Instead they are aspiring to a better home—a heavenly one.^c Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; in fact He has prepared a city for them.

Patriarchs

17By faith Abraham, upon being tested, offered up Isaac; yes, he who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his only begotten,^d **18**of whom it had been said, “Through Isaac will your seed be reckoned,”^e **19**calculating that God was indeed able to raise him from the dead; from whence in fact he did receive him, figuratively speaking.

20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. **21**By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.^f **22**By faith Joseph, near the end, thought of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones.^g

Moses

23By faith Moses was hidden for three months by his parents, after he was born, because they saw he was a fine child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict. **24**By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of

^a Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit “she bore a child” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b This statement helps us understand why Sarah urged Abraham to sleep with Hagar; she knew his virility was declining and was desperate for him to produce an heir. For Isaac to be born, God had to work a miracle in Abraham’s body, as well as in Sarah’s.

^c I think we are obliged to understand that Abraham received a great deal more information from God than is recorded in Genesis—information that was duly passed on to Isaac and Jacob.

^d That is what the Text says, “only begotten”. In terms of the promise, that included Sarah, Isaac was his only begotten, although he also had children with Hagar and Keturah.

^e See Genesis 21:12.

^f It has been alleged that this statement disagrees with Genesis 47:31, that has Jacob leaning on the head of the bed (following the Massoretic Text), rather than the top of his staff. However, Hebrews 11:21 and Genesis 47:31 refer to different occasions, so there is no need to imagine a discrepancy. That said, it may be of interest to note the following. The Hebrew words for ‘bed’ and ‘staff’ are spelled with the same three consonants, the difference being in the vowels, that were not written. Thus the Original Hebrew Text was ambiguous here. When the Massorettes added vowel pointing to the Hebrew Text, many centuries after Christ, they chose ‘bed’. Long before, the Septuagint had chosen ‘staff’.

^g He was doubtless well aware of the content of Jehovah’s conversations with Abraham.

Pharaoh's daughter,^a **25**choosing rather to be maltreated along with God's people than to have the temporary pleasure of sin, **26**considering the reproach of Christ^b to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; because he was looking ahead to the reward. **27**By faith he left Egypt behind, not fearing the king's rage,^c because he persevered as though seeing Him who is invisible. **28**By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them. **29**By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry ground, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were swallowed up.^d

30By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, having been encircled for seven days.^e **31**By faith the prostitute Rahab, having received the spies in peace, did not perish with the disobedient.^f

Exploits achieved through faith

32And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell about Gideon, about Barak and Samson and Jephtha, about David and Samuel and the prophets, **33**who through faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, closed lions' mouths, **34**quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty in battle, put to flight foreign armies. **35**Women received their dead back by resurrection; while others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance, so that they might obtain a better resurrection.^g **36**Still others were tried by mockings and scourgings, and even by chains and imprisonment. **37**They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were tempted, they were murdered by sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, mistreated **38**—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.^h

39Now all these did not receive the promise, though having been approved through faith, **40**God having planned something better for us,ⁱ so that they should not be perfected without us.

"Let us run with endurance"

12 **1**So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we too must run with endurance the race that is set before us, laying aside every impediment and the sin^j that so easily ensnares, **2**looking unto Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of the Faith, who for the joy^a that was set before Him

^a This may explain Exodus 2:15. If Moses had publicly rejected an offer by Pharaoh, based on his adoption, then Pharaoh would be disgruntled and would welcome an excuse to kill Moses.

^b This statement intrigues me. What did Moses know about the Christ (when he left Egypt), and from whom did he learn it? And how did he know about the reward? I suppose it is possible that he had made a point of finding out who his parents were, and had conversed with them about their history.

^c This refers to the Exodus, not his flight 40 years earlier.

^d For a discussion of where this happened, please see the Appendix: "Where is Mt. Sinai?"

^e Those walls were so thick that they contained houses. To get several million Jews to march in silence was also quite a trick!

^f And she entered the line that produced the Messiah—Matthew 1:5. Amazing!

^g I assume that by "better resurrection" is meant more rewards and honor once resurrected.

^h We have had it pretty easy, wouldn't you say?

ⁱ What do we have that is "better"? Well, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we have the complete Bible, for starters.

^j I suppose that each of us has his own 'besetting sin'—what gives me trouble will not necessarily be the same thing that gives you trouble.

endured a cross, scorning its ignominy, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

All legitimate children receive discipline

³Do consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so as not to grow weary, losing courage in your souls. ⁴In your struggle against sin^b you have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed.^c ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation that instructs you as sons:

“My son, do not make light of the LORD’s discipline,
nor lose heart when you are reproved by Him;
⁶because whom the LORD loves He chastens,
yes scourges every son whom He accepts.”^d

⁷If you are enduring discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline (something everyone undergoes),^e then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we have had our human fathers as correctors and respected them. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits^f and live? ¹⁰Now they indeed disciplined us during a short period as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, so that we may partake of His holiness. ¹¹Now no discipline seems to be pleasant at the time, but painful; yet afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.^g

Watch your step!

¹²Therefore strengthen the listless hands and weakened knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame not be turned aside but rather be healed.^h

¹⁴Pursue peace with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord;ⁱ ¹⁵taking care that no one come short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and thereby many be defiled, ¹⁶that no one be a fornicator, or worldly like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave up his birthright. ¹⁷Because you do indeed know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected; he found no place for a change of mind,^j though he sought it diligently with tears.

^a I imagine that that “joy” has something to do with His Bride.

^b In the context this presumably refers to sin in the world, not within.

^c The Text does not say whose blood.

^d See Proverbs 3:11-12. When I was a boy my father had a horse, a gentle creature, and a proper horse-whip to go with it. I found myself on the business end of that whip more than once (more often than did the horse), and I can assure the reader that it was not a pleasant experience. So God’s scourgings tend not to be very pleasant; but if we end up partaking of His holiness (verse 10 below), it will be worth it.

^e At that time there was probably no culture dominated by relativistic humanism.

^f “The Father of spirits”—an interesting concept. All created spirits owe their existence to Him.

^g That is the secret—we must be “exercised” by it; that is, we must learn whatever lesson the Lord is trying to teach us.

^h I take the point to be that we should not turn our Christian walk into a bunch of complicated rules—keep it simple.

ⁱ If we need to “pursue” this holiness, then it is experiential, not positional. God rewards those who “earnestly seek Him” (11:6 above).

^j Neither Isaac nor God changed his mind; Jacob was in and Esau was out.

¹⁸Now you have not come to a touchable mountain burning with fire, to blackness and darkness, to tempest; ¹⁹to a trumpet blast and spoken words such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them ²⁰(because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned!”^a ²¹and the sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am terrified and trembling!”); ²²but you have come to Mount Zion, even to the City of the Living God, Heavenly Jerusalem; to myriads of angels in festal gathering, ²³to an assembly of firstborn ones^b who have been enrolled in heaven; to God, Judge of all; to the spirits of the perfected righteous; ²⁴to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant, and to a blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.^c

Warning: “Our God is a consuming fire”

²⁵See to it that you not refuse Him who speaks. Because if they did not escape who refused Him who gave divine warning on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns from Heaven! ²⁶Then His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth but also the heaven.”^d ²⁷Now the ‘yet once more’ clearly indicates the removal of the things being shaken (created things), so that the unshakables may remain.

²⁸Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us hold on to the grace by which we serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; ²⁹because our God is indeed a consuming fire.^e

Practical instructions

13 ¹Let brotherly love continue. ²Do not forget hospitality to strangers, for in doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are being mistreated as if you yourselves were physically there. ⁴Marriage is honorable among all and the marriage bed undefiled,^f but God will judge fornicators and adulterers.^g ⁵Your way of life should be free from the love of money, being content with what you have, because He Himself has said:

^a Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts add ‘or shot with an arrow’ (as in AV and NKJV).

^b I wonder who these “firstborn ones” are.

^c Let me try to list the ‘reception committee’: 1) the City; 2) angels; 3) firstborn ones (different from angels?); 4) God the Father; 5) the perfected righteous; 6) Jesus; 7) the Blood. An impressive list! What did Abel’s blood say?—murder and punishment! What does Jesus’ blood say?—redemption and forgiveness! Oh praise God!

^d See Haggai 2:6.

^e One gets the impression that taking God, and our life in Christ, for granted is definitely not a good idea.

^f The rendering of the King James Version—“marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled”—has been seriously misused, here and there. While in Seminary, a ‘Christian’ psychologist used this text to tell our class that it was ok for a man to have anal sex with his wife: “marriage is honorable in all!” It should be obvious that it is not ok to murder in bed, to tell lies in bed, to steal in bed, to commit adultery in bed, to fornicate in bed. Since the Creator decrees the death penalty to those who engage in anal sex (Leviticus 20:13), doing it in the marriage bed cannot make it right!

^g This is one of several texts that show that ‘fornication’ and ‘adultery’ are distinct concepts. ‘Fornication’ includes pre-marital sex, prostitution, anal sex and animal sex, but not adultery.

“I absolutely will not desert you;
I most certainly will not abandon you.”^a

⁶So we can say with confidence:

“The LORD is my helper; I will not fear.
What can man do to me?”^b

⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke the Word of God to you, whose faith imitate, considering the outcome of their conduct. ⁸Jesus Christ is Himself,^c yesterday and today and into the ages. ⁹Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, because it is good that the heart be established by grace, not foods, by which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

Join Jesus outside the camp

¹⁰We have an altar from which those who serve in the Tabernacle have no right to eat.^d

¹¹Because the bodies of the animals—whose blood, concerning sin, is brought into the Holies by the high priest—are burned up outside the camp, ¹²therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered outside the city gate. ¹³So then, let us go out to Him, outside the camp, bearing His disgrace;^e ¹⁴because here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the coming one.

¹⁵Through Him therefore, at all times, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God^f—the fruit of lips that identify with His name. ¹⁶(But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.)

Concluding remarks

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who must give account, so that they may do it with joy and not sighing (which would be unprofitable for you).

¹⁸Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, desiring to live commendably in all things; ¹⁹I especially urge you to do this so that I may be restored to you more quickly.^g

Benediction

²⁰Now may the God of peace—who through the blood of the eternal covenant^h brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the

^a What a marvelous assurance! See Deuteronomy 31:8.

^b See Psalm 118:6.

^c The basic meaning of the emphatic pronoun here is ‘self’, but it can also mean ‘same’, especially in a comparison. If Jesus is always Himself, then He is always the same.

^d I do not understand this. The Tabernacle set up by Moses had been gone for over 1000 years when Paul wrote. Perhaps ‘tabernacle’ is a metaphor for ‘temple’.

^e Persecuted Christians in China and elsewhere know all about this, but many in North America have had such an easy time of it that they have ‘forgotten’ this aspect of the Gospel. But their turn is coming—in Canada, if you speak out against homosexuality you go to jail, for instance.

^f To praise God when everything is fine is no “sacrifice”, so I suppose that the reference is to doing so when we are hurting, perplexed, not understanding.

^g This suggests that the author is in jail, in Italy (verse 24 below), so Paul is a possible candidate.

^h “The blood of the eternal covenant” can only refer to the blood of God’s Lamb, that was ‘foreknown before the foundation of the world’ (1 Peter 1:19-20). From our point of view, anything that existed before

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sheep—²¹equip you for every good work to do His will,^a working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sign off

²²Now I appeal to you, brothers, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.^b ²³Know that brother Timothy has been released, with whom I will see you, if he comes quickly.

²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

²⁵The Grace be with you all. Amen.

our planet was created, and that will continue to exist after it is destroyed, may properly be called 'eternal'.

^a In John 5:19 the Lord Jesus said that He only did what He saw the Father doing. All the power, enabling, equipping that the Text says is available to us is there for us to do the Father's will, not our own.

^b As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul's letters to them are liberally sprinkled with commands—he could be quite 'heavy' at times. There he was on his own 'turf'. But the Jews were Peter's turf (Galatians 2:7-8), so in writing to them Paul (as I assume) does not come on as an apostle, and here 'appeals' rather than commands. The reference to Timothy in the next verse also suggests Paul as the author.

The Epistle of

JAMES

1 ¹James, a slave of God and of Sovereign Jesus Christ,^a to the twelve tribes^b that are in the Dispersion:^c Greetings.

Various exhortations

²Count it all joy,^d my brothers, whenever you fall into various trials, ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance; ⁴but let that endurance have a complete work,^e so that you may be perfect and complete, falling short in nothing.

About wisdom

⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from the giving God,^f who gives to all liberally and does not reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶However, let him ask in faith, with no doubting, because he who doubts is like a sea wave driven and tossed by the wind—⁷such a man should not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸*being* a double-minded man,^g unstable in all his ways.

⁹Now the lowly brother should glory in his high position,^h ¹⁰but the rich *brother* in his humiliation,ⁱ because he will pass away like a flower of wild grass.^j ¹¹For the sun rises with its burning heat and withers the grass, and its flower falls off and the beauty of its face perishes. Just so the rich man will be withered in his undertakings.^k

^a There is no definite article with ‘Sovereign Jesus Christ’, so I treat the phrase like a proper noun. Note that James, half-brother of Jesus (same mother), declares himself to be His slave. Another half-brother, Jude, does the same (Jude 1). They make no special claim, based on that relationship.

^b If there are twelve, then none are ‘lost’. Evidently James is writing to Jewish Christians. If this letter was written around 45 AD, it was before the explosive increase of the Gentile Church resulting from Paul’s ministry. It would also be around the time of the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15 (see the footnote at Acts 15:19).

^c See 1 Peter 1:1.

^d Joy, not happiness or pleasure.

^e Since trials tend to be unpleasant, we tend to try to cut them short, but if they are lessons that need to be learned, we need to endure until the lesson is fully learned. I believe Paul Billheimer (*Don’t Waste Your Sorrows*) has given us a handle on a basic truth—the only way a human being can learn *αγαπη* love is through suffering. And the mainspring of God’s Kingdom is *αγαπη* love, and God wants to prepare His servants for their responsibilities in the next world. So the lessons God wants us to learn come wrapped in unpleasant circumstances; but if we refuse a given lesson our spiritual growth stops. Further, sooner or later that lesson will return, and will keep on returning until we learn, or die (which is why Billheimer says, “don’t waste your sorrows”, because if we don’t learn the first time we will have wasted that suffering). Notice verse 12 below.

^f One of God’s characteristics is that He gives, and evidently wisdom is something that He especially enjoys giving. What better time to ask for wisdom than when we are in the middle of a test?

^g In verse 7 we have the generic term for man, but here the term refers to males.

^h I assume that the reference is to his position in Christ, in spite of his low social standing.

ⁱ I take the point to be that he has already been humbled; otherwise he probably would not have trusted in Christ.

^j Presumably this is true of a lowly person as well, but they are usually less arrogant, more aware of their vulnerability.

^k Sovereign Jesus said that someone who trusts in riches cannot be saved (Mark 10:24); not infrequently God uses financial reverses to bring people to Himself.

About testings

¹²A man who endures testing is blessed, because upon becoming approved^a he will receive the crown of the life that the Lord^b has promised to those loving Him.^c ¹³Let no one, upon being tempted,^d say, “I am being tempted by God,” because God is untemptable by evil, so He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴But each one is tempted by his own craving, being taken in tow and enticed. ¹⁵Then the craving, upon conceiving, gives birth to sin, and the sin, upon completion, delivers death.

¹⁶Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers: ¹⁷every good giving and every perfect gift is from Above,^e coming down from the Father of the lights,^f with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸Having willed it, He brought us forth by a word of truth,^g so that we might be a sort of firstfruits of His products.^h

¹⁹So then,ⁱ my beloved brothers, let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰because a man’s anger does not achieve God’s righteousness.^j

About obeying the Word

²¹Therefore, laying aside all filthiness and overflow of evil,^k receive with meekness the implanted Word which is able to save your souls.^l ²²Further, become word doers and not just hearers, deceiving yourselves. ²³Because if anyone is a law^m hearer and not a doer, the same is like a man observing his physical face in a mirror; ²⁴for he observes himself, then goes away and promptly forgets what he is like. ²⁵But he who looks carefully into the perfect law of liberty and continues in

^a So what happens if we squirm out from under the testing and are not approved?

^b The so-called ‘critical’ text (really ‘eclectic’) omits ‘the Lord’, following 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality. Curiously, versions like NIV, TEV and NASB, that usually follow the ‘critical’ text, here create their own Greek text, following 4% of the manuscripts in reading ‘God’.

^c The proof of our love is obedience (John 14:21).

^d The same Greek word can mean ‘test’ or ‘tempt’ (to tempt = to test in a moral context), the translator’s choice being guided by the context. Here the context requires ‘tempt’. God ‘tests’, but does not ‘tempt’.

^e Gifts coming from other sources may certainly strike us as pleasant and inviting, but will presumably have a negative effect upon our spiritual life.

^f That is what the Text says, presumably referring to the sun, moon, etc. (shadows caused by those lights move and change).

^g For someone to be born again (born from Above) he must be exposed to a word of truth. In John 14:6 Sovereign Jesus said, “I am the Truth”.

^h Why “firstfruits”? Before the advent of refrigeration, food could be preserved by drying, smoking, salting, etc., but by the time of the next harvest, nothing would compare with a firstfruit, which would be something special. We are special!

ⁱ Instead of “so then”, some 4% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, read “know!” (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.).

^j “A man’s anger”, not God’s anger. We can and should be angry as a reflection of God’s anger in the presence of evil and perversity.

^k Evidently James is not laboring under any exaggerated notions of their saintliness—he refers to rather gross manifestations of the old nature.

^l This sounds like a process—the Word has been implanted, but needs to be ‘received’ with meekness, and then must be practiced.

^m I render “law”, instead of ‘word’, following some 30% of the Greek manuscripts including what is clearly the best line of transmission, in my opinion. Comparing verse 23 with 25, James is now talking about ‘law’, but copyists, having already written ‘word’ twice, in verses 21-22, could make the change (of ‘law’ to ‘word’) without thinking.

it,^a he—not being a forgetful hearer but a work doer—he will be blessed in what he does.^b

²⁶If anyone among you thinks he is religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his heart, his religion is useless.^c ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion before God and Father^d is this: to care for orphans and widows in their adversity;^e to keep oneself unspotted from the world.^f

About partiality

2 ¹My brothers, stop holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory, with partiality!^g ²For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothes, should enter your synagogue,^h and a poor man in filthy rags should also enter, ³and you pay special attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit in this special seat,” but to the poor one you say, “You stand there,” or “Sit here at my footstool,” ⁴have you not been separated among yourselves and become judges with malignant thoughts?ⁱ

⁵Listen, my beloved brothers. Has not God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that He has promised to those loving Him? ⁶But you dishonored the poor one. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts? ⁷Do they not blaspheme the noble name that was called upon you? ⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture,^j “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; ⁹but if you show partiality, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever will keep the whole law, yet stumble in one *point*, has become guilty of all. ¹¹Because He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.^k

¹²Speak and act as being those who are about to be judged by a law of liberty ¹³(the judgment will be without mercy to the one not showing mercy).^l *That law exalts mercy^a over judgment.*

^a This is reminiscent of John 8:31.

^b Notice the emphasis on doing. This same emphasis is found repeatedly in Paul’s epistles.

^c This topic will be developed further in 3:1-12.

^d The phrase “God and Father” works like a proper noun, referring to one being.

^e James is writing to Jews, who tended to be quite religious, tithing being an important feature. But what is the point of tithing? You cannot send your money to heaven, and God does not need it anyway. I take it that the purpose of the tithe is to help the needy; produce would have to be distributed before it spoiled.

^f The importance of this is developed in 4:1-6.

^g James is accusing them of being partial. Can you think of a single local church where a rich person and a beggar receive equal treatment?

^h That is what the Text says, “synagogue”. James is addressing Christian Jews, and their culture is very strong. For many generations they have called their meeting places ‘synagogues’, so why stop now? Since the place or building is in view here, to render ‘assembly’ is less clear.

ⁱ The verb ‘separate’ is in the passive voice, so some outside force has acted on them. The term ‘malignant’ is generally used of Satan and his works—something malignant is aggressively evil, it contaminates. Obviously their partiality did not come from God.

^j We have access to the “royal law” through the Scriptures.

^k It is more comfortable to regard the commands like beads on a string, but James says they are more like a pane of glass—if you break off a corner, the pane is broken.

^l Even though inserted as an aside, this is a very serious bit of information! Since showing mercy is not one of my strong points...

Faith and works

¹⁴What is the advantage, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? That faith cannot save him, can it? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is actually naked, and is destitute of the daily food, ¹⁶and someone among you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you (pl) do not give them the things needed for the body, what is the benefit? ¹⁷Thus also that faith, if it does not have works, is dead, being by itself. ¹⁸(But someone will say: “You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith by^b your works^c and I, **by my works** will show you my faith [what he believes].”^d ¹⁹You believe that God is one.^e You do well. The demons also believe—and shudder!) ²⁰But you need to know, you foolish fellow,^f that faith without works is dead!^g

Examples

²¹Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ²²You can see that faith was acting together with his works, and the faith was made complete by the works. ²³And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “So Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”^h And he was called ‘friend of God’. ²⁴You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ²⁵Similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by a different way? ²⁶For just as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.ⁱ

Careful with your tongue

3 ¹My brothers, not many of you should become teachers, knowing that we^j shall receive a stricter judgment. ²Because we all stumble in many things. If

^a Perhaps 20% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘mercy’ in the nominative case, making it the subject of the verb (as in most versions), but some 80%, including the best line of transmission, have ‘mercy’ in the accusative case, making it the direct object (which to me makes much better sense). This accords with God’s description of Himself in Exodus 34:6-7—He keeps mercy to the 1000th generation, He punishes to the 4th; the proportion is 250:1.

^b Instead of “by”, some 11% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘without’, as in most versions. The following word “your” is omitted by perhaps 8% (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c He is citing James’ position.

^d This delightful verse is generally misunderstood to this day. The translations that close the quote after the first ‘works’ do not make sense. The hypothetical objector has disclaimed faith, so for James to say, “Show me your faith”, does not follow. James clearly teaches salvation by faith, a faith that is alive (if you are alive, you do things). But an orthodox Jew believes in salvation by works, so here James (who had once been one) anticipates an objection from that quarter. The salvation-by-works person has a different faith.

^e In his retort James cites a central tenet in Judaism. Since the demons believe the same thing, and it does not do them any good, something more or different is needed.

^f Whom is James addressing here? I imagine it is the “someone” in verse 14 above.

^g Instead of “dead”, less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have ‘useless’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h See Genesis 15:6. We like to quote Ephesians 2:8-9, but James is saying that we need to give equal time to verse 10. We are not saved by good works, but for good works. We do good works because we are saved, and if we don’t, we probably aren’t.

ⁱ I suppose the opposite is also true: a human spirit without a body is ‘dead’, as also are works without faith.

^j James knew that he was included. We teachers will have to answer for what we teach, and especially if we have damaged others with our teaching.

anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, being able to bridle the whole body as well. ³Consider, we put bits in horses' mouths for them to obey us, and we guide their whole body. ⁴Consider also the ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the impulse of the pilot may desire. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member and boasts great things.

Just look at how great a forest a little fire can kindle! ⁶And the tongue is a fire! The organization of wickedness,^a that is how the tongue is placed among our members, defiling the whole body and setting on fire the course of life, *itself* being set on fire by hell.^b ⁷Every kind of animal and bird, reptile and sea creature, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race, ⁸but no one among men is able to tame the tongue—an uncontrollable^c evil, full of deadly poison.^d ⁹With it we bless God^e and Father,^f and with it we curse the people who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰Out of the same mouth proceed blessings and curses. My brothers, these things should not be that way. ¹¹A spring does not send out sweet and bitter *water* from the same opening, does it? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grape vine figs? Thus no spring yields salt water and sweet.^g

True wisdom

True contrasted with demonic

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him exhibit his works in the meekness of wisdom, by his good way of life. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth—¹⁵such 'wisdom' is not coming down from Above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.^h ¹⁶Be-

^a Satan uses our tongues to organize wickedness, our own and that of others.

^b James here follows the Lord's example in using 'Gehenna' as a metaphor for the Lake of Fire. Since none of us can literally go to the Lake of Fire and dip our tongue in it, this must be figurative—a case of metonymy. With what, or whom, is hell most closely associated? In Matthew 25:4 Sovereign Jesus affirms that the Lake was "prepared for the devil and his angels". Apparently the antichrist and the false prophet will be the first residents (Revelation 19:20), followed a thousand years later by Satan, presumably along with his angels (Revelation 20:10). The defiling, destructive activity of the tongue is the result of demonic participation.

^c Instead of "uncontrollable", less than 3% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, have 'restless' (as in NIV, NASB, etc.).

^d Notice the violence of the description of the tongue—"organization of wickedness", "defiles the whole body", "uncontrollable evil", "deadly poison"—it would be difficult to be more emphatic. Obviously James is describing something extraordinary. One of Satan's most effective ways of lousing up our lives is by causing us to say things that we should not, and that by ourselves we would not. By this means he turns our homes, our schools, our work places into places of contention instead of peace. "No one among men is able to tame the tongue"—an unaided human being is presumably incapable of escaping from demonic attack, but the Holy Spirit can indeed tame our tongue, if we let Him.

^e Instead of "God", perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts have 'the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f See note at 1:27 above.

^g In nature this does not happen—if it ever did it would mean that there were two veins of different water meeting just below the opening of the spring. James is affirming that our mouths produce words from two different sources—our own mind and demonic interference (since Satan is not omnipresent he works through his angels, the demons). (Perhaps 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, replace the last sentence with, 'nor can salty yield sweet water' [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.])

^h James is forthright about demonic interference in our minds. The prevailing ignorance on this subject in Christian circles is a calamity with terrible consequences—it condemns most Christians to a life of defeat.

cause where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is unruliness and every foul practice.^a ¹⁷In contrast, the wisdom from Above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸Now the fruit of righteousness is planted in peace by those making peace.^b

Is not worldliness

4 ¹Where do the wars and disputes among you come from? Is it not precisely from your pleasures, the ones at war in your members? ²You crave and do not have; you murder^c and covet and are not able to obtain; you fight and war. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so that you may lavish it on your pleasures. ⁴Adulterers and^d adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? So whoever may want to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.^e ⁵Or do you suppose that the Scripture says in vain that the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?^f ⁶But He gives greater grace; therefore He says:

“God resists proud ones,
but gives grace to humble ones.”^g

Is submitting to God

⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil^h and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.ⁱ Sinners, cleanse your hands! Double-minded, purify your hearts!^j ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into dejection.^k ¹⁰Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you.^a

^a Self-centeredness is the essence of sin; the more we give in to it the dirtier becomes our practice, the lower we are prepared to go to achieve what we want, or think we want.

^b “Those making peace” are planters; they create an ambient of peace within which to plant. Is the “fruit” righteousness, or does righteousness produce it?

^c Remember 1 John 3:15, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.” The fighting and warring is not done with guns or knives, but is real none the less. Our churches are full of people who have been wounded by other Christians.

^d Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit ‘adulterers and’ (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.). (This is an easy case of ‘like-beginning’.)

^e This is all exceedingly serious—if you make God your enemy, what are your chances? 1 John 2:15-17 is to the same effect. To love the things of the world (especially its values) is to adulterate against God.

^f This appears to be the only reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter. We do not have an exact match with any OT verse, but there are various references to God being jealous of His people.

^g See Proverbs 3:34.

^h This is a command, not an optional point. “Submit to God” is also a command, and comes first. To resist Satan in our own strength is to be defeated. To wield God’s power against the enemy we must be in submission to God. I take it that the main way to resist is with words—commanding Satan to stop doing some particular thing; we must be specific.

ⁱ Note that we have to take the first step, although apart from God’s grace few of us will.

^j Notice that these are commands, which means that they are things that we can and must do. We have the Holy Spirit to help us, but we must take the initiative.

^k Dear me, we are not used to exhortations like this! I would rather hear, “Rejoice in the Lord always...” So what does James want? Well, all along his letter has been an exercise in ‘tough love’; we have seen “filthiness and overflow of evil”, “malignant thoughts”, “foolish fellow”, “uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison”, “bitter envy and selfish ambition”, “unruliness and every foul practice”, “adulterers and adulteresses”, “enemy of God”—all in all, not a pretty picture. I take it that James is saying that we have a long way to go in our spiritual growth. There is no room for spiritual pride or self-

Does not judge the different brother

¹¹Brothers, do not speak evil of one another. Because the one speaking against a brother and judging his brother speaks against a law and judges a law. So if you judge a law you are not a law-doer but a judge. ¹²The Lawgiver and Judge^b is One, the one who is able to save and to destroy. So who are you (sg) to be judging someone who is different?^c

Does not boast about tomorrow

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today and tomorrow let us travel to that certain city, spend a year there, do business and make a profit;” ¹⁴whereas you do not know anything about the morrow. For what is our life?^d It is even a vapor that appears for a little time but then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶But now you boast in your arrogant pretensions. All such boasting is malignant.^e ¹⁷Therefore, to the one knowing to do good and not doing it, to him it is sin.^f

The coming of the Lord

Rich oppressors will be judged

5 ¹Come now, you rich, howl as you weep over your distresses that are coming upon you! ²Your wealth has decayed and your clothes have become moth-eaten. ³Your gold and silver are corroded,^g and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire—you stored it up for the last days.^h ⁴Look, the wages of the workers who cut your fields, that were unjustly held back by you, cry out, and the loud cries of the reapers have entered the ears of the Lord of Hosts. ⁵You have lived on the earth in self-indulgence and luxury, you fattened

contentedness, or a conquering hero complex; if we really want to walk with God we need to fall on our faces before Him, put our mouth in the dust—in short, try to see our sin as He sees it.

^a If we exalt ourselves, God knocks us down; if we humble ourselves, He lifts us up—I imagine that just how far up He lifts us depends on a variety of factors.

^b Some 62% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, read “Lawgiver and Judge”. The *Textus Receptus* (and all published ‘Majority Texts’) follows the 38% in omitting “and Judge” (as in AV, NKJV, etc.).

^c I was surprised to find the Greek ετερος here, which usually refers to a different kind. I personally do not enjoy dealing with ‘brothers’ who are too different; I would rather question whether they are really ‘brothers’ at all! But James tells me not to do that. Each person is different (background, experiences, personality, training) and we must recognize that God can and will deal differently with different people. He uses one ‘law’ with me, another ‘law’ with you, and so on. A law is a set of rules or demands, so when I judge a brother I am questioning the way (‘law’) that God is working on him. As He is both Lawgiver and Judge, I will have to answer to Him for how I judged my ‘brothers’. (For ‘different one’ the eclectic text currently in vogue has ‘neighbor’, following some 12% of the Greek manuscripts [as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.])

^d I follow some 26% of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, in reading “our” rather than ‘your’. I take it that the question is properly inclusive; James includes everyone.

^e It is aggressively evil.

^f The sin here is of omission, perhaps harder to recognize than sins of commission.

^g For some reason they just hoarded their wealth; they did not invest it, did not put it to work. They are doubly at fault—they acquired the wealth unjustly, and then just sat on it.

^h They probably thought they were hoarding it for a future ‘rainy day’, but they were actually hoarding it against themselves at the Day of Judgment.

your hearts as in a day of slaughter.^a **6**You condemned, you murdered the righteous—he offers you no resistance.^b

Patience and perseverance

7Therefore, brothers, be patient until the coming of the Lord. Consider, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it until it receives the early and late rain. **8**You also be patient. Keep your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord has approached. **9**Do not groan against one another, brothers, lest you be judged. Look, the Judge is standing at your doors! **10**Brothers, take as an example the patient bearing of hardship and the steadfastness of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.^c **11**Indeed we count as blessed those who endure—you have heard of the perseverance of Job and have seen the final outcome *given* by the Lord, that He is very compassionate and merciful.^d

12But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or any other oath. Let your “Yes” be “Yes”, and your “No”, “No”, lest you fall into pretense.^e

Righteous prayer is powerful

13Is anyone among you suffering hardship? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. **14**Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the congregation, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. **15**And the prayer of faith will deliver the one who is sick,^f and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sin, it will be forgiven him.^g **16**Confess your transgressions to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.^h The prayer of a righteous one, being operative, is very powerful.ⁱ **17**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. **18**And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Help the wanderer

19Brothers, if anyone among you should wander away from the truth, and someone should turn him back, **20**let him know that the one who turns a sinner

^a Back in the old days, when an animal was slaughtered you got to eat more than usual; things like liver, heart, tongue could not be preserved, so had to be eaten up.

^b The tense of the verb changes from past to present, and I do not understand why. How can he offer resistance after he is dead? Or is this giving the rationale of the murderer, ‘might makes right’: someone who offers no resistance is like a sheep asking to be shorn.

^c According to the Record, the O.T. prophets generally did not have an easy time of it.

^d See Job 42:10-13. God gave him double what he had lost.

^e Some 5% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘judgment’ instead of ‘pretense’ (as in NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc.). The more we talk, the more likely we are to say things that are not precisely true.

^f The implication is that the person is really sick, confined to a bed (that is why the elders have to go to him). Note that it is the faith of the elders.

^g The clear implication is that some sickness is the result of sin, but not all: “and if”.

^h In my own experience, praying by myself for my own healing does not always work. When I ask others to pray for me, the Lord usually answers. God likes to promote ‘mutuality’ or interdependence.

ⁱ Just because we ourselves do not see, or are not allowed to see, an immediate result to our praying, does not mean that God is not answering. ‘The just shall live by faith’, and that includes praying.

back from the error of his way will deliver a soul from death^a and will remove from sight a multitude of sins.^b

^a In spite of the demands of our doctrinal packages, I don't see how this can be referring to mere physical death. Apart from the Rapture, all Christians die physically.

^b Most of the letter has been about sin, sinning and sinners, one way or another, so this is a fitting conclusion. As we help each other, it will reduce the level or incidence of sin, and therefore of the consequences thereof.

The First Epistle of

PETER

To elect pilgrims

1 ¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect sojourners^a of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ²*elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the setting apart of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ:^b May grace and peace be multiplied^c to you.

Do not take your inheritance for granted*Begotten into an incorruptible inheritance*

³Blessed be the God and Father^d of our Lord Jesus Christ,^e who according to His great mercy has given us^f another birth^g into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead,^h ⁴into an imperishable and undefiled and unfading inheritance,ⁱ already reserved in the heavens for you, ⁵who are being guarded by the power of God through faith^j unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.^k

Genuineness of faith proved by testing

⁶You should be overjoyed about this, even if just now, briefly, of necessity,^l you have been distressed by a variety of trials, ⁷so that the demonstrated genuineness of your faith (much more precious than gold that perishes, albeit tested through fire) may translate into^m praise, glory and honor^a at the revelation of

^a One could render 'resident aliens' or perhaps even 'refugees'—these are presumably Christians who had left their homelands because of persecution (but since Paul was apostle to the Gentiles, Peter may be writing to Jews, as did James); Peter will emphasize the security of their position in heaven, in contrast to the uncertainty of their situation on earth. For a discussion of the implications of Peter addressing this letter to five provinces, please see the article "Multiple Autograph Copies", available from my website: www.prunch.org.

^b Peter is evidently making a point of including all three persons of the Godhead in the process of our salvation: the Father chooses, the Spirit sets apart (He works in our minds to encourage or predispose us to obey) and the Son paid the price for our cleansing. God has done His part, but each of us must obey.

^c "Multiplied"—not just a little, lots!

^d "The God and Father" is one person.

^e Since His victory by the cross and resurrection, the official name of Jehovah the Son is 'the Lord Jesus Christ', to which Peter adds the possessive pronoun.

^f The 1st person plural is presumably inclusive, including the people Peter is addressing; in the next verse he switches to the 2nd plural, applying the truth directly to them.

^g The Text neither says nor implies that God begot them the first time (that was done by their physical father); He is giving them a second begetting, a spiritual one.

^h If Jesus had not arisen we would have no hope, but now we have a "living" hope, that will not let us down.

ⁱ Like, wow! Now that is an inheritance! And it is already reserved. Before talking about the difficulties they are facing Peter emphasizes the incredible blessing of a secure position.

^j Time and again Peter will present both divine sovereignty and human responsibility; God guarantees His part, we must do our part.

^k The full manifestation of our salvation is still future.

^l The trials are necessary to prove the quality of the faith.

^m Literally, "may be found into".

Jesus Christ ⁸—whom not having understood^b you love, into whom believing (not yet seeing) you exult with joy inexpressible, already glorified,^c ⁹obtaining for yourselves the end result of your faith,^d the salvation of your souls.

Salvation foretold by prophets

¹⁰Concerning this salvation^e the prophets, who prophesied about the grace *that would come* to you, searched and inquired diligently, ¹¹investigating into whom, or what sort of time, the Spirit of Christ^f who was in them was indicating^g as He testified beforehand the sufferings *that would be inflicted* on Christ^h and the glories that would follow them. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were not ministering these things to themselves, but to you;ⁱ which things have now been announced to you by those who proclaimed the gospel to you, with^j the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things that angels really desire to look into.^k

Be serious, be holy, be fearful

¹³Therefore, having girded up the loins of your mind,^l staying sober,^m rest your hope fully upon the grace being brought to you in the revelation of Jesus Christⁿ—¹⁴as children of obedience,^o not conforming yourselves to the former lusts

^a These are things that the faithful person will receive. To hear “Well done, good and faithful servant” from the lips of the Sovereign will be the ultimate praise.

^b The familiar ‘seen’ is based on about 7% of the Greek manuscripts (early, but of objectively inferior quality); to render ‘known’ rather than “understood” would require qualification.

^c Anyone who has experienced this joy will agree with Peter—it definitely is not ‘natural’; it is ‘other-worldly’, a foretaste of heaven.

^d Here Peter emphasizes human responsibility; the verb ‘obtain’ is in the middle (reflexive) voice.

^e “This salvation” presumably includes the basis and the process, as well as the result; evidently quite different from the ‘salvation’ the prophets themselves knew.

^f The Spirit of Christ was at work in the Old Testament. Is this a reference to the Holy Spirit, or did Jehovah the Son also do some inspiring?

^g Evidently Peter had access to information that we do not. However, when a prophet spoke or wrote under inspiration, he would not necessarily receive an explanation of the interpretation. Anything pertaining to the Messiah would be of intense interest, and they would certainly keep mulling over the implications—assuming a single advent, it would be hard to reconcile glory and suffering.

^h The Text says literally, ‘the sufferings into Christ’.

ⁱ The familiar ‘to us’ (TR, AV, NKJV) is based on about 14% of the Greek manuscripts, and is more congenial than “to you”; I take it that having already narrowed the focus to his addressees, Peter just keeps on going.

^j The more usual rendering is ‘by’, but I do not think it fits the context. The Holy Spirit went along with the Gospel.

^k That is what the Text says, but I am not sure what it means. I assume that angels can read, so are they not allowed to? Or is it that they cannot really understand why the Sovereign would do something like that? Do angels have ‘soul’—emotions, ambitions, etc.? I wonder.

^l This is obviously a figure of speech, but I wasn’t sure how else to render it; in order to work, fight, run, or whatever, they would tie in their loose garments with a rope or a belt—the idea appears to be to prepare the mind for action, which would involve discipline and determination.

^m I take this phrase to be basically synonymous to the figure of speech; staying sober involves being disciplined and determined.

ⁿ In verse 7 I rendered the same Greek phrase as ‘at the revelation of Jesus Christ’, referring to His second coming, but here in verse 13 “being brought” is in the present tense, so I take the revelation to be contemporaneous. The more we obey, the more Jesus reveals Himself to us.

^o Peter, a Jew, uses a Jewish idiom—he is not saying they are children, but are to be characterized by obedience.

I PETER 2

as in your ignorance, ¹⁵but just as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your way of life, ¹⁶because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”^a

¹⁷Also, since you invoke as Father^b the One who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves during the time of your sojourn *here in fear*,^c ¹⁸knowing that it was not with perishable things (silver or gold) that you were redeemed from the futile way of life handed down by your forefathers,^d ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a faultless and pure lamb; ²⁰who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world,^e but was revealed in these last times for your sake, ²¹who through Him are believing into God,^f who raised Him out from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are into God.

Born again through an eternal Word

²²Since you have purified your souls by obeying the truth through the Spirit,^g resulting in sincere brotherly love, you must love one another fervently from a pure heart, ²³having been begotten again, not from a corruptible seed but an incorruptible,^h through the living Word of God that remains *valid* forever.ⁱ

²⁴For:

“All flesh is as grass,
and all man’s glory as flower of grass.
The grass withers and its flower falls off,
but the Lord’s word endures forever.”^j

²⁵Now this is the good word that was proclaimed to you.^k

To grow you must eat

2 ¹So then, laying aside all malignity^a—even all deceit and play-actings and envies, yes all malicious speaking—²crave the pure spiritual ‘milk’,^b like new-

^a Since God is holy all the time, we are to be also. The quote is from Leviticus 11:45 or 19:2.

^b To “invoke as Father” is to place yourself under His authority and protection—also His evaluation!

^c “In fear” is emphasized in the Text. We tend to forget just who and what God is, and so we get complacent—not a good idea, says Peter.

^d All ways of life that are not biblical are futile. We should not be apologetic about challenging people’s belief systems or presuppositions, provided we are in a position to present the biblical worldview.

^e This sort of ‘blows my mind’—the Text is saying that the Lamb, with blood shed, was so known before the creation of our race and planet; which means that the Creator knew, before creating, what would happen and the terrible redemption price He Himself would have to pay, yet He went ahead anyway. Wow!

^f “Into” not ‘in’, both here and at the end of the verse; what is involved is a change of position, from being outside to being inside.

^g Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit “through the Spirit” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h The seed that Adam received when he was created proved to be corruptible, in fact became corrupted upon his Fall, and that corrupted seed has been passed down through the succeeding generations [less than 300]; so our first begetting, by a human father, was with that corrupt seed. God gives us a second begetting with a pure seed that cannot be corrupted.

ⁱ As it says in Psalm 119:89, “Forever, O LORD, your word is settled in heaven.” Some 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit “forever” (as in NIV, NASB, etc.).

^j The quote is from Isaiah 40:6-8.

^k Wait a minute—was the “good word” they proclaimed limited to the Old Testament? I would say it was mostly about Jesus, the content of the Gospels. So Peter is saying that New Testament material is also God’s Word. By the time he wrote this letter, Matthew and Mark were already in circulation, and may be even Luke. (Luke was ‘published’ in 45 AD.)

born babies do, so that by it you may grow into salvation,^c ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is benevolent. ⁴Coming to Him, a living stone—rejected indeed by men but chosen by God, precious—⁵you also, as living stones, are being built^d into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.^e

The Chief Cornerstone

⁶That is why the Scripture contains:

“Attention, I am laying in Zion a chief cornerstone,
chosen, precious,
and the one who rests his trust upon Him
will absolutely not be humiliated.”^f

⁷So then, this recompense is for you who believe, but to those who disobey,^g “the stone that the builders rejected is just the one that became the chief cornerstone,”^h ⁸also “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”;ⁱ being disobedient to the Word, they stumble, to which, indeed, they were appointed.^j

A royal priesthood

⁹But you are a chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a private-property people, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you

^a This refers to the deliberate effort to harm others. If they must ‘lay aside’ such attitudes and activities, the implication is that they have not yet, or at least not sufficiently—actually, if they are still involved in such activities they have quite a ways to go.

^b Since Peter has just referred overtly to God’s Word, it is generally assumed that the “milk” here is a metaphor for that Word. Peter is not saying that they are babies, just that they should imitate the craving.

^c Until quite recently, based upon von Soden’s apparent ascribing of some 80% attestation to the shorter reading (80% of the extant Greek manuscripts), I was rather critical of the longer form; I argued that Peter was writing to the “elect” [1:2], to the “redeemed” [1:18], to the “born again” [1:23], to a “holy priesthood” [2:5], to “believers” [2:7], to “slaves of God” [2:16]—they did indeed need to grow, but not “into salvation”. However, the evidence as presented by ECM [*Editio Critica Maior*] looks quite different—some 65% for the longer reading, including the best line of transmission, and joined by all three ancient versions, a not insignificant witness. Time and again Peter presents both divine sovereignty and human responsibility; God guarantees His part, we must do our part. According to 1:5 above the full manifestation [at least] of our salvation is still future. Here in 2:2 the immediately following “if indeed” would appear to allow for some uncertainty as to their spiritual condition; Peter is emphasizing their responsibility.

^d Spiritual growth is a process, much like physical growth.

^e Much of the preaching nowadays focuses on what we are supposed to get, rather than what we are supposed to do. We need to talk more about what God is supposed to get—‘spiritual sacrifices’. Don’t sacrifices cost?

^f The quote is from Isaiah 28:16. I suppose that the not being humiliated refers to the final Accounting.

^g Instead of “disobey”, perhaps 8% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘disbelieve’ (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.).

^h The quote is from Psalm 118:22.

ⁱ The quote is from Isaiah 8:14. One is reminded of the Sovereign’s words in Matthew 21:44. “Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but upon whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

^j Were they ‘appointed’ to stumble, a direct and necessary consequence of being disobedient to the Word, or were they ‘appointed’ to be disobedient? If the latter, this would become one of a very few passages that overtly point to ‘double predestination’ or preterition (that the lost are predestined to be lost). The answer hinges on the grammar, the antecedent of the pronoun ‘which’—is it the finite verb ‘stumble’ or the participle ‘disobey’? Being higher in rank, the finite form presumably takes precedence. Also, since there are hundreds of passages that clearly teach human responsibility, I take the former option to be the preferred interpretation.

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out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who formerly were not a people but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.^a

Your practice should be consistent with your standing

¹¹Dear ones, I urge you to abstain from the lusts of the flesh, that war against the soul,^b ¹²keeping your way of life among the nations praiseworthy (you being foreigners and sojourners), so that wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, in spite of the praiseworthy deeds they have observed,^c they may glorify God in the day of visitation.^d

Respect civil authority

¹³Therefore subordinate yourselves to every human institution because of the Lord, whether to a king, as being in authority, ¹⁴or to governors, as being sent by him, both for punishment of evildoers and for praise of good-doers.^e ¹⁵Because such is the will of God, to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good: ¹⁶as free (not using the freedom as a cover for evil), yet as slaves of God. ¹⁷Respect everyone;^f love the brotherhood; fear God; honor the king.

A word for servants

¹⁸Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unscrupulous.^g ¹⁹For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God someone endures grief, suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if upon sinning and being beaten you endure patiently? But if upon doing good and suffering you endure patiently, this is commendable before God.

Christ gave the example

²¹Now you have been called to this, really, because Christ also suffered in our behalf, leaving you^h an example that you should follow in His footsteps: ²²who

^a Peter alludes to a number of OT passages, including Hosea 2:23. Presumably it is in this world, this life, that we are to proclaim God's excellencies—which raises the question: how much time do we spend doing that?

^b When we indulge the flesh our soul is adversely affected; to 'indulge' is more than normal, necessary use.

^c The critics have already observed the good deeds—they know their criticism is false.

^d What "day of visitation" might this be? Is it a personal visitation wherein God touches a critic, wakes him up and he glorifies God; or is it the Day of judgment where 'every knee will bow and every tongue confess', only it will be too late to do them any good? In either event, we are to live in such a way that we do not furnish any pretext to those who are looking for ways to 'justify' their unbelief.

^e But what happens if the 'government' does just the opposite, persecutes those who fear God and protects the corrupt? We have spiritual 'weapons' (authority) that we should learn how to use, but the time may come when we must say with Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29), and take the consequences.

^f Since every human being carries the 'image of God', that image should be respected (even when it is scarcely recognizable).

^g Slavery was a normal aspect of the culture at that time. Note that belonging to Christ did not automatically change one's social situation; and it did not change a bad boss. However, we can use our spiritual authority to 'improve' a bad boss.

^h 15% of the Greek manuscripts have "our" and 'us' (1st person pl., as in TR, AV and NKJV) while a different 15% have 'your' and "you" (2nd person pl., as in the eclectic text currently in vogue and most modern versions)—I take it that the 85% readings are correct ("our" and "you"); in addressing his readers Peter uses the expected 2nd person, but referring to the scope of the benefits of Christ's suffering he properly uses the inclusive 1st person.

did not commit sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth; ²³who being reviled did not revile in return, suffering did not threaten but committed it to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴who Himself bore our sins in His own body^a on the tree, so that we, having died to those sins,^b might live for the^c righteousness; by whose **wound**^d you were healed. ²⁵Yes, you were like straying sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our^e souls.

A word to wives

3 ¹Similarly,^f wives, be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if some are disobedient to the Word, they may be won over, without a word, by the conduct of their wives ²(having watched your pure behavior *accompanied* by respect), ³whose adorning should not be the outward one of braiding hair and wearing gold, or putting on fine clothing,^g ⁴but rather the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *adorning* of the gentle and quiet spirit that is of great value before God. ⁵For this is how the holy women who hoped in God in former times also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him 'lord', whose (f) daughters you became^h by doing good and not being afraid of any intimidation.ⁱ

A word to husbands

⁷Similarly,^j husbands, live together knowledgeably as with a weaker vessel,^k according honor to the wife especially as being a joint heir of the grace of life,^a for your prayers not to be hindered.^b

^a This refers to the human body of Jesus that was nailed to the cross. Without a body there is no blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.

^b Since the Lord died for our sins, we should die to them (separate ourselves from them).

^c The Text has the definite article; the point being, I suppose, that there is only one true righteousness, God's.

^d "Wound" is singular in the Text; of course the familiar 'stripes' sounds better, but do you really suppose that the marks left by the individual blows produce our healing? It was THE WOUND, when the Father placed on the Son the sins of the world (including yours and mine). In verses 22-25 Peter obviously has Isaiah 53:4-12 in mind, though he creates his own mosaic.

^e The evidence is split between "our" and 'your'; both make good sense, but I take it that the best line of transmission reads "our", inclusive.

^f This is parallel to 2:18 above, and both are examples of "the will of God", 2:15.

^g Peter is not advocating a sloppy or slovenly appearance; the problem is the vanity and competition expressed by extravagant hairstyles, clothes, jewelry—anything to get attention.

^h A woman becomes a 'daughter of Abraham' by faith in God; she becomes a 'daughter of Sarah' by doing good.

ⁱ An incorruptible character does not surrender to intimidation. Since there has never been a lack of evil people in the world, to keep on being and doing good one must stand up to intimidation.

^j This is parallel to 3:1 and 2:18.

^k Oh dear me, definitely not politically correct in this year of our Lord! But then, when did the Sovereign Lord ever worry about being 'politically correct', especially in a culture heavily influenced by Satan? And when did the Sovereign's true servants ever worry about being 'politically correct' in such a culture? Remember James 4:4—"Adulterers and adulteresses! [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts]. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? So whoever may want to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." 1 John 2:15-17 is to the same effect. To love the things of the world (especially its values) is to adulterate against God: "the love of the Father is not in him". As Joshua said so long ago, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). In Genesis 3:16 the Creator said to the woman, "your desire shall be for your husband"—a woman's emotional health and sense of security are heavily influenced by her husband's attitudes, more so than vice versa.

The golden rule

⁸Finally, all of you be likeminded, compassionate, loving as brothers,^c tenderhearted, courteous,^d ⁹not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but instead blessing, knowing that you were called to this so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For:

“The one who wants to love life and to see good days
must refrain his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit;
¹¹he must turn away from evil and do good;
he must seek peace, even pursue it.
¹²Because the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous,
and His ears *open* to their prayer;
but the face of the Lord is against those doing evil.”^e

Better to suffer than to sin

¹³Now who is he who will harm you if you become imitators of the good?^f ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear, neither be troubled.”^g ¹⁵Rather, sanctify the Lord God^h in your hearts, and always be ready with an answer for everyone who asks you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with meeknessⁱ and respect; ¹⁶keeping a good conscience, so that wherein they speak against you as evildoers,^j those who revile your good way of life in Christ may be put to shame.^k ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, should the will of God so determine, than for doing evil.

^a “The grace of life”—I love it. I take this to be the bottom line in marriage, husband and wife are joint heirs of the grace of life. Without males the race dies out; without females the race dies out; so both sexes are 100% necessary, so they are equally important. But for people to live together harmoniously there has to be organization, a chain of command, an authority structure.

^b Oops, there is more involved than meets the eye. “Your” is plural—it could be referring to the husbands, but could also be referring to a husband and his wife, which seems to me more likely. Praying together is an important activity for any Christian couple, but if their relationship is strained such praying becomes awkward, in fact probably won’t even happen.

^c This list of attitudes refers primarily to relationships within the Christian community.

^d Instead of “courteous”, some 22% of the Greek manuscripts, have ‘humble’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^e The quote is from Psalm 34:12-16. Based on this Psalm, the blessing to be inherited is in this life. Without peace life is not ‘good’.

^f “The good” is ambiguous as to gender; it could be a good person or a good thing, or a generic good.

^g The quote is from Isaiah 8:12. In that context there is a contrast between Jehovah as the ‘fear’ of Israel and whatever god the others fear. Whatever ‘fear’ motivates those who persecute you for doing good, do not let it shake your devotion to the true God.

^h Instead of “God”, perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘Christ’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

ⁱ ‘Meek’ is not ‘weak’—it is power that is restrained, under control. Since the worldview of the Bible is far superior to all others, someone who really understands the issues can smash the opposition, but Peter says not to do that; by handling the questioners gently we have a better chance of converting them. In verse 18 below he will make the point that in this we will be following Christ’s example. But remember what Jesus Himself said about ‘dogs’ and ‘pigs’ in Matthew 7:6.

^j This clause is a repeat of 2:12.

^k Often such people are put to shame in this life, but if not, they certainly will be at the Judgment.

Follow Christ's example to victory

¹⁸Because Christ also suffered on account of sins, once for all,^a the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God; having been put to death, to be sure, in flesh, but having been made alive in spirit; ¹⁹in which He also went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison^b ²⁰who formerly were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, while the Ark was being prepared,^c in which a few, that is eight, souls were brought safely through water. ²¹This is an antitype^d of baptism, that now saves us also (not the removal of physical filth, but the appeal into God from a good conscience) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.^e

Some concluding instructions

Pursue the will of God

4 ¹Therefore, since Christ suffered on our behalf^f in flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mentality (for the one who has ‘suffered in flesh’ has been made to cease from sin)^g ²so as not to live your remaining time in flesh for human lusts any longer, but for the will of God. ³Because the time that has passed is

^a “Once for all”—no one can kill Jesus twice.

^b What spirits are these? Peter gives a little more detail in his second letter, 2:4-6. “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction...” So the spirits in question are angels. Jude 6-7 refers to those same angels: “and the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these [angels], having given themselves over to fornication and gone after a different kind of flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Recall that the men of Sodom wanted to rape the angels who were in Lot’s house; whatever kind of flesh angels have when they materialize, it is not human flesh, it is precisely a different kind of flesh. So the angels in question are the ones who cohabited with women, producing the mongrel race of *nephilim* (Genesis 6:2-4). Their crime was so terrible that God incarcerated them even before Jehovah the Son became flesh and defeated Satan—they were put in cold (or hot) storage until human history played itself out. So the “proclamation” that Jesus went to make to those spirits was that he had won and that their condemnation was now irreversible.

^c It probably took Noah at least 100 years.

^d Why “antitype” rather than ‘type’? I suppose because the roles are reversed: the ark was to save Noah from the water, the water was the problem; in baptism the water is part of the solution, it saves us from something else. From what, from sin and death? Probably not. I have been given to understand that for the early Church water baptism was meant to do the following: by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ the convert was placing himself under Christ’s protection and repudiating Satan and the world system (with its values) and the demons controlled by him. Recall that in the New Testament water baptism followed immediately upon conversion (no weeks or months of instruction). Peter discounts the physical effect of water—the point is to appeal to God in good conscience—and goes on to the victory of Christ over death and the whole angelic hierarchy. So obviously He is in a position to protect us from Satan and his angels.

^e I believe that this truth is directly relevant to Ephesians 2:6 (see the footnote there). In Christ we have authority over the hierarchy of fallen angels. [I am still working on how we may interact with the good ones.]

^f Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “on our behalf” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g 3:18 above says Christ was “put to death in flesh”, as the culmination of His suffering, and I take that to be the point of reference here. I take ‘suffer in flesh’ to be a euphemism for death, and when one dies he stops sinning [I suppose]. All during His earthly life Jesus knew He was going to die on account of sins and was totally committed to doing the Father’s will. With the same mentality we too will be com-

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plenty for you^a to have performed the will of the pagans—having walked in lewdness,^b lusts, drunkenness, revelries, carousings and disgusting idolatries—⁴in regard to which they are disagreeably surprised at your not running with them into the same flood of debauchery, reviling you;^c ⁵they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge living and dead ⁶(which is precisely why dead ones were *once* evangelized, that they should be judged as men in flesh, to be sure, but that they should live according to God in spirit).^d

Redeem the time

⁷The end of all things has approached; therefore be serious and self-controlled in your praying.^e ⁸Above all things your love for one another should be constant, because love covers a multitude of sins.^f ⁹Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.^g ¹⁰As each has received a gift, minister it to one another as good administrators of God's varied grace.^h ¹¹If anyone speaks, let it be as utterances of God. If anyone serves, let it be as from strength as God supplies, so that in all things **God** may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion throughout the ages. Amen.

Suffering in the will of God

¹²Dear ones, do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you as a test, as though something strange was happening to you, ¹³but to the extent that you share in Christ's sufferings, rejoice, so that at the revelation of His glory you also may rejoice a great deal more.ⁱ ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of the glory and of God has come to rest upon you. On their part He is blasphemed,^j but on your part He is glorified.^k

mitted to doing God's will, and so will avoid sin. "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). Verse two here agrees that this is not automatic—we must determine not to indulge the flesh.

^a The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between "you" and 'us', but the best line of transmission has "you", which jives with verse 4.

^b All the nouns in this list are actually plural, emphasizing that their life was characterized by these things. The main ingredients would be alcohol and sex.

^c Is that not precisely the way that people in the world react, when someone breaks out of their circle? They feel condemned, but do not want to admit that they are wrong. Or they know that they are wrong, but do not want to change.

^d This delightful verse has given commentators no end of exercise. Verse 5 ends with "judge living and dead", but anyone who is dead was once alive, obviously, and the judgment will be based on what they did while alive, which is why everyone needs to be evangelized while in this life (including the people who are making fun of us). There is no definite article with "dead", either in verse 5 or 6, so Peter is referring to the ones who were evangelized in this life—he is not saying that everyone has been or will be evangelized. Everyone will be judged, but to "live according to God in spirit" one must respond adequately to the Gospel.

^e Haven't you heard a lot of 'praying' that would not qualify?

^f Love overlooks sins, does not make a big deal out of them, in interpersonal relationships. The eternal consequence of sin is not in view here.

^g Have you never heard anyone grumble? Recall that to be hospitable is commanded.

^h Does your church allow people to minister their gifts?

ⁱ Presumably the reference is to our rewards; the more we share in Christ's sufferings, the more we get.

^j If someone insults us because of the results of the Holy Spirit's working in our lives, they are blaspheming Him; but we should glorify God for the privilege of belonging to Him, both now and for eternity.

^k Perhaps 17% of the Greek manuscripts omit this whole sentence (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

¹⁵Now do not any of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in others' affairs; ¹⁶but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.^a ¹⁷Because the time has come for judgment to begin at God's house;^b now if it starts with us, what will be the end of those who keep disobeying the Gospel of God? ¹⁸Also, 'If the righteous one is saved with difficulty, where will the godless and sinful person appear?'^c ¹⁹And so let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.^d

How to be a shepherd

5 ¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I, the fellow elder and witness of Christ's sufferings; also the partaker of the glory that is to be revealed:^e ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers willingly,^f not under compulsion; not for dishonest gain but freely; ³neither as lording it over those entrusted to you,^g but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd is revealed you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Humility is a must

⁵Similarly, you younger ones, submit to elders. Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility, submitting to one another, because 'God resists proud ones, but gives grace to humble ones.'^h ⁶Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; ⁷casting all your care upon Him, because He does the caring for you.ⁱ

Guard against the devil

⁸Be sober, stay alert! Because your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is circling *you*,^j looking for someone to devour; ⁹withstand him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.^k

^a Instead of "matter", perhaps 11% of the Greek manuscripts have 'name' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^b Dear me, does this mean that the more I call down judgment on the forces of evil at work in the society at large, the more God judges the church? If that is the price to be paid for doing our job (1 John 3:8), so be it.

^c See Proverbs 11:31 in LXX (Septuagint), which is quite different from the Hebrew Text. However, Peter does not claim to be quoting Scripture here, but used a statement that is true and served his purpose. "Saved with difficulty" does not sound automatic.

^d The bottom line when we are suffering is whether or not we are going to trust God's concern for us.

^e I take it that Peter is referring to his having been on the mount of transfiguration; only James and John could say as much, and presumably they were not among the addressees (James had already been martyred). Peter uses the definite article with "fellow elder" and "partaker", from which I conclude that he is claiming a position of special authority.

^f Perhaps 14% of the Greek manuscripts add 'according to God' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g How many church leaders do you know who enjoy 'lording'?

^h Proverbs 3:34 in LXX.

ⁱ My rendering follows the best line of transmission; God is offering to handle our concerns for us, so we do not have to—now that is a real deal (but it only works if we hand them over).

^j He is not ambling aimlessly; he is circling the prey, looking for an opening. I follow the best line of transmission, albeit with only 24% of the Greek manuscripts here.

^k What does this last clause have to do with withstanding Satan? Well, when we are suffering it is easy to question God's goodness, to think that we are being picked on, to feel sorry for ourselves, and so on—our faith starts to waver and Satan has all sorts of fun. 'Devour' means to gobble up (or gobble down);

Benediction

¹⁰Now may the God of all grace, who called you into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, Himself perfect, establish, strengthen and ground you—after you have suffered a while.^a ¹¹To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Sign-off

¹²I have written to you briefly by our faithful brother Silvanus,^b as I consider him, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. ¹³The jointly elect *sister* in 'Babylon' greets you;^c and so does Mark, my son.^d ¹⁴Greet one another with a kiss of love.^e

Peace be to you, all who are in Christ Jesus.^f Amen.

for a while I lived among a people in the Amazon jungle who used to practice cannibalism—I was assured that human flesh is sweet; now really, would any self-respecting 'lion' turn up his nose at such a treat? But this particular 'lion' is especially fond of devouring Christians.

^a Oh dear, can't I have all the good stuff without needing to suffer? Guess what the answer is.

^b This may be the same Silvanus who is mentioned in the opening verse of both Thessalonian epistles. If so, he was a man of some importance in the Church at that time. Evidently he was entrusted with the responsibility of delivering this letter; if he personally had to go to each province, he had quite a journey.

^c Almost half the Greek manuscripts have a postscript that the letter was written in Rome, and it seems likely that such was the case. So 'Babylon' presumably refers to Rome. (So far as I know, the historical Babylon was a ruin at that time, without inhabitants.) The 'sister' could be an individual woman, but could also be the church.

^d Presumably Peter is referring to John Mark (Acts 12 & 15, Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11), whom he took under his wing, as it were. This is the Mark who wrote the second Gospel. Many Greek manuscripts have a scribal comment that Mark wrote his Gospel with Peter at his elbow.

^e The love here is *agape*, not *phile*. What is involved is genuine concern for the other's well-being, not an emotional interest.

^f If you are not in Christ Jesus you cannot expect peace. Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Jesus" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

The Second Epistle of

PETER

To fellow believers

1 ¹Simon Peter, slave^a and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained^b with us the same kind of faith in the righteousness^c of our God and Savior,^d Jesus Christ: ²may grace and peace be multiplied to you^e through a real knowledge of God^f and of our Lord Jesus,^g ³in that His divine power has granted to us all things *pertaining* to life and godliness, through the real knowledge of the One^h who called us by glory and excellence,ⁱ ⁴through which^j He has granted to us such precious and extraordinary promises, so that through these^k you may become partakers of a divine nature,^l having escaped the depravity that is in the world because of lust.^m

Take the Truth seriously!*Our 'entrance' depends on us*

⁵So for this very reason, making every effort,ⁿ to your faith add excellence,^a and to the excellence knowledge, ⁶and to the knowledge self-control, and to the

^a That is right, "slave"—Jude (vs. 1), James (1:1) and Paul (Romans 1:1) also call themselves slaves of Jesus Christ.

^b The verb here suggests receiving something by lot or appointment; in this case the source would be God's will: this faith is something God apportioned to them.

^c That is right, faith in Christ's righteousness: 1) that Jesus was righteous, not dying for any wrongdoing of His own; 2) that being intrinsically righteous He can impart His righteousness to us.

^d "God and Savior" refer to a single person, the Son.

^e "Multiplied"—not just a little, lots. In his first letter Peter ended the salutation here, but now he fleshes out the means.

^f As our genuine knowledge of God grows, so the amount or degree of grace and peace we receive also grows.

^g Here the reference is to two persons, Father and Son—although the grammar could be taken to indicate a single person, in which case I would render 'of God, even our Lord Jesus' (or 'Jesus our Lord'). But looking at the next verse, "His divine power" refers to the Father, because "the One who called" refers to the Son.

^h Again, we only appropriate the complete provision for "life and godliness" to the degree that we grow in our genuine knowledge of God. As Creator He made everything upon which life depends, including life itself, but our understanding of and appreciation for His provision is measured by our relationship with Him.

ⁱ I take it that Peter is saying that it is the glory and moral excellence of Christ that attracts us, but there is the extraordinary promise that we can share in those qualities, as he spells out in verse 4. Instead of "by glory", perhaps 19% of the Greek manuscripts have 'by His own glory' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j "Which" is plural and presumably refers back to "glory and excellence".

^k The promises—but of course we have to appropriate them.

^l There is no definite article with "divine nature"; "become" indicates a process—the more like Christ we become, the more divine will our nature be.

^m At times Peter's syntax seems to be almost as convoluted as Paul's; the first four verses form a single sentence. The precise interrelationship of the dependent clauses is not transparent. The notes above give my understanding of Peter's intent. It is the inordinate desire (lust) for anything in this world that leads to depravity. The proper amount of food, drink, pleasure, money, power or whatever is a good thing. It is when people want more that they get into trouble.

ⁿ Here Peter emphasizes human responsibility, heavily.

II PETER 1

self-control perseverance, and to the perseverance godliness,⁷ and to the godliness brotherly affection, and to the brotherly affection love.^b ⁸Because with these things existing and increasing in you, it makes *you to be* neither useless nor unfruitful in the real knowledge^c of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is blind, being *so* myopic, having forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.^d

¹⁰Therefore, brothers, you should be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure,^e for if you do these things you will never stumble.^f ¹¹Because in this way you will be granted the abundant entrance^g into the unending kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.^h

Peter's death is imminent

¹²So then, I will not neglect to keep reminding you about these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³Yes, I think it right to stir you up by a reminder, as long as I am in this 'tent', ¹⁴knowing that the shedding of my 'tent' is imminent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.ⁱ ¹⁵Moreover I will take pains to provide a reminder of these things for you to have,^j as needed, after my exit.

^a The word used here can refer to excellence in any area, but in this context the emphasis is presumably on moral excellence.

^b Do these qualities have to be added in this sequence, or can we tackle them in any order, or even all at once? If this sequence must be followed I do not understand how it works. I believe spiritual growth moves in an upward spiral: the Holy Spirit makes the rounds of all areas, progressively increasing the level of excellence, or Christ-likeness. I take this to be the point of the "increasing" in verse 8.

^c I have used "real knowledge" repeatedly because I take that to be the intent of the Text. Real knowledge of God contrasts with human ideas about God and false 'knowledge' furnished by demonic prophecies, visions, etc. It also contrasts with true theoretical knowledge about God—real knowledge must be experiential, as well as being true. Notice that we are supposed to be useful, to be fruitful. If we do not grow, something is definitely wrong, as verse 9 makes clear.

^d Peter says that someone who lacks the qualities listed in verses 5-7 has forgotten his cleansing and become myopic to the point of being practically blind. If we do not walk with God, do not study His Word, do not listen to the Holy Spirit, Satan will cheerfully take care of the rest.

^e As in his first letter, Peter emphasizes both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, only this verse is especially bothersome to certain theological systems. If we can make our election sure, then we can also make it unsure, or words have no meaning. Since both truths are clearly presented from cover to cover of the Bible, theological systems that emphasize only one of the two do not do justice to the Sacred Text. To emphasize only one is to hop on one foot—to walk, run and work efficiently you really need both feet. To our limited human logic the two truths appear to be incompatible, but to God's infinite logic they obviously are not. Those who are wise will bow to God's logic.

^f The verb used is 'to stumble', not 'to fall', but the tense used suggests a permanent consequence.

^g The Text has the definite article; I take the point to be that there will be different levels or kinds of "entrance": some will have many rewards, others some, others none (1 Corinthians 3:15). Those who follow the orientation in these verses will receive many rewards, they will get "the abundant entrance". (I suppose we will all agree that it is better to get in by the skin of your teeth [1 Corinthians 3:15] than not to get in at all, but would it not be better yet to have some rewards? The amount is up to us.)

^h To participate in that "unending Kingdom" is surely worth whatever effort is required of us. The difficulty is that all such effort must be expended in faith.

ⁱ The Lord told Peter his time was up, and evidently did the same for Paul (2 Timothy 4:6). "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). A servant of God dies only at the appointed time.

^j Verses 12 & 13 refer to repeated reminders while he is still in his 'tent', which would be his own ongoing activity; so why the 'moreover' in verse 15? In the NKJV verse 15 reads: "Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease". Well, how can you 'ensure' that someone will 'always have a reminder' of something? It seems clear to me that the something

The prophetic Word is trustworthy

¹⁶Now then, we did not follow craftily devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; rather we were attentive eyewitnesses of His majesty ¹⁷—because He received from God the Father honor and glory when that **Voice**^a was directed to Him by the Magnificent Glory, “This is my Son, the beloved, in whom I am *always* well pleased”—¹⁸yes, we heard this Voice being uttered from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.^b

¹⁹And so we have the most reliable prophetic Word,^c to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,^d until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;^e ²⁰knowing this first, that no Prophecy of Scripture comes to be from private release;^f ²¹for no Prophecy ever came by the will of man, rather holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.^g

Watch out for false teachers!

Their teachings are destructive

2 ¹However, there were also false prophets among the people, just as, indeed, there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce^h destructive heresies, even denying the Owner who bought them (bringing on themselves swift destruction).ⁱ ²And many will follow their licentious ways, because of which the way of the Truth will be defamed.^j ³And in covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; since way back the judgment for such people is not slack, and their destruction will not sleep.

has to be written down; a reminder has to be in writing, to be guaranteed. So what is Peter's intention? He specifies “a reminder of these things”, so what are the ‘these things’? They are evidently the things he will discuss in this letter. But he must be referring to something more than the initial draft of the letter (or the verse becomes meaningless)—hence, multiple copies. For more on the subject of multiple copies, please see the article “Multiple Autograph Copies”, available from my website: www.prunch.org.

- ^a Peter never forgot that VOICE; he even coined the phrase, Magnificent Glory, to describe the source. Evidently what happened on that mountain was totally overwhelming. What happened there turned an ordinary mountain into a “holy” one.
- ^b Verses 16-18 have to do with the transfiguration experience: those present had a foretaste of “the power and coming” (verse 16) of the Lord; they experienced a microcosm of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom.
- ^c “Reliable prophetic Word” about what? About the Messianic Millennial Kingdom—the mount of transfiguration event confirmed all the O.T. prophecies that there would be such a Kingdom.
- ^d In this dark world we need the light of God's Word, but when all prophecies are fulfilled and we are glorified, when we are basking in the light of the Lamb (Revelation 21:23), the prophetic Word we now know will belong to ancient history.
- ^e An interesting figure of speech—I imagine that “the day dawning” and “the morning star rising” are basically synonymous, since the morning star heralds the new day. But the new day happens in our hearts; eternal life is a quality of life that we can start enjoying right now, in this world. However, Peter's use of “until” points to the future Glorious Day.
- ^f The word rendered “release” occurs only here in the New Testament, but the basic meaning of the root is ‘to loose’ or ‘release’. With reference to a prophetic word it could refer either to its enunciation/origination or to its interpretation. Verse 21 makes clear that here it is the origination. False or fake prophecies derive from the will of the ‘prophet’ (or demonic influence), but true prophecy never does.
- ^g Here we have an impressive description of the process of Inspiration.
- ^h The verb here does not normally imply secrecy; purveyors of false ideas usually come on as sincere, above board, confident, even bold.
- ⁱ Sometimes we wish that destruction were a little ‘swifter’, but 3:9 below gives the answer.
- ^j The biblical worldview is defamed.

II PETER 2

Their doom is sure

⁴Because if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but delivered them into chains of darkness, confining them in Tartarus^a to be reserved for judgment, ⁵and did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood on the world of the ungodly, ⁶and condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction, reducing them to ashes (providing a warning to those who are intent on being ungodly),^b ⁷while He rescued upright Lot, who was distressed by the licentious lifestyle of the wicked ⁸(for that upright man,^c dwelling among them, tormented an upright soul from day to day by seeing and hearing lawless deeds) ⁹—*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of testings and to reserve the unjust under punishment^d for the day of judgment, ¹⁰and especially those who go after the flesh in the lust for defilement,^e and despise authority.

Their depravity is 'unreal'

They are audacious, self-willed; they are not afraid to revile majestic beings,^f ¹¹whereas angels, though being greater in might and power,^g do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.^h ¹²But these, as unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct made to be caught and destroyed, spouting off in matters of which they are ignorant, will be destroyed by their own depravity,ⁱ ¹³receiving the wages of unrighteousness. Counting it a pleasure to carouse in the daytime, they are stains and blemishes, reveling in their own deceptions^j while they feast with you, ¹⁴having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin,^k

^a Tartarus is not to be equated with Hades (the holding area for departed human spirits) nor with the Lake of Fire, since the Text here clearly says those angels are being reserved for judgment. The day when Satan and his angels will be cast into the Lake is still future (Revelation 20:10, Matthew 25:41). So Tartarus is a prison for certain fallen angels—for more about those angels see 1 Peter 3:19-20 and Jude 6-7.

^b Unfortunately, “those who are intent on being ungodly” could care less about any such warnings, even if they have any awareness of them.

^c Compared to the people around him Lot was definitely “upright”, but evidently it was mostly a passive uprightness; he did not make any converts, and even lost his immediate family.

^d They are under punishment already before the Day of judgment. Compare Luke 16:19-31, which is not said to be a parable: in Hades (which is not the Lake of Fire), before the final judgment, the rich man was already being punished (when someone is put in prison he is already being punished, before his case is tried and sentence pronounced). In Hades there is a great gulf between the just and the unjust. Since we determine our destination by what we do in this life, and there is no second chance (the rich man knew he was condemned), the punishment, or the blessing, starts at physical death.

^e People who are greedy in their moral depravity tend not to respect (or even acknowledge) authority, including that of angelic beings.

^f Literally ‘glories’—based on the next verse, it appears that they are high ranking fallen angels.

^g Greater than unregenerate human beings (presumably not than those seated in Christ—Ephesians 1:20-21, 2:6).

^h Compare Jude 9.

ⁱ Depravity destroys the quality of life already, down here, even before death and judgment.

^j “Reveling in their own deceptions”—I imagine all of us know people like this.

^k The eyes don’t stop sinning. I am reminded of our Lord’s words in Matthew 6:22-23. “The lamp of the body is the eye. So if your eye is sound your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So if the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” Of course we have two eyes, but the Text has ‘eye’ in the singular. I take it that the reference is to the way we interpret what we see (which is our real ‘eye’)—two people, one pure and one vile, observing the same scene will give very different interpretations to it. ‘Evil’ here has the idea of malig-

enticing unstable souls; having a heart trained in greediness they are children of a curse;^a **15**having forsaken the right way^b they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; **16**but he got a rebuke for his wrongdoing—a mute donkey speaking with a human voice restrained the insanity of the prophet.^c **17**These are waterless springs, clouds driven by a storm,^d for whom the blackest of the darkness^e has been reserved forever.^f

Their victims lose out

18Because speaking pompous words of emptiness they entice through fleshly lusts, through licentiousness, those who have actually escaped from those who are living in error, **19**promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. **20**For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the real knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter circumstances have become worse for them than the first ones. **21**For it would have been better^g for them not to have really known the way of the righteousness, than having really known it to turn back from the

nant, aggressively evil. Someone with a malignant mind will give an evil interpretation to everything he sees, and in consequence his being will be filled with unrelenting darkness. Compare Titus 1:15.

- ^a Peter, a Jew, uses a Jewish idiom—they are characterized by curse. They are a walking curse, damaging everyone they touch.
- ^b Their first decision was to forsake the right—once you turn out the light you condemn yourself to stumble around in the dark.
- ^c Peter says that what Balaam did was ‘insane’, just like the mercenary ‘prophets’ of our day.
- ^d Such clouds often rush past without dropping any water. The false teachers make all sorts of promises, but being empty they cannot deliver; they cheat their hearers.
- ^e This darkness is associated with Satan’s kingdom. Peter is saying that they will share Satan’s destiny. The description given to these false teachers is unusually severe, Peter really does not like them! Since God hates those who have sold themselves to do evil (Psalm 5:5-6, Deuteronomy 7:10), so does Peter, and so must we. (Psalm 97:10 has a command: “You who love Jehovah, hate evil!” David, at least, obeyed it—Psalm 26:5, 31:6, 119:113, 139:21-22. How about us?) God’s love includes hating evil, of necessity, because of the consequences of the evil. If God loves us He must be against whatever may harm us.
- ^f Just over 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “forever” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).
- ^g Oh my, batten down the hatches! If it would have been **better** for them not to have known, then of necessity they are now worse off than they were before they knew (as verse 20 makes clear). But before they knew they were lost, so what can be worse than that? To be lost without a chance. Before, they were lost but had the option to be saved. But once they know the Truth, if they throw it away there is no second chance. Hebrews 6:4-6 is plain enough (if you hear someone twist the Text into a pretzel in an effort to avoid the plain meaning, you may be sure that whatever position he is trying to defend is incorrect). “For it is impossible for those who were once for all [*hapax*] enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become sharers in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the coming age, and have fallen away—it is *impossible* to renew them again to repentance, thereby crucifying the Son of God **again**, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt.” You cannot crucify again unless you have crucified at least once already. For someone to crucify Jesus again must mean that he has indeed taken advantage of the first crucifixion, he was indeed saved—if he was never really saved he never really appropriated the first crucifixion, so he cannot do it **again**.
- I have used ‘to really know’ to translate the heightened form *epiginwskw* (in contrast to *ginwskw*, ‘to know’) and ‘real knowledge’ to translate the heightened form *epignwswis* (in contrast to *gnwswis*, ‘knowledge’). I consider that the Holy Spirit is an intelligent and honest user of human language, so His choice of the heightened forms was deliberate. Those who seek to arrive at the intended meaning of the Text need to respect that deliberate choice. When Peter says someone has a “real knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”, that someone must be saved.
- To elevate a doctrinal system above the Word of God is a form of idolatry.

II PETER 3

holy commandment delivered to them. ²²But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: a dog returns to its own vomit and a bathed sow to wallowing in mud.

So take the Truth seriously!!

3 ¹Dear ones, this is now a second letter I am writing to you^a (in both of which I stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder), ²so that you remember the words that were spoken before by the holy prophets and the command of the Lord and Savior, through your apostles.^b

Mockers will come

³Knowing this first: in the last days mockers will come, living according to their own lusts ⁴and saying: “Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” ⁵This because they deliberately ignore^c that heavens^d and land (out of water and through water)^e had been existing from of old by the word of God, ⁶by which *word* the world^f that then was perished, being flooded by water.^g

This world will be destroyed

⁷But the current heavens, and the earth, are being reserved by His word for fire,^h being preserved until the day of judgment and perdition of godless men.ⁱ

The Lord is longsuffering

⁸But dear ones, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.^j ⁹The Lord is not delaying the

^a See 1 Peter 1:1 for the identification of the addressees.

^b Peter places the “command of the Lord and Savior through your apostles” (which I take to be a reference to N.T. writings) on a par with the “words spoken before by the holy prophets”, which evidently refers to O.T. writings. Since “apostles” is plural, I take it that Peter was aware that there were several authors.

^c It appears to me that the term “deliberately” has a direct bearing on the intended meaning. How can one ‘forget’ deliberately? To ‘ignore’ is deliberate; to ‘pretend’ is deliberate. When a professor or a scholar or a scientist ignores the scientific evidence for a worldwide flood he is deliberately deceiving his students or readers. To do so is to be perverse.

^d There is no definite article with ‘heavens’, I suppose because the third heaven, God’s abode, is not included—the reference here would be to the first heaven (the atmosphere) and the second (stellar space).

^e To be visible and useable (for normal purposes) land must rise above the water level, ‘out of water’, but to sustain life there must be water available on the land as well, ‘through/by water’.

^f “World” is different from “land” (vs. 5) and refers to the organized world—Noah’s flood did not destroy the planet earth, just the organized surface. It was the divine decree that unleashed the destructive forces.

^g All around the world there are layers of sedimentary material hundreds of meters deep, and the layers are similar. The whole globe was scoured and the surface rearranged about 4350 years ago. To ignore the evidence is a deliberate choice, and has serious consequences.

^h God promised Noah that He would never destroy the world by water again, designating the rainbow as a symbol of that promise (there were no rainbows before the Flood)—the next time it will be by fire. The destruction in Noah’s day involved the earth and the first heaven, the atmosphere; the next destruction will include the second heaven, stellar space, as well.

ⁱ “Preserved”—our planet was created for the use of the human race and placed under human administration, so it cannot be destroyed until human history has run its course.

^j Although I myself have been partial to the idea that this information constitutes a precise formula, it is doubtless more prudent to take this as a general statement, showing that an eternal Being does not regard time the way we do.

promise, as some consider delay, but rather is patient toward us, not wishing any one to perish but all to come into repentance.^a

Hasten the Day of God

¹⁰However, the day of the Lord will come like a thief at night, in which heavens^b will pass away with a whoosh, while the elements will be dissolved by burning—both the earth and the works in it will be completely consumed. ¹¹Therefore, since all these things will be destroyed, what kind of people ought you to be in holy living and godliness, ¹²expecting and hastening^c the coming of the day of God, because of which heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

A better world is coming

¹³Nevertheless, we look for new heavens and a new earth^d in which dwells righteousness, according to His promise.

So be serious!

¹⁴Therefore, dear ones, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace,^e faultless and blameless; ¹⁵and consider the longsuffering of our Lord to be salvation^f—just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles^g (speaking in them of these things, about which there are some things hard to understand), which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures,^h to their own destruction.ⁱ ¹⁷You therefore, dear ones, being forewarned, be on guard lest, being carried away by the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness.^j ¹⁸Rather, may you grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and into the eternal day.^k Amen.

^a If everything were 'cut and dried', there would be no point in waiting.

^b The same comment applies as in verse 5 above.

^c "Hastening" is a transitive verb. If we can hasten the coming, we can also delay it, or words do not mean anything. The point is, what we do or do not do makes a difference, which is why there will be an accounting. I imagine that there are outside limits or parameters that God's sovereignty will guarantee, but within those parameters it is up to us (like players on a football field—the score is up to them). So how can we hasten the coming of God's day? By living our lives to the hilt on behalf of His Kingdom, standing up for biblical values in the society at large, working to get the Gospel to the last ethnic nation.

^d God is not through creating, but since the Son will have His bride, the next time around righteousness will be guaranteed.

^e When we face the Creator are we going to see a smile, or a frown—it is up to us.

^f Peter repeats the truth stated in verse 9 above—just because God is not striking us down like He did with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) does not mean that we are getting a free ride. If you have sense, you look ahead.

^g Peter was obviously aware of a 'Pauline corpus'—the use of 'all' suggests that Peter was aware of a fair number of Paul's letters.

^h Peter affirms that Paul's letters are Scripture!

ⁱ The verb form of this noun is usually rendered 'to perish'—the implication is that such people are lost. To distort what is in a newspaper or magazine does not have the same consequence—it is distorting God's Word that is serious.

^j Peter emphasizes human responsibility, again.

^k Peter does not use the usual 'forever', but the effect is the same.

The First Epistle of

JOHN

Prologue

1 ¹That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have witnessed with our eyes, that which we contemplated and our hands handled^a with reference to the word of the Life^b ²—oh yes, the Life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and declare to you that eternal Life who was in the presence of the Father and was manifested to us—³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us;^c indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴Yes, we write these things to you so that our^d joy may be fulfilled.

The conditions of fellowship*God is light*

⁵Now this is the message that we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and there is no darkness^e at all in Him. ⁶If we claim that we have fellowship with Him while walking in the darkness, we are lying and not living the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light just as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ^f His Son cleanses us from all sin.^g

God forgives confessed sin

⁸If we claim that we have no sin,^h we are deceiving ourselves and the Truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us those sins and to cleanseⁱ us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim that we have not sinned,^j we call Him a liar and His Word is not in us.

^a John could hardly be more emphatic as to the certainty of what he is going to write—he is an eye-witness, an ear-witness, a hand-witness, a mind-witness...

^b The text has the definite article with “life”, and from the next verse it seems clear that the reference is to the Son (compare John 1:4).

^c Note that the fellowship is to be based on historical fact, not someone’s sub-culture.

^d The manuscript evidence is badly divided between “our” and ‘your’, roughly 60:40%. The best line of evidence, in my view, is with the majority in favor of “our”; it is easy to see how many copyists could make the change (a change in only one letter). The more people we bring into the fellowship, the greater our joy.

^e I suppose that “darkness” here refers to sin and Satan; presumably it follows that there is no light in Satan. Also, “walking in the darkness” (next verse) refers to living according to the world’s values, a world controlled by Satan.

^f Perhaps 5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Cleansing is not the same as forgiveness. If a mother forgives her boy for playing in the mud, he escapes punishment, but that does not wash the clothes. Forgiveness takes care of the consequences of our sin in heaven, but for the consequences down here we need cleansing (although some consequences cannot be undone). As we walk in the light we will be progressively cleansed.

^h I take the reference here to be to the sin nature; of course someone without a sin nature would have no need of a Savior, nor of regeneration. Anyone who really thinks that he does not have one is most certainly self-deceived, if not satanically deceived.

ⁱ If He forgave without cleansing us, we would still be dirty. But He only forgives when we confess. (Do not forget Proverbs 29:1).

^j The reference here is to individual acts of sin. To contradict God, who affirms that we do in fact commit sins, is to make Him out to be a liar—probably not a good idea.

Jesus Christ is our Advocate

2 ¹My dear children, I am writing these things to you so that you not sin: if someone does sin, we have an Advocate in the Father's presence, righteous Jesus Christ—²also, He Himself is the propitiation for our sins;^a not concerning ours only but also concerning those of the whole world.^b

We must keep His commandments

³Now by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, "I have come to know Him," yet does not keep His commandments, is a liar and the Truth is not in him.^c ⁵But whoever keeps His Word, God's love has truly been perfected in him: by this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who claims to be abiding in Him really needs to act just like He acted.^d

An old/new commandment

⁷Brothers,^e I am not writing a new commandment to you but an old one that you have had from the beginning; this old commandment is the word that you have heard from the beginning. ⁸Again, I am writing a new commandment to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness^f is passing away and the true Light is already shining. ⁹He who claims to be in the Light while hating his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰He who keeps on loving his brother is staying in the Light, and there is no occasion for stumbling in him. ¹¹But he who keeps on hating his brother is in the darkness and keeps walking in the darkness; he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Look out for the enemy!

A bit of poetry

¹²Dear children, I am writing to you because your sins have been forgiven for His name's sake^g ¹³—fathers, I am writing to you because you have come to know Him^h who is from the beginning; young men, I am writing to you because you have overcome the evil one;ⁱ children, I am writing to you because you have come

^a Now there is a good deal! Having Himself paid my debt, when the Son pleads my case before the Father, I will be cleared. Thank you, Lord! The term 'propitiation' is not so well known these days, but it has a specific theological content that needs to be preserved. It refers to an atoning sacrifice that is required to satisfy God's outraged character, outraged by our sin.

^b "The whole world" cannot be limited to the elect, if language has verifiable meaning. Just because many do not avail themselves of the propitiation (most have never heard about it) does not mean it is not available.

^c A statement both strong and uncomfortable, yet true. Deliberate sin indicates an inadequate knowledge of God.

^d I imagine John was remembering the upper room—John 14:12.

^e Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have 'beloved' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^f I take "the darkness" to be a reference to Satan's kingdom, while "the true Light is already shining" would refer to the outworking of Christ's victory, which in a certain sense turned all old commandments into new ones—the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to do what we could not, before. Darkness is merely the absence of light; to introduce light in any situation reduces the darkness, which is why the world hates us.

^g Verse 12 is an introductory cover statement; in verse 13 John divides the cover group into three subgroups; in verse 14 he returns to the first two categories [I confess that I do not understand the purpose of verse 14, unless it be that John wanted to enlarge on what he says to the young men but did not want to pass over the fathers].

^h An increasingly adequate knowledge of God has everything to do with spiritual maturity.

ⁱ Spiritual warfare is not for 'children'.

I JOHN 2

to know the Father—¹⁴fathers, I have written to you because you have come to know Him who is from the beginning; young men, I have written to you because you are strong, and the Word of God remains in you,^a and you have overcome the evil one.

We must not love the world

¹⁵Do not love the world, neither the things in the world;^b if anyone loves the world, the Father's love is not in him. ¹⁶Because everything in the world—the craving of the flesh and the craving of the eyes and the pretension of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.^c ¹⁷The world, with its craving, is passing away, but he who does God's will remains forever.^d

A bunch of little antichrists

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour, and just as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared, by which we know that it is the last hour.^e ¹⁹They went out from us but were not of us,^f for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us—they left so that they might be exposed, that none of them were of us.

²⁰You have an Anointing from the Holy One and understand all.^g ²¹I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the Truth.^h

We must abide in the truth

²²Who is the liarⁱ but the one denying that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either.^j ²⁴So you, let what you have heard from the beg-

^a For the Word to abide in you, you have to abide in it (John 8:31).

^b The crucial issue is the values that the surrounding culture seeks to impose on us—materialism, relativism, humanism; these values are directly opposed to the Father's values, and therefore to His love.

^c The world system is controlled by Satan (5:19 below), so that system with its values is against the Creator. As the Sovereign said in Matthew 6:24, it is impossible to serve two masters—the more so if one is God and the other is Satan!

^d Note that we have to do the will. “Whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, my mother” (Mark 3:25). The Sovereign also said that it is a son who abides in the house forever (John 8:35).

^e One gets the impression that the early Christians expected the Lord's return within their lifetime. The Creator is not bound by our notions of time.

^f Those who have left the Christian community are often nastier than those who have never been a part of it. Notice that John calls them “antichrists”! There have always been defectors from the Faith, and they have always been bad news.

^g Presumably the “Anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit; to receive understanding we need to listen to Him.

^h The Spirit of the Truth cannot lie (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13; Titus 1:2), just as Satan cannot tell the truth (John 8:44) [if he ever does it is distorted so as to deceive].

ⁱ The Text has the definite article—behind every liar is the father of lies. Those who claim that Jesus was only a good man, a great teacher, are on Satan's side.

^j Some 20% of the Greek manuscripts add, “whoever confesses the Son has the Father also”, as in most versions. I take it that John is making the point that to deny either the Father or the Son is to deny them both—the addition is unnecessary. The 80%, including the best line of transmission, are correct. Note that John rejects Unitarianism (Sabellianism, modalism). Also, this verse is directly relevant to how one should present the Gospel to Muslims.

inning abide in you; if what you have heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Father and in the Son.

²⁵This is the promise that He Himself promised us—the eternal life. ²⁶I have written these things to you concerning those who *are trying to* deceive you; ²⁷but really, you do not need anyone to teach you, because the Anointing that you received from Him abides in you; further, as the same Anointing teaches you concerning all things,^a and it is true and no lie—well just as He has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Remember the accounting at our Lord's return

²⁸And now, dear children, do abide in Him, so that whenever He appears we^b may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹If you have understood that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness has been begotten by Him.^c

"We are children of God"

3 ¹Consider how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called children of God!^d The world does not acknowledge us^e for this reason: it did not acknowledge Him.^f

²Dear ones, right now we are children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.^g ³—everyone who has this hope upon him purifies himself, even as He is pure.^h

"Whoever abides in Him does not sin"

⁴Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness as well; yes, sin is lawlessness.ⁱ ⁵And you know that He was revealed in order to remove our sins—in Him there is no sin.^j ⁶Whoever is abiding in Him does not sin;^k indeed, whoever is sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him.^l

^a Compare John 16:13.

^b One might expect 'you' instead of "we", but evidently John is concerned about the results of his labors, as was Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

^c Do you find this statement to be uncomfortable? You probably know people who live moral, upright lives, but have never gotten 'saved' according to our definition of the procedure. Might there be something lacking in our definition?

^d Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts add 'and we are' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The addition is out of place here, since John takes up that point in the next verse. The Father took the initiative in bestowing His great love upon us; it is up to us to "consider" and respond. Do please "consider": for the Father to call you His child is a privilege beyond compare.

^e Although perhaps 64% of the Greek manuscripts read 'you', the best line of transmission is with the 36% in reading "us". John is making a general statement, so it is properly inclusive—first person.

^f John is probably remembering John 15:18-24. He was there.

^g This verse is directly relevant to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:10-12.

^h We will be completely exposed in His presence, and be fully conscious of it, so to avoid a bad scene we need to get a head start on the purifying.

ⁱ Lawlessness is rebellion against a known standard. It follows that John is not referring to the 'sins of ignorance' in the O.T.

^j An important statement—that is why He can be our Savior.

^k In order to sin one must stop abiding.

^l An uncomfortable statement: again, deliberate sin indicates an inadequate knowledge of God.

I JOHN 3

⁷Dear children, let no one mislead you; he who keeps doing righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸He who keeps doing sin is of the devil,^a because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was manifested for this purpose: to undo^b the devil's works. ⁹Whoever has been begotten by God does not commit sin, because His seed remains in him; actually, he is not able to sin, because he has been begotten by God.^c

Children of God X children of the devil

¹⁰In this the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished: whoever is not doing righteousness is not of God, also whoever is not loving his brother. ¹¹Because this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another ¹²—not like Cain, who was of the evil one^d and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his *own* works were evil, while those of his brother were righteous.

¹³My brothers, do not be surprised if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have transferred out of the death into the life^e because we love our brothers; he who does not love his brother^f remains in the death. ¹⁵Whoever is hating his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding within himself.^g

Love in deed and truth

¹⁶We know the Love by this: He laid down His life in our behalf; we also are obligated to lay down our lives in behalf of our brothers. ¹⁷Now whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart toward him—how does the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸My dear children, let us not love in word or with the tongue *only*, but in deed and truth ¹⁹—yes, by this we know that we are of the Truth and may put our

^a God demands holiness. Belonging to God involves living a holy life (see verse 10 below).

^b Many versions render 'destroy', but I prefer 'undo'—to undo a work involves undoing its consequences as well. In John 20:21 Sovereign Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you". So we are here to undo Satan's works—there is certainly no lack of opportunity or challenge! However, Satan does not take kindly to any such attempt, so you need to know who you are in Christ, and be living in submission to the Holy Spirit.

^c This statement appears to be so contrary to our experience that it has given rise to all sorts of evasive action. When explaining this verse in a church I ask all who have been born of God to raise a hand (raising my own)—most do. I then ask, "When were you born of God, from your mother's womb?" "Oh no", they will say, "it was when I was saved / born again." I then ask for a volunteer who was saved as an adult—John Doe' offers, saying he was saved when he was 30. So I say, "Tell me, John, for the first 29 years of your life you were John Doe, right? Your family, your friends, everybody knew you." "That's right." "So when you were saved at 30 did you stop being John Doe? Nobody knows you any more?" "Everybody still knows me." "So for 29 years you were John Doe and you continue to be John Doe?" "That's right." "Okay, so what do you have that was born of God? It can't be anything that was there during the first 29 years." Well, the answers will vary according to the theological sophistication of the person, but the Bible speaks of a 'new man' or 'new nature' that the Holy Spirit produces in us. It is that new nature that is God's "seed" within us, and that seed cannot sin. But the old nature still exists, and it does indeed sin—recall the Apostle Paul's struggle (Romans 7:13-25).

^d Satan got Cain.

^e "The death" refers to Satan's kingdom; "the life" refers to Christ's Kingdom.

^f Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "his brother" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Note the "is hating"—someone who murdered in the past can repent and be saved.

hearts at ease in His presence, ²⁰and that, if our heart should condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all.^a

Confidence toward God

²¹Dear ones, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God, ²²and whatever we may ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.^b ²³Now this is His commandment, that we believe in the name^c of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded. ²⁴He who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him.^d This is how we know that He remains in us: by the Spirit whom He gave us.

Various instructions

Test the spirits

4 ¹Dear ones, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this the Spirit of God is known:^e every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ as having come in flesh is of God, ³and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus Christ^f as having come in flesh^g is not of God; indeed, this is the spirit of the Antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming—actually, it is already in the world right now.^h

⁴Dear children, you are of God and have overcome them,ⁱ because He who is in you is greater than the one in the world.^j ⁵They are of the world; that is why they speak of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are of God: he who knows God listens to us; he who is not of God does not listen to us—by this we know the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the deception.^k

^a Well, the heart is ‘deceitful above all things’ (Jeremiah 17:9), so presumably Satan can use it to accuse us falsely, but the Righteous Judge has all the facts. He knows whether or not we were loving “in deed and truth”.

^b I take the point to be this: if we are doing “the things that are pleasing in His sight”, then we will not ask for something that will displease Him.

^c With reference to salvation the Text always has ‘believe into Jesus / His name’—a change of position is involved, from being outside to being inside, which also involves commitment. Here John is writing to those who are already inside, so it is “believe in the name”. John was with Peter in Acts 3:6, 16 and 4:10, and may be calling on us to make similar use of the Name.

^d Note that the reciprocal abiding depends on our keeping His commandments. When we stop, He stops. If you are not sure that you have the Holy Spirit, there is something wrong.

^e Both the *Textus Receptus* and the eclectic (‘critical’) text have ‘ye know’, with 25% of the Greek manuscripts, so almost all versions so read. I wonder if this has contributed to the use of this passage as a ‘litmus’ test for demonization in some quarters. A better procedure is to use the discernment the Holy Spirit gives us. If we are to test spirits, then they most certainly exist! In today’s world we desperately need the gift of discerning spirits (plural).

^f Some 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Christ” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Some 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “as having come in flesh” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h The “spirit” of antichrist, an expression of Satan himself, has been around for a long time, but in our day is becoming ever stronger.

ⁱ What is the antecedent of “them”? Presumably either the false prophets in verse one or the spirits of antichrist in verse two, or both. Well, the next verse seems to point to the false prophets.

^j Jesus is greater than Satan.

^k Well now, this would make a good litmus test, but we had better be walking with God if we try to use it!

Love one another

⁷Dear ones, we must love one another, because the love is of God and every one who loves^a has been begotten by God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹God's love was made real within us by this: God sent His only begotten Son into the world in order that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is the love, not that we loved God but that He loved us—He even sent His Son as the propitiation for our sins.^b ¹¹Dear ones, since God loved us in this way we are obligated to love one another, really.

As He is so are we in this world

¹²No one has ever looked at God. If we love one another, God remains in us and His love is being perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴Yes, we have observed and do testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God.^c ¹⁶Yes, we have come to know and believe the love that God has in us. God is love, and he who abides in the love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷The love is perfected with us for this: that we may have confidence in the Day of judgment,^d since just as He is so are we in this world.^e

There is no fear in love

¹⁸There is no fear in love; rather perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment; so he who fears has not been perfected in love.^f ¹⁹We love Him^g because He first loved us.

²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," while hating his brother, he is a liar. Well, how can he love God whom he has not seen, while not loving his brother whom he has seen? ²¹Indeed, this commandment we have from Him: he who loves God must love his brother also.

Our faith overcomes the world

5 ¹Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God;^h also, whoever loves the Begetter should love the one begotten by Him as well. ²In this we know that we love the children of God, whenever we love God and keep

^a Of course this refers to *agape* love, not emotional or physical love. The world knows nothing of *agape* love, and Satan represents the opposite.

^b Oh praise God! Thank you, Jesus! The only adequate response is to live our lives for Him.

^c There is a big difference between 'profess' and 'confess'; to confess Jesus is to submit to Him.

^d This is an interesting concept: we may face the judgment with confidence, especially if our thoughts and actions have been oriented by *agape* love.

^e An important statement—note that it is in this world, not the next. But who is the antecedent of "He"? Verse 13 mentions the Holy Spirit, while verse 14 mentions the Father and the Son, so perhaps it is God the Trinity. As the body of Christ we represent the triune God in this world. And we individually should reflect God's character in this world.

^f So why do we fear? Usually fear is directly tied to our self-centeredness—it is because of what may happen to us that we are afraid. To the extent that we identify with the interests of God and His Kingdom, we will be less concerned about ourselves.

^g Perhaps 2.5% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "Him" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^h I suppose that John would say that 'knowing' and 'believing' are different things. Satan certainly 'knows' that Jesus is the Christ, but it does not do him any good. How we act shows what we really believe, so to "believe" that Jesus is the Christ requires that we submit to Him.

His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments;^a His commandments are not burdensome, ⁴in that whatever has been begotten by God overcomes the world;^b this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. ⁵Who is he who overcomes the world if not he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Receive the witness of God

⁶This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ—not by the water only, but by the water^c and the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the Truth; ⁷actually there are three who bear witness^d ⁸—the Spirit, the water and the blood—and the three are to one effect. ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for this is God’s testimony which He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰He who believes into the Son of God has the witness within himself; he who does not believe God has made Him *out to be* a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning His Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.^e

¹³I have written these things to you who believe into the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life, really believing into the name of God’s Son.^f

Our confidence

¹⁴Now this is the confidence that we have toward Him: if we should ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us, whatever we may ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.^g

Sins not leading to death

¹⁶If anyone should see his brother sinning a sin not leading to death, let him ask, and He will give him life for those who do not sin unto death. There is sin

^a The appropriate ways to demonstrate love differ according to the specific relationship involved; to demonstrate love for God is to obey Him.

^b To overcome the world on a personal level is to reject its values and live according to Christ’s values. It is the ‘new nature’ that has been ‘begotten by God’; the ‘old nature’ cannot overcome the world. To receive a new nature one must believe into Jesus.

^c I suppose that “the water” stands for the Scriptures.

^d Those who use the AV or NKJV are used to: “There are three that bear witness *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three agree as one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*” The words in italics are only found in five late Greek manuscripts (less than 1% of the total) and part of the Latin tradition, from which they came. To be more precise, the manuscripts are: (61)[16th], (629)[14th], (918)[16th], 2318 [18th], 2473 [17th], wherein the cursives in () all differ from each other; the two that agree verbatim with TR were probably copied from it. The only one that is clearly early enough to have served as TR’s exemplar, 629, is far too different—it lacks the seven last words in TR, omits another five, changes five and adds two—19 out of 40 words is too much; the *Textus Receptus* is not based on cursive 629, so it must be a translation from the Latin (or its exemplar is lost). The shorter reading makes excellent sense. [Those who make ‘the three heavenly witnesses’ a litmus test for orthodoxy are either ignorant or perverse (or both).]

^e Here is a plain statement.

^f A person’s name represents that person. Some 4.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit “really believing into the name of God’s Son” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^g Again, in order to be ‘heard’ we must ask “according to His will”.

I JOHN 5

leading to death; I am not saying that he should make request about that. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.^a

¹⁸We know that whoever has been begotten by God does not sin;^b rather the one who was begotten by God preserves himself,^c and the evil one does not touch him.^d

¹⁹We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.^e

Conclusion

²⁰We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the genuine God, and the Life eternal. ²¹Dear children, guard yourselves from idols.^f Amen.

^a The way John phrases this, “there is sin not leading to death”, almost gives the impression that most sin does lead to death. Well, ‘the wages of sin is death’, both physical and spiritual. Christ’s sacrifice can save us from spiritual death, but not the physical. So is John referring to a premature physical death? But verse 16 is about a “brother” sinning. Consider what is said in Hebrews 10:26-31.

Because, if we deliberately keep on sinning after having received the real knowledge of the Truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ just a certain fearful anticipation of judgment and fierce fire that is ready to consume the hostiles. ²⁸ Anyone who rejected Moses’ law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be deemed worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is up to me”, says the Lord, ‘I will repay.’ And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” ³¹ It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!

Note the ‘after having received the real knowledge of the Truth’ and ‘by which he was sanctified’ (see also verses 32-36). I fear that what I was taught in Seminary on this subject does not square with the Text. I am not aware of any passage that spells out the sins that do and/or those that do not. I suppose that a request about a sin leading to death simply will not be granted. We ignore this area of truth at our peril.

^b This statement is very similar to the one in 3:9 above—please refer back to the note there.

^c Instead of “himself”, perhaps 8% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘him’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). This changes the interpretation of the statement.

^d “The evil one does not touch him” has given rise to the catastrophic idea that Christians cannot be demonized; but let us analyze the situation a bit. Wherein might the “touch” in the Text consist? It cannot be temptation, because Christ Himself was tempted (Mt. 4:1-11); it cannot be an attack on the body, because the Apostle Paul was so attacked (2 Corinthians 12:7); it cannot be an attack on the mind, because the Apostle Peter was so attacked (Matthew 16:22-23). So wherein might the “touch” consist?

Consider Ephesians 6:12—“our wrestling match” is against wicked spirits (wrestling is direct, physical, violent—it is impossible to be in a wrestling match and not be ‘touched’). Consider also 1 Peter 5:8—why ‘be vigilant’ if that lion cannot touch us? You may be absolutely certain that believers can be and are demonized! The crucial thing is a **conscious** submission to the Holy Spirit (while controlled by the Spirit you will never be controlled by a demon).

But just who is it that the evil one does not touch? The one begotten by God, or born of God—but who is the “born of God”? Since only Jesus was literally born of God from His mother’s womb, the rest of us receive the ‘new man’ at regeneration, so the believer as a whole person is not in view. Please refer back to the note at 3:9 above.

^e The verb ‘lie’ here is used for lying on a bed—your whole weight is resting on it. A bed has no volition, but Satan does; the picture is one of control. All human cultures have features that serve Satan’s purposes, but some have more than others. Any true follower of Sovereign Jesus needs to evaluate the culture that surrounds him and reject those features that are contrary to God’s values.

^f The most dangerous “idols” are not made of wood, plaster or stone. Things like money, power, prestige, social standing and non-biblical worldviews are more dangerous.

The Second Epistle of

JOHN

Salutation

¹The elder, to the elect lady^a and her children, whom I love in truth—and not I only, but also all who have known the Truth—²because of the Truth,^b who abides in us and will be with us into the age: ³Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord^c Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be with you^d in truth and love.

Walk in Christ's commandments

⁴It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I put a request to you, lady (not as though writing a new commandment to you, but one that we have from the beginning): that we love one another. ⁶And this is the love,^e that we live according to His commandments—this is the commandment,^f just as you heard from the beginning, that you should live according to it.

Beware of deceivers

⁷Now many deceivers have come into the world,^g who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in flesh^h—this is the deceiver, even the Antichrist!^a ⁸Look

^a Commentaries are divided between understanding the “lady” to be a specific woman or a local congregation. It seems to me more probable that the clause “also all who have known the Truth” would apply to a congregation—a congregation would be more widely known and loved than an individual woman. The “elect sister” in verse 13 below would be another congregation.

^b I take “the Truth” to refer to the Holy Spirit because of the following clause, “will be with us into the age / forever”—‘truth’ as a package of true propositions could be said to abide in us, but to be with us forever fits better with a Person. The truth is a basic characteristic of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, Titus 1:2).

^c Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), but the 92% are doubtless correct. “The Lord Jesus Christ” is now the proper name of Jehovah the Son.

^d The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between “you” and ‘us’, but the best line of transmission has “you”. I imagine that the difficulty arose from the use of the future indicative with the verb ‘to be’, when the optative or subjunctive would be expected. We expect ‘may mercy... be with you’, not the affirmation that it will be. If “in truth and love” is understood as modifying the pronoun, then the use of the indicative is explained. Anyone who is in truth and love will have grace, mercy and peace. Now there you have an excellent motivation for embracing truth and love!

^e The Text has the definite article with “love”—from God’s point of view, the way we express “the love” He is looking for (as opposed to any number of other loves) is by obeying Him. The Text has “that we walk...”—I render “live” because I take that to be the real point.

^f “The commandment” is to live according to His commandments. It is a different way of stating what the Lord said in Matthew 22:37-38. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.’” (See also Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27.)

^g Some 82% of the Greek manuscripts have “come into” rather than ‘gone out into’ (as in most versions). The 18% presumably have the deceivers going out from the church into the world, but that is not John’s point. The deceivers have been introduced into the world by Satan, the original and boss deceiver.

^h The Text has “coming”, not ‘having come’, so evidently John is referring to Christ’s second coming, which will certainly be “in flesh”. Recall the word of the angels in Acts 1:11, “This very Jesus who is being taken up from you into the sky, He will come again in the precise manner that you observed Him going into the sky.” The angels are emphatic: the return is going to be just like the departure. I take it that the Lord will return with the same glorified human body, visibly, come out of a cloud, and His feet

to yourselves, so that we not lose the things for which we worked but may receive a full reward.^b

⁹Anyone who turns aside and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God;^c but whoever continues in Christ's teaching does have both the Father and the Son.^d ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house; do not even tell him, "I wish you well," ¹¹because whoever tells him, "I wish you well," participates in his malignant works.^e

Farewell

¹²Although I had many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

¹³The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

will touch down at the same spot where they left (see Matthew 24:30, "coming on the clouds", and Zechariah 14:4, "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives").

^a John is affirming the real source of the idea that Christ will not return in bodily form.

^b Some 17% of the Greek manuscripts put this verse in the 2nd person plural throughout (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.), but the 83%, including the best line of transmission, are correct. John is concerned about the results of his labors (see 1 John 2:28), as was Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

^c If you turn aside, you are out. "Does not continue" can only refer to someone who has been 'in'.

^d As in verse 3 above, John emphasizes that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons.

^e People who do not believe and teach what Christ taught are on the other side. To be malignant is to be aggressively evil. Obviously, we should avoid anything that might be interpreted as identification with such people.

The Third Epistle of

III JOHN

Salutation

¹The elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

²Dear one, I pray for you to prosper in every way and to be healthy, just as your soul prospers.^a ³Because it gave me great joy when some brothers came and testified to the truth about you, how you are walking in Truth.^b ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in Truth.

Gaius is commended

⁵Dear one, you are faithful in whatever you do for the brothers, and for the strangers ⁶who testified to your love before the church—you will do well by sending them on their way in a manner worthy of God, ⁷because it was for the sake of the Name^c that they went out, accepting nothing from pagans.^d ⁸We therefore ought to welcome such, so that we may work together for the Truth.^e

Diotrephes is criticized

⁹I wrote to the congregation, but Diotrephes, who wants to dominate the others, does not acknowledge us.^f ¹⁰So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, slandering us with malignant words. And not satisfied with that, not only does he himself not receive the brothers, but he forbids those who want to do so, kicking them out of the congregation.^g

Demetrius is commended

¹¹Dear one, do not imitate what is bad, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.^h ¹²Demetrius is well spoken of by

^a This prayer challenges me. Do I really want my physical health to be a reflection of my spiritual health?

^b There is no article with “truth” here (or in verse 4). To love someone in truth means to truly love, presumably, but to walk in truth does not mean to truly walk; a different meaning is required—the principal candidates would be God’s Word and the Holy Spirit.

^c Users of the AV and NKJV are accustomed to ‘His name’, which is based on some 15% of the Greek manuscripts. I take it that the 85%, including the best line of transmission, are correct in reading “the Name”. Both readings refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, presumably, “the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9), and at which every knee shall bow.

^d The word rendered “pagans” is often translated ‘nations’ or ‘Gentiles’, but in this context the reference is not to nations, nor to non-Jews. The reference is probably to non-Christians. But what of the principle involved here? It seems clear that John is in agreement with the decision not to accept financial support from unbelievers. Would this be because of possible ‘strings’ attached, or is something going on in the spiritual realm? But really, who wants to tell a donor that he is a sinner?

^e John is talking about giving hospitality, a place to stay and food to eat, but also about giving a good send off.

^f I believe this is the main reason for this letter—since Diotrephes censored the letter that John wrote to the congregation, he now writes to an individual, to get around the censorship. Unfortunately, Diotrephes-types are still with us, and not even unusual.

^g One wonders where he got the power or authority to be able to do this. Evidently people were letting him get away with it.

^h John is good at making flat statements, which most of us find to be uncomfortable, because we would like to think there are exceptions. Don’t unbelievers do good things? If a pastor does something bad, does that mean he doesn’t know God? Just as all truth is from God and all lies are from Satan, all genuine good is from God and all evil is from Satan. I imagine that John would insist that anyone who has really seen God will not do evil.

everyone—even by the truth itself. Yes, we also speak well of him, and we know^a that our testimony is true.

Farewell

¹³I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; ¹⁴rather I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

Peace to you. The friends *here* greet you. Greet the friends *there* by name.

^a I follow the best line of transmission here, using the first person, albeit representing only 23% of the manuscripts. We expect the second person (61.5%; there are two further variants), and it would be almost unthinking for copyists to make the change, but on reflection the first person makes good sense. Indeed, in John 21:24 the same author uses 'we know' with reference to his testimony.

The Epistle of

JUDE

Salutation

¹Jude, slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,^a to the called, those who have been sanctified^b by God the Father and preserved^c through^d Jesus Christ:
²May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.^e

Why he is writing

³Dear ones, while I was really intent on writing to you about the salvation we share, I had a compulsion^f to write exhorting you to contend earnestly for the Faith^g once for all committed to the saints. ⁴Because certain men, who were marked out for this condemnation long ago,^h have sneaked in; they are godless, perverting the grace of our God into licentiousness and denying the only Sovereign God,ⁱ even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Examples from ancient history

⁵So I want to remind you, though you already know this, that the Lord delivered a people out of the land of Egypt yet later destroyed those who did not believe.^j ⁶And the angels who did not keep their proper domain but deserted^k their own dwelling He has kept bound in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.^l ⁷So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding

^a Both James and Jude were half-brothers of Jesus (same mother) but were themselves full brothers. Jude avoids any special claim to that half-brotherhood and declares himself a slave.

^b Rather than “sanctified”, about 9% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘beloved’ (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^c By using words like “called”, “sanctified” and “preserved”, Jude is emphasizing God’s part in our salvation.

^d “Jesus Christ” is in the dative case, without an explicit preposition, so we are faced with an ambiguous construction—it could be ‘by’, making Jesus Christ the agent; or if the Father is the agent it could be ‘for’ or ‘in’ as well as “through”.

^e The verb is in the passive voice, so these things will be supplied by an outside power.

^f I believe he is claiming inspiration here.

^g Wherein might “the Faith” consist? Jude evidently contrasts it with what the “certain men” of verse 4 believe, teach and do, as explained in the following verses. I take it that for Jude “the Faith” refers to the sum of Biblical values, the Biblical worldview or philosophy of life. It has been “committed” to us to put into practice, but also to defend. Who in North America or Europe is ‘contending for the Faith’, even a little bit? Both those continents are now anti-Christian.

^h This is one of a very few texts that could be used to defend the doctrine of preterition, or double predestination (that the lost are predestined to be lost).

ⁱ About 13% of the Greek manuscripts omit “God” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

^j It is not wise to presume upon God’s goodness—He demands commitment. Less than half of those who left Egypt entered the promised land.

^k If they had to ‘desert’ their domain and dwelling in order to acquire the ability to procreate with women, the implication may be that their decision was irrevocable—they could not go back.

^l The place is called Tartarus in 2 Peter 2:4. Comparing this passage with 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 and Genesis 6:2,4, it seems clear that certain angelic beings cohabited with women, producing a mongrel race, the *nephilim*. (The phrase ‘sons of God’ in Gen. 6:2,4 is a translation of the Hebrew phrase *bene-haelohim*—the only other places this phrase occurs are in Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7, where the reference is clearly to angelic beings.) This was such a heinous crime that God incarcerated them millennia before the victory of Christ (that would justify the procedure; that is what He went to announce, as mentioned in 1 Peter 3:19). It was also a master stroke by Satan—since the male sperm transmits

towns—who gave themselves up to fornication and went after a different kind of flesh^a in a manner similar to those angels—stand as an example, undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.^b

Evil men are in the church

⁸Likewise these dreamers in their turn both defile flesh^c and reject authority and slander celestial beings.^d ⁹Yet even Michael the archangel,^e when taking issue with the devil—he was arguing about Moses’ corpse^f—did not dare to pronounce a reviling judgment, but said, “May the Lord rebuke you!”^g ¹⁰But these speak abusively against whatever they do not understand, while whatever they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals—by these things they are ruined.^h ¹¹Woe to them, because they have taken the way of Cain,ⁱ have rushed into Balaam’s error for profit,^j and have destroyed themselves in Korah’s rebellion!^a

the human nature (Hebrews 7:9-10, Romans 5:12) and determines the blood of any child, if Satan had succeeded in contaminating the whole race, the Messiah could not be born and Genesis 3:15 could not be fulfilled.

- ^a Recall that they wanted to rape the angels. Whatever kind of ‘flesh’ an angel has when he materializes, it is not human.
- ^b Just as ‘eternal life’ refers primarily to a quality of life, I take it that “eternal fire” here refers to a quality of fire—at the destruction of Sodom God used ‘brimstone and fire’ (Genesis 19:24), and the eternal Lake contains ‘fire and brimstone’ (Revelation 20:10).
- ^c The Text has just those two words, “defile flesh”, which makes it difficult to be dogmatic about the meaning; perhaps the most common interpretation takes it as referring to their own bodies, presumably by unnatural sex.
- ^d The Text has ‘glories’, but because of verse 9 it seems likely that the reference is to angelic beings.
- ^e Michael is now “the archangel”, the boss angel, the commander of the heavenly army (Revelation 12:7).
- ^f Where did Jude get this information? I always assumed that Moses went up Nebo alone (and since he did not return there would be no human witness), but the Text does not actually say so. Could it be possible that Joshua went along? Whether Joshua wrote it or God revealed it to someone, I take it that a written record was made and that Jude had access to a copy in his day. Being true information the Holy Spirit moved him to include it in his letter, which became the only inspired account of those details.
- ^g For years I wondered why God included verse 9 in an inspired letter; what difference does it make what happened to Moses’ corpse? I now understand that the corpse is a mere prop, the crucial thing being the relationship between the two boss angels—one the leader of the good ones and the other the leader of the bad ones. We understand from Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-17 that Lucifer was created the number one angel, but when he rebelled against the Creator I assumed that he was demoted. In such an event Michael (I assume he was the original number two) the archangel (there is only one) would be superior to Satan and be able to order him away. But the Text says he did not ‘dare’ to be disrespectful, but had to content himself with appealing to God for help. Against my inclination, I feel obliged to conclude that Lucifer (now Satan) was not demoted—he continues higher in rank than Michael. The same would hold for the other angelic beings that followed Lucifer (Daniel 10:13, 20-21; Ephesians 6:12)—they maintain their original rank. However, what Michael did not dare do, we can. According to Ephesians 1:20-21 and 2:6, we who are in Christ are seated with Him far above all principality, power, etc. (the angelic hierarchy, good and bad). In Christ we are above Satan and may rebuke him directly (but do not forget James 4:7).
- ^h Those people were evidently rather crass materialists, controlled by their body’s appetites. We have to eat to live, but those who live to eat ruin themselves.
- ⁱ Since people and animals were vegetarians before the Flood, Abel did not raise sheep for food—so why did he do it? It seems to me obvious that God must have given Adam instruction, after the Fall, about the necessity of animal sacrifice to cover their sins. To Cain, the rationalist, that didn’t make sense, so he chose to worship God in his own way. When rejected he rebelled against God and even killed his brother; those who choose evil usually hate the good, because the good shows them up.
- ^j Balaam prostituted his divine gift for material gain. Not only were there such people in Jude’s day, there is no lack of such in ours.

JUDE

¹²These men are hidden reefs at your love feasts, joining the feast without fear, caring only for themselves; they are clouds without rain, carried along by winds; they are late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead (having been uprooted); ¹³they are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their own shameful acts; they are wandering stars, for whom the black of the darkness has been reserved forever.^b

¹⁴Now even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men saying: “Look, the Lord is coming with ten thousands of His holy ones ¹⁵to execute judgment on everyone and to convict all the godless among them of all their godless deeds that they have godlessly perpetrated, also of all the harsh things they have spoken against Him—the godless sinners!”^c ¹⁶These men are grumblers and complainers, living according to their own evil desires; they talk big, flattering people to gain advantage.

Exhortation

¹⁷But you, dear ones, remember the words that were spoken before by the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸how they told you that in the last time there will be scoffers who live according to their own godless desires. ¹⁹These are the ones who cause division; they are ‘soulish’, not having a spirit.^d

²⁰But you, dear ones, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in God’s love,^e looking forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ into eternal life.^f

²²Now be merciful to some, making a distinction;^g ²³but others save with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.^a

^a Korah rebelled against God’s established order—he wanted to be priest but was not a descendent of Aaron (though he was a Levite). He was not satisfied with the place God had allotted him.

^b “The darkness” is characteristic of Satan’s kingdom. Those who promote humanistic, relativistic, materialistic ideas and values in the church are really ‘party-crashers’, agents of Satan’s kingdom. Jude’s description of such people could scarcely be more violent or abusive—they have a special spot reserved in a really black corner of the darkness, throughout eternity. Servants of Satan who pretend to be Christians are too despicable for words.

^c Since I believe that Jude was inspired by the Holy Spirit in writing this letter, then I understand that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, actually did write a prophecy and copies still existed in Jude’s day. Note that this affirms the historicity/accuracy of the Genesis genealogy. If Enoch wrote, Adam also wrote, and their writings were preserved in Noah’s Ark, becoming available for use by Moses and others. If the language spoken before the Flood was a type of Hebrew, as I assume, then Jude could easily read it. No copies of this prophecy in Hebrew are known today, though Jews are reported to have used one as late as the 13th century A.D. A few supposed copies in other languages have been found.

^d There is no definite article with “spirit”, so Jude is probably not referring to the Holy Spirit here. He says that the people being described are characterized by soul, not having a spirit. In which case, the reference is to humanoids, the offspring of demons with women; like it was in the days of Noah (note Genesis 6:4—“**and also afterward**”). Don’t forget our Lord’s words in Matthew 24:37. If/since there are such humanoids among us today, our total ignorance on the subject is having very serious consequences in the culture at large. For more on this subject, please see my article, “As were the days of Noah”, available from my website: www.prunch.org.

^e This is an interesting concept; we are to keep ourselves in God’s love. Two of the means toward that end are given in verse 20.

^f Our final entrance into eternal life is stated to derive from our Lord’s mercy.

^g Verses 22 and 23 have given all sorts of exercise to commentators (and to copyists who produced Greek manuscripts, before them). Considering the violent description that Jude gives to the godless who have sneaked into the church, he presumably intends that such be identified and excluded without ceremony. So I take it that verses 22 and 23 refer to people in the church who have been influenced by those

Doxology

²⁴Now to Him who is able to keep them^b from stumbling and to present them before His glorious presence without fault and with exultation^c—²⁵to God our Savior, who alone is wise,^d be glory and majesty, power and authority, both now and throughout all the ages! Amen.

godless ones, in varying degrees. Some who are still wavering need to be treated with mercy, not harshly (vs. 22). Others have pretty well sold out to the values of the godless and are almost to the point of no return—it will take energetic, if not desperate, action to snatch them from the jaws of hell (vs. 23). You can't 'snatch' without direct contact, and there is the danger of contamination.

^a 1 John 2:15 says: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In a similar vein Jude warns against allowing oneself to be contaminated by anything attached to the people who are being rescued—everything about them will be contaminated by Satan's germs.

^b Virtually all versions in English read 'you', following some 30% of the Greek manuscripts; but the 68% (there are two further variants), including the best line of transmission, read "them", and in the context "them" makes good sense. Jude is assuring his readers that it is worth the effort to snatch people from the very jaws of hell (v. 23), because God is able to secure them (one's natural tendency would be to doubt that). In commenting the parable of the lost sheep, the Lord Jesus affirmed that "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." It seems that God gets special pleasure out of cheating the Lake. Remembering that every human being bears the image of the Creator, we can understand why.

^c This is truly marvelous: someone who was snatched from the jaws of hell is transformed to the extent that he can stand before God "without fault". God Himself will exult (Luke 15:10).

^d About 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit "wise", leaving 'to the only God our Savior' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

REVELATION

Introduction

1 ¹Jesus Christ's revelation, which God gave Him to show to His slaves^a—things that must occur shortly.^b And He communicated it, sending it by His angel to His slave John, ²who gave witness to the word of God, even the testimony of Jesus Christ^c—the things that He saw,^d both things that are and those that must happen after these. ³Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it;^e because the time is near.

⁴John, to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace and peace to you from^f Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven-fold^g Spirit who is before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness,^h the firstborn from among the dead,ⁱ and the ruler of the kings of the earth.^j

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins with His own blood ⁶—indeed, He made us a kingdom, priests^k to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

⁷Take note, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him.^a And all the tribes of the earth will beat their breasts [in dismay] because of Him. Yea, verily!^b

^a Whose, the Father's or the Son's? Probably the Son's, but in practice it makes little or no difference. Yes, the Text says "slaves", so this book is not intended for the merely curious.

^b The Text actually says, "with speed". Since to God 1000 years = one day, it has only been two days!

^c Any testimony of Jesus Christ is a word of God.

^d Most, if not all, versions have 'he saw' (referring to John, not Jesus) and omit the rest of the verse. The manuscript evidence is seriously divided at this point. My translation reflects two of the three main independent lines of transmission, including the best one (as I see it). See 22:20, "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming swiftly!' Oh yes!! Come Lord Jesus!" The whole book is what Jesus Christ is testifying, is revealing; as an eye witness. So the whole book is inspired.

^e John is evidently claiming divine inspiration for what he is writing. You will not be blessed for reading or hearing a newspaper or a magazine. Notice that one person is reading (aloud) and a number of people are hearing, which was the norm in the congregations, since very few could afford to have a private copy of Scripture. Notice further that it is necessary to "keep" what is written.

^f The sequence "from..., and from..., and from..." suggests three persons. The third, "Jesus Christ", has to be the Son. "The seven-fold Spirit" would be the Holy Spirit. So "Him who is, was and is coming" must be the Father. Just over half of the Greek MSS add 'God' after the first "from" to make the connection overt (but the best line of transmission does not).

^g Although the evidence is badly divided, I take it that the original reading is "the seven spirits which is". A plural subject with a singular verb is anomalous, unless we understand "seven-fold Spirit which is". If the Deity is three in one, why might not the Holy Spirit be seven in one? See Isaiah 11:2.

^h When and how was He "the faithful witness"? Throughout His life on earth He was the faithful witness to the Father's character, what the Father was doing (John 5:19), what the Father was saying (John 12:50). Here He is the faithful witness to what is going to happen.

ⁱ We have two readings here: one is clearly "from among the dead" while the other is ambiguous, meaning either "from among the dead" or 'of the dead'. With the latter option, "firstborn" could have the derived meaning of 'lord' or 'boss'. I take it that the better option is to follow the best line of transmission and read "from among", in which case "firstborn" has its primary meaning. Death is pictured as a huge womb, pregnant with all the dead, and Jesus Christ was the first one out, literally the "firstborn"—but only the first! Because Jesus conquered death, we too may emerge from that 'womb'. Thank you Lord!

^j Satan has been demoted—see John 12:31.

^k What was the function of a priest? A priest was a go-between, representing the people to God. I would say that intercessory prayer is a priestly function.

⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega,”^c says the Lord God, “He who is and who was and who is coming, The Almighty.”^d

John is commissioned

⁹I, John, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance^e in Christ Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the Word of God and on account of the testimony of Jesus Christ.^f ¹⁰I was in spirit^g on the Lord’s day and I heard a voice behind me, loud as a trumpet, ¹¹saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” ¹²And there I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.^h And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³and in the midst of the seven lampstands one similar to a son of man,ⁱ clothed down to the feet and girded at the nipples^j with a golden belt. ¹⁴Now His head, that is His hair, was white, like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; ¹⁵and His feet were like fine brass, as when refined in a furnace; and His voice was like the sound of many waters;^k ¹⁶and He had seven stars on His right hand and a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth; and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.^l

¹⁷And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as if dead. And He placed His right hand^m upon me saying: “Do not fear. I am the First and the Last, ¹⁸even the Living One—I became dead, to be sure, and now I am living for ever and ever! Oh

^a The soldier who actually pierced His side on the cross, and the religious leaders who brought the situation about, are presumably in Hades. I take it that we are being told that the dead will also see Him when He returns to reign. The human spirit is indestructible, so those in Hades are very much ‘aware’ (Luke 16:22-31).

^b That is how people used to talk—you may prefer ‘Yes, indeed!’ or ‘Even so, amen!’ The certainty that all tribes will beat their breasts is being emphasized.

^c To be the first and the last you have to be the biggest, all the time.

^d In verse 8 the Father speaks, putting His weight behind what is being written.

^e “The tribulation and kingdom and endurance”—that there is only one definite article for the three nouns presumably indicates that the three are regarded as a single package. To participate in the Kingdom in this life involves tribulation and requires endurance.

^f Presumably the witness that John gave about Jesus Christ. As in this verse, the human authors frequently alternated ‘Jesus Christ’ and ‘Christ Jesus’—so far as I can see, it was merely a stylistic device to reduce repetition.

^g There is no definite article with “spirit”, so to capitalize the word is arbitrary. It could refer to the Holy Spirit, but I think it more likely that it refers to John’s spiritual condition (see 4:2 below).

^h It was at that point that he turned.

ⁱ The Lord Jesus referred to Himself as “the Son of the Man”, always with the two definite articles, but here there are no articles (in the Greek). John saw a human like form, very different from the Jesus he had known.

^j Since the figure was clothed, the nipples would not be visible, so the point is presumably to give the position of the belt—across the middle of the chest. Since no further mention is made of the belt, in the letters, it is hard to know what purpose it served. But see 15:6 below.

^k A low (or loud) roar that pervades the atmosphere—it is awesome, and you cannot get away from it.

^l Comparing this with verse 14 it is evident that only the part of the head covered by the hair was white, the face (probably no beard) was like the sun.

^m But He had seven stars on that hand! Presumably the stars were on His open hand, so He rested the back of His hand on John. Since the seven stars represented the messengers of the seven churches, what might the symbolism be? Since the seven churches, taken together, represent the total Church (presumably), perhaps the glorified Christ is blessing John on behalf of the Church, so that he will be a blessing to that Church, in his turn.

REVELATION 2

yes!! And I have the keys of Death and of Hades!^a **19**Therefore^b write the things that you have seen, and the things that are, and the things that are going to occur after these.^c **20**The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the messengers^d of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands that you saw are seven churches.

The seven letters^e

To Ephesus

2 ¹“To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write:

These things says He who holds the seven stars on His right hand, who walks about in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:^f **2**I know your works, yes the labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot stand those who are evil. And you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not,^g and found them *to be* liars; **3**and you have born up and endured on account of my name, and not grown weary.

4Nevertheless I have against you that you have left your first love.^h **5**So think about from where you have driftedⁱ and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come at you swiftly and remove your lampstand out of its place^j—unless you do repent. **6**But you do have this, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans,^k which I also hate.’

^a Oh praise God! Satan used to have the keys, Hebrews 2:14, but now Jesus has them, because He did indeed vanquish the devil.

^b In verse 8 the Father guarantees the veracity of the prophecy; here the Son, who conquered death and lives forevermore, does the guaranteeing.

^c I take it that the precise form of the original Text here has the effect of affirming the certainty of the coming events. This verse is often taken as giving the outline of the book: “what you saw” = chapter 1; “things that are” = chapters 2-3; “things to come” = chapters 4-22.

^d The Greek word *αγγελος* may mean messenger or angel (they are often messengers). Since 2:20 below says “your wife”, referring to the messenger, we should presumably understand ‘messenger’ here as referring to a man. It is possible that messengers from these churches were visiting John, on Patmos, or had visited him earlier.

^e These letters have received a variety of ‘interpretations’. The basic meaning is obviously the literal one—these were actual churches at the time that John wrote, and each one was exactly as described in its letter. By way of application, these churches may also be taken as symbolic—at any given moment throughout the history of the Church local churches may be found to be similar in character to any one of these seven. It is also possible to see these seven churches as prophetic of the general course of the Church through time, and in that event we are presumably in the last or Laodicean age.

^f Christ’s walking about in the midst of the churches is not an aimless meandering; He is observing and evaluating.

^g Evidently it is possible to test the validity of someone’s claim to be an apostle—I wish we had been told how to do it.

^h Ouch!

ⁱ They had not taken a sudden fall, they had drifted from their moorings, a process so gradual that it may go unnoticed for quite some time. It can happen to us too.

^j In fact, Ephesus did lose its lampstand.

^k We don’t know for sure who or what they were. The etymology of the word suggests ‘laity conquerors’, perhaps the beginning of the system where the clergy dominates the laity. Once someone has a ‘guaranteed’ position their lifestyle often becomes licentious.

⁷“He who has an ear^a let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.^b To the one who overcomes^c I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of my God.^d

To Smyrna

⁸“And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write:

These things says the First and the Last,^e who became dead and came to life: ⁹I know your works and affliction and poverty (but you are rich), and the slander of those who claim to be Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.^f ¹⁰Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer: Take note, the devil is really about to throw some of you into prison, so that you may be tested, and you will have an affliction of ten days.^g Stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.^h

¹¹“He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. The one who overcomes will absolutely not be harmed by the second death.ⁱ

To Pergamos

¹²“And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write:

These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³I know your works, and where you live, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold my name fast and did not deny my faith during the days in which Antipas was my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan lives.^j

¹⁴Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you have there adepts of the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a

^a That is right, just one ear. In other words, we had better pay attention!

^b At this point it becomes very clear that God is giving a general application to these letters. The first one was written to a literal church in literal Ephesus, in literal terms, but **all** of us are to pay attention to the spiritual principles and lessons involved.

^c So what happens if you do not overcome??

^d The Tree of Life is first mentioned in Genesis 3:22-24; it must have been transplanted out of the Garden of Eden before the Flood, unless it was a replica of the original in God’s Paradise. A considerable majority of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, have “my” God. While walking this earth the Son repeatedly referred to the Father as ‘my God’.

^e Here, and in 1:17 and 22:13, the glorified Christ calls Himself “the First and the Last”—comparing with Isaiah 44:6 we have one of several demonstrations that Jesus Christ is Jehovah [Mormons and JW’s deny that He is Jehovah].

^f You had better believe that there is a ‘synagogue of Satan’ near you! Why do you suppose that 1 Peter 5:8 says to “**be vigilant**”? In our day false Christians are more of a problem than false Jews.

^g The Lord does not promise us a free ride, bed of roses, or whatever. Here they are given specific advance warning—bad times ahead. (Presumably the “days” are not solar.)

^h So what happens if you don’t stay faithful? Note that the Lord does not register any complaint against Smyrna. If you are being persecuted for your faith it tends to keep you pretty close to the Lord. Also there is no incentive to pretend.

ⁱ Revelation 20:14 makes clear that “the second death” is the Lake of Fire. The first death is the physical one; the second is the spiritual one—eternal separation from the Creator, in whose image we are. Of course the redeemed go into eternal life, not death, so the “second death” holds no threat for them. But there is the little matter of ‘overcoming’.

^j I find the double reference to Satan here to be curious. The opposition in the spirit realm would be especially strong.

REVELATION 2

stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things offered to idols and to fornicate.^a **15**Thus^b you also have adepts of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans as well. **16**Repent! Or else I will come at you swiftly and will fight against them^c with the sword of my mouth.’

17‘He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will grant to eat from^d the hidden manna. And I will give him a white pebble, and on the pebble a new name written, which no one knows except the receiver.^e

To Thyatira

18‘And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write:

These things says the Son of God,^f He who has the eyes like a flame of fire and the feet like fine brass: **19**‘I know your works^g—the love, the faith, the service—and your endurance; in fact your last works are greater than the first.^h

20Nevertheless I have against you that you tolerate your wife Jezebel,ⁱ who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my slaves^j to fornicate and to eat things offered to idols.^k **21**I even gave her time so that she might repent, but she does not want to repent of her fornication.^l **22**So, I am throwing her into a *sick*bed and those adulterating with her into great affliction, unless they repent of her works.^m

^a Why are fornication and adultery becoming more and more common in ‘Christian’ circles today? They come with idolatry—the church is riddled with humanism, relativism, materialism, spiritism, etc., false gods all. One wonders how many Christians today have a world view that is strictly Biblical, without any admixture of the world’s values.

^b Birds of a feather flock together: if you start sinning in one area, before long it is two.

^c Notice that the pronoun changes—it is specifically against the Nicolaitans and Balaamites that He will fight.

^d “From” is literal, maybe too literal; perhaps we should render “some of” the hidden manna.

^e Our name identifies us to other people, so what good is a name that no one knows? Except that the giver knows, obviously. So maybe the private name has to do with a private relationship, between giver and receiver! Eating “hidden manna” also sounds sort of private.

^f If anyone was still in doubt as to the identity of the One who is dictating these letters, the doubt stops here.

^g Each of the seven letters begins with this phrase, ‘I know your works’. How we act reflects our world-view, what we really believe.

^h Wow, here is a church that has it all—love, faith, service, endurance—and it is growing, doing more and more! Yes, well, but, then there is the rest of the story.

ⁱ About three fourths of the Greek manuscripts, including the best line of transmission, read “your wife” rather than ‘that woman’. The main group that reads ‘that woman’ reflects a tradition that is full of obvious corruptions, and so does not inspire confidence. The original reading is doubtless “your wife”. To have a wife the messenger must be a man, not an angel.

^j The Lord uses an emphatic possessive pronoun here—she is messing with **His** slaves.

^k Again, notice that fornication and idolatry go together.

^l If someone refuses to repent they are beyond help; judgment has to come.

^m Two thirds of the Greek manuscripts, including the most dependable group, have “her” works, not ‘their’ works. In verse 20 the Lord emphasized that they were His slaves. If the original reading is “her” works, as I believe, then what is involved here is spiritual adultery—she was not literally sleeping with a variety of men in the church. No matter how much love, faith and service there may be in a church, the Lord will not tolerate idolatry, which is spiritual adultery.

²³And I will execute her children;^a and all the churches will know that I am the One who searches minds and hearts, and I will give to each one of you according to your works.^b

²⁴Now to the rest of you who are in Thyatira I say—to as many as do not hold this teaching, those who have not known^c the depths of Satan, as they say—I will not put any other burden on you; ²⁵just hold fast what you have until I come.^d ²⁶And *as for* the one who overcomes and keeps my works^e until the end, I will give him authority over the nations; ²⁷and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron; they will be smashed like clay pots ²⁸—just as I have received from my Father.^f And I will give him the morning star.^g

²⁹“He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

To Sardis

3 ¹“And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write:

These things says He who has the seven spirits of God^h and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, yet you are dead. ²Wake up! And strengthen the remaining things that you were about to throw away,ⁱ for I have not found your works to be fulfilled before my God. ³So remember how you have re-

^a Literally ‘kill by death’—so how else can you kill someone if not by death? Those who are familiar with the KJV will recall the phrase ‘let him die the death’, which in the context implies execution. I take it that “her children” does not refer to her literal sons and daughters, but to her ‘spiritual children’, those who have bought into her teaching and life style. The Lord wants to eradicate her ‘genes’, as it were. But why does God not kill Jezebel herself, instead of her children? I imagine that God uses evil people, like Jezebel, to put the rest of us to the test, to see whose side we really are on. Those who go along with a ‘Jezebel’ don’t really want God.

^b What we do, or do not do, not only makes a difference down here, but will also make a difference ‘up there’.

^c “Known” implies experiential knowledge. Note that the Lord links Jezebel’s teaching directly to Satan, and those who are doing it are deeply involved with him (whether or not they fully understand the implications—if they are ‘deceived’ [v. 20] then they may indeed not understand).

^d They were doing quite well, generally—see the second note with verse 19 above. So if they throw off Jezebel’s influence they will be all right.

^e “Keeps my works until the end”—it is not enough to hold to the right doctrine; the Lord wants to see us reproducing His works (John 14:12). Notice that our participation in the administration of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom is at stake.

^f The Lord is evidently referring to Psalms 2:7-9. In that event He is declaring that He is the “Son” in verse 7 and that He did indeed ask for and receive the nations as an inheritance. If we are co-heirs (Romans 8:17) then we are involved in the outworking.

^g In Revelation 22:16 the Lord declares Himself to be the “morning star”. In Isaiah 14:12 Satan is called “day-star, son of the morning”, but that was what he was before he fell. The planets Venus and Mercury are the ‘morning stars’ we see in the sky at dawn. But the Lord here says the morning star. I guess we will find out what He means when we get there.

^h In 1:4 above “the seven Spirits”, which I rendered as “seven-fold Spirit”, has to do with the Holy Spirit. Here I think not—the Lord ‘has’ them like He has the seven stars. Perhaps the reference is to Isaiah 11:2.

ⁱ “That you were about to throw away” is the reading of about 2/3 of the Greek manuscripts, including the most dependable group, as opposed to ‘that were about to die’. They had probably already stopped believing in a variety of Biblical truths and were on the verge of dumping the rest, like the theological modernist or liberal of our day. Not surprisingly, they were short on works as well.

REVELATION 3

ceived and heard,^a and hold fast and repent; because if you do not watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

⁴But you do have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, because they are worthy. ⁵The one who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not erase his name from the Book of Life,^b and I will confess his name before my Father and before His angels.^c

⁶He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

To Philadelphia

⁷And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write:

These things says the Holy, the True, He who has the key of David, who opens and no one can shut it, except He who opens, and no one can open:^d ⁸I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, that no one is able to shut; because you have a little strength and have kept my Word and have not denied my name. ⁹See, I am determining that some of the synagogue of Satan, those who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—yes, I will cause them to come, and to do obeisance at your feet and to know that I have loved you.^e ¹⁰Because you have kept my command to endure, I also will keep you from the hour of the testing that is about to come upon the whole inhabited earth,^f to test those who dwell on the earth.

¹¹I am coming swiftly. Hold fast what you have so that no one may take your crown.^g ¹²The one who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never again go out. And I will write on him the name of my God, the name of my God's city—the

^a See Luke 8:18.

^b The Text is very clear—the glorified Christ said “erase”. You cannot erase something that is not there! To argue that Christ is using an impossibility as a threat is to accuse Him of using language deceitfully, a form of lying—not smart! By the grace of God my name is in the Book of Life, but what happens if I do not overcome? In all seven letters our risen Lord places heavy emphasis upon our human responsibility. God will take care of His side; we had better take a careful look at our side.

^c Comparing this statement with Jesus' statement in Matthew 10:32-33, confessing is the opposite of denying. Since eternal destiny is at stake, the confessing/denying must involve what we are and do, not just our words. Confessing has to do with overcoming.

^d The evidence is badly divided with reference to the wording of the last half of the verse. The translation given here reflects over half of the Greek manuscripts, including the most dependable group. We are accustomed to the more balanced form, but the basic point remains the same.

^e I take it that this will happen here on earth—a pleasant prospect! Since they have been slandering us (at the very least, 2:9) this will be a welcome vindication. I imagine that at this point in history the “synagogue of Satan” includes people who claim to be Christians, but are not really. They may even be in positions of leadership (cf. Jeremiah 20:1-4).

^f There has always been tribulation and testing here and there on the earth, but to include “the whole inhabited earth” the reference must be to the Great Tribulation. How can you be “kept from the hour” if you are in the middle of it? To be protected in the middle of a situation is not the same as being kept from it. This text would appear to point toward a pre-tribulation, or pre-wrath, rapture of the Church.

^g Would the glorified Christ make an empty threat? So how does someone take our crown? How about if someone moves into a spot that you relinquished?

new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God—and my new name.^a

¹³“He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

To Laodicea

¹⁴“And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write:

These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Originator of God’s creation: ¹⁵I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, since you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth.^b ¹⁷Because you say, “I am rich, even become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and do not realize that you are the most wretched—yes, the most pitiable and poor and blind and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy gold from me, refined by fire, so that you may become rich; and white garments, so that you may be clothed, and your nakedness not be shamefully exposed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love I rebuke and discipline;^c so be zealous and repent!

²⁰Now then, I stand at the door and knock.^d If anyone should hear my voice^e and open the door, I really will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. ²¹To the one who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame^f and sat down with my Father on His throne.^g

²²“He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”

“The things that must happen after these”

4 ¹After these things I looked and wow—a door standing open in the sky, and the first voice that I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me,^h saying, “Come up here and I will show you the things that must take place after these.”^a

^a That is three names.

^b If the Lord vomits you out, where do you go? Something can only be vomited out if it is in.

^c Sounds like ‘tough’ love. The Greek word is φιλεω, not αγαπαω. See Hebrews 12:6.

^d Although this text is widely used in evangelism, it is actually directed to Christians. The Lord is offering fellowship and communion to those who claim to belong to Him. Recall that the Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23). Many have the impression that God is hard to find or reach, but He disagrees: “You will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). The trouble is that few of us are willing to meet the condition. See also 2 Chronicles 15:2 and 16:9; also Acts 17:27.

^e Evidently He both knocks and calls. In many cultures one calls out rather than knocks [there may not be any door, or the dogs may not let you get near it], and in the Apurinā culture (an indigenous people in the Amazon jungle, among whom I lived for several years) you call the person’s name.

^f “Consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself...” (Hebrews 12:3; see also verses 4:11). He overcame, we must overcome—God is not offering a free ride.

^g Comparing this statement with Ephesians 1:19-21 and 2:6, what is the picture? Since the Son is now literally “seated” at the Father’s right hand, this promise should be taken literally. But how about right now? I take it that we are supposed to be conducting ourselves on the basis of our position in Christ, on the basis of His victory and authority—maybe this has something to do with ‘overcoming’.

^h This is a reference to 1:10 above, so it is the glorified Christ who is speaking—He is continuing His communicating (see 1:1 above), only now He is speaking from Heaven.

REVELATION 4

The Throne Room

²And immediately I was in spirit,^b and there, a throne set in heaven (and One sitting on the throne) ³similar in appearance to a stone,^c jasper and carnelian, and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, similar in appearance to an emerald. ⁴And around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw the twenty-four elders sitting,^d clothed in white robes and golden crowns on their heads.^e ⁵And out of the throne came lightnings and noises and thunders; and seven lamps of fire were burning before His throne, which are seven spirits^f of God; ⁶and before the throne it was like a sea of glass, similar to crystal.

The four living beings

And in the midst of the throne and around the throne were four living beings full of eyes, front and back. ⁷The first living being was similar to a lion, the second living being was similar to a calf, the third living being had a face like a man, and the fourth living being was similar to a flying eagle. ⁸And the four living beings, each one of them, having six wings apiece, were full of eyes around and within.^g And they take no rest, day or night, saying:^h

“Holy, holy, holy;
Holy, holy, holy;
Holy, holy, holy;ⁱ
The Lord God Almighty;
He who was and who is
and who is coming!”

The twenty-four elders

⁹And whenever the living beings ascribe glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they cast their crowns before the throne saying:

^a “After these” opens and closes the verse. ‘These’ is a pronoun, so what is its antecedent? Presumably the churches described in chapters 2 and 3 (“the things that are” referred to in 1:19). Does “after” the churches imply that they are off the scene?

^b Compare 1:10. The Voice commanded him to “come up here”—it was something John had to do; I take it that his spirit was transported to heaven. (Consider Jesus—Matthew 17:25, John 1:48; Paul—1 Corinthians 5:3-4, Colossians 2:5; Elisha—2 Kings 5:26, 6:12.)

^c The throne, not the One. 15% of the Greek manuscripts do have the One looking like a stone, but I judge that the 85% are correct.

^d Why do we have “the” twenty-four elders the first time they are mentioned? I take it that John found them to be especially impressive or interesting (perhaps he identified with them).

^e Might this picture have any connection with the promise in 3:21 above?

^f There is no definite article with “seven spirits”. I doubt that they represent the Holy Spirit.

^g The picture seems to be that the throne was not solid—the living beings moved in, through and around it; and they themselves were translucent—at least John could see that they had eyes inside as well as outside.

^h Most of the Greek manuscripts have the elders in chorus with the living beings here, but the best line of transmission has just the living beings repeating ‘holy’ endlessly, which agrees with verse nine.

ⁱ The manuscript evidence is badly divided here, but I take it that two of the tree main lines of independent transmission, including the best one, have “holy” nine times, instead of three. Surely it is more likely that ‘nine’ would be changed to ‘three’ than vice versa. In fact, try reading “holy” nine times in a row out loud—it starts to get uncomfortable! Since in the context the living ones are repeating themselves endlessly, the ‘nine’ is both appropriate and effective. Three ‘holies’ for each member of the Trinity.

¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, the Holy One,^a
to receive the glory and the honor and the power,
because You created all things,
and by Your will they exist and were created!”

The Lamb takes the scroll

5 ¹And I saw upon the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll, written inside and outside, sealed with seven seals.^b ²And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?” ³And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it. ⁴And I began to really weep, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

⁵So one of the elders says to me: “Stop weeping! Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and its seven seals.” ⁶And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living beings, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing^c—as if slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which^d are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And He went and took it out of the right hand of the One sitting on the throne!

A new song

⁸And when He took the scroll the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having harps and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints.^e ⁹And they sing a new song saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals:
because You were slaughtered,
and have redeemed us^f to God by your blood
out of every tribe and language
and people and ethnic nation;
¹⁰and You have made them^g kings and priests to our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

^a ‘O Lord’ as in KJV is found in a very few late manuscripts. Almost all Greek manuscripts have the words “Lord”, “God” and “our”, and some 2/3 of them (including the best group) have “the Holy One”.

^b Again, how did John know that the scroll was written on both sides if it was closed? And where were the seals, all on the outside? It appears that the scroll also was not solid, or else John had laser vision.

^c The Lamb is a Lion; the Lion is a Lamb. I would say that the Lamb characterizes Christ in His first advent to this earth, while the Lion characterizes His second advent.

^d In about ¾ of the Greek manuscripts, including the best group, the gender of this relative pronoun agrees with “horns” (neuter) and not “eyes” (masculine). Perhaps the spirits were represented by both the horns and the eyes, possibly referring to power and knowledge.

^e They all fell down, but I gather that it was the elders who had harps and bowls and sang the new song (the four are saying “Holy, holy” all the time).

^f Every Greek manuscript except one, of inferior quality, reads “us”. Many modern versions follow that lone manuscript and omit the pronoun, but that leaves the transitive verb “redeem” without a direct object, so they usually supply “men” or some such thing. But the true reading is obviously “us”, so the 24 elders are among the redeemed, and they are already in heaven wearing crowns.

^g A very few late Greek manuscripts read ‘us’, as in KJV, but almost all the manuscripts read “them”. The 24 elders exclude themselves when it comes to reigning on the earth—evidently they will not be involved in the administration of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom.

REVELATION 6

All the angels

¹¹And I looked, and I heard as it were the voice of many angels, around the throne and the living beings and the elders. And their number was ten thousand times ten thousand and a thousand thousands,^a ¹²saying with a great voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered
to receive the power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and blessing!”^b

Every creature

¹³And every creature which is in the heaven and upon the earth and under the earth, and upon the sea (the existing *places* and the creatures in them)—I heard them all^c saying: “To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb: the blessing and the honor and the glory and the power for ever and ever! Amen!!”¹⁴(It was the four living beings saying the “Amen”.) And the elders fell and did obeisance.^d

The Lamb opens the seals

The first seal

6 ¹And I saw that the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living beings saying, like a voice of thunder, “Come!”^e ²And I looked and, wow, a white horse!^f And he who sat on it had a bow. And a crown was given to him; and he went out conquering, that is, in order to conquer.

The second seal

³And when He opened the second seal I heard the second living being saying, “Come!”^g ⁴And another horse went out, fiery red, and it was granted to him who sat on it to take the peace from the earth, so that they would slaughter each other; also, a huge sword was given to him.

The third seal

⁵And when He opened the third seal I heard the third living being saying, “Come!” And I looked and, wow, a black horse! And he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living beings say-

^a 10,000 x 10,000 = 100,000,000, so the good angels are over 100 million. If we understand correctly from Revelation 12:4 that a third of the original angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion, that means that there are some 50 million demons out there. Good grief!

^b A list of seven; what else could we add?

^c “Every creature” presumably must include more than men and angels; I take it that all mammals, at least (they have soul), including those in the sea (dolphins, whales), and quite possibly birds (eagles) will participate.

^d The living beings and the elders were prostrating themselves and getting up repeatedly.

^e The evidence is badly divided here, but I take it that two of the three main independent lines of transmission, including the best one, read as I have translated. The “Come!” was directed to the horse, not to John (since he was right there, there would be no need to address him with a thunderous roar). The same comment applies in verses 5 and 7.

^f You had better believe that that was some horse!

^g Over 80% of the Greek manuscripts do not have “and see”, as in KJV. Each of the living beings called out a horse, saying to it, “Come!”

ing: “A ‘quart’ of wheat for a denarius^a and three ‘quarts’ of barley for a denarius; but do not harm the olive oil and the wine.”^b

The fourth seal

⁷And when He opened the fourth seal I heard a voice from the fourth living being saying, “Come!” ⁸And I looked and, wow, a sickly pale horse! And as for the one sitting upon it, his name is Death, and Hades follows with him.^c And authority was given to him^d over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword and by famine and by death, also by the wild animals of the earth.^e

The fifth seal

⁹And when He opened the fifth seal I saw underneath the altar the souls of the people who had been slaughtered on account of the Word of God and on account of the testimony of the Lamb which they held.^f ¹⁰And they cried out with a loud voice saying: “How long, O Sovereign, Holy and True, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ¹¹So a white robe was given to each of them, and they were told that they should rest a while longer, until both their fellow slaves and their brothers,^g who were about to be killed just like they were, should complete *the number*.

The sixth seal

¹²And I saw, just when He opened the sixth seal—there was a severe earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. ¹³And the stars of heaven fell to the earth,^h like a fig tree drops its late figs when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴And the sky was split, like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.ⁱ

¹⁵And the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the mighty, and every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.^j ¹⁶And they said to the mountains and the rocks: “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and

^a A denarius was the daily wage for manual labor. To work a full day for a quart of wheat means bare survival.

^b Perhaps the oil and wine are spared for their medicinal value.

^c The Text does not say that Hades was on a horse. John is stating a fact of human existence: Hades follows death—so it has been for 6,000 years.

^d Less than 30% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘them’ for “him”, but they are followed by most (if not all) versions in English. However, it is Death that does the killing; Hades just collects the dead. The 70% are doubtless correct (involving two of the three main independent lines of transmission, including the best one).

^e “The four horsemen of the Apocalypse” have received quite a bit of press, off and on, but they are just the opening gambit. The really heavy stuff comes later.

^f These “souls” have evidently not yet been reunited with their bodies, which means that they have not participated in any resurrection, including the Rapture (see 3:10, 4:1 and 5:9). See notes at 7:13-14. “Of the people” excludes animals, that also have souls.

^g “Slaves” and “brothers” evidently refer to two distinct categories of people, but I don’t know the explanation (unless ‘slaves’ refers to Israel, see 7:3 below and Galatians 4:25, in which case ‘brothers’ would refer to the Church).

^h I suppose this refers to fallen angels, since a single literal star would obliterate our planet.

ⁱ Now it starts to get heavy! I have never been in a serious earthquake, but a former colleague was, and the trauma was so severe that years later he still had trouble talking about it.

^j The wrath of God is a great leveler; the social classes all of a sudden do not make much difference—they are all trying to hide.

REVELATION 7

from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷Because the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"^a

Paraphrase

The sealed of Israel

7 ¹And after this^b I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth,^c holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind should blow upon the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. ²And I saw another angel ascending from the sun's rising, having the seal of the Living God. And he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it had been granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³saying: "Do not harm the earth, nor the sea nor the trees, until we have sealed the slaves of our God on their foreheads." ⁴And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel:

⁵From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,
⁶from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,
⁷from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,
⁸from the tribe of Zebulon twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Joseph^d twelve thousand,
from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.^e

A multitude from the Great Tribulation

⁹After these things I looked, and wow, a great multitude that no one could number, from all ethnic nations and tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *having* palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰And they shouted with a loud voice saying, "Saved by our God who sits on the throne, and by the Lamb!"

^a Note that it is the Lamb's wrath—those who reject His sacrifice can look for wrath. Notice that there is no hint of repentance from the people.

^b He saw the content of chapter seven after he saw the content of chapter six, but the events described are not necessarily in chronological order. It should not be assumed that nothing else happened between the seals, or even at the same time. However, the seals are broken in sequence.

^c The Text says "the four corners" and "the four winds". Presumably from John's perspective the earth would look like a sphere (or a circle)—so perhaps the angels were strategically placed so as to control the whole planet. There are four basic wind patterns that influence most of the world—the north and south 'trade winds' and the north and south 'prevailing westerlies'.

^d "Joseph" stands for Ephraim. Since Levi is counted here (usually he isn't) and Joseph has two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim, someone has to be dropped—Dan. From both Jacob (Genesis 49:16-17) and Moses (Deuteronomy 33:22) he got the least impressive 'blessing'.

^e Linguistically speaking, in terms of the norms of language, a phrase like "the tribe of Asher" can only have one meaning, precisely the meaning that it has everywhere else in the Bible. Ezekiel chapter 37 makes very clear that 'the ten lost tribes' are not lost at all—God knows exactly who and where they are, and at the right moment they will be restored.

¹¹And all the angels stood around the Throne, and the elders and the four living beings, and they fell down before the Throne, on their faces, and worshipped God, ¹²saying:

“Amen!
The blessing and the glory
and the wisdom and the thanksgiving
and the honor and the power
and the strength to our God
for ever and ever!
Amen.”

¹³And one of the elders reacted, saying to me, “Who are these that are clothed in the white robes,^a and where did they come from?” ¹⁴So I said to him, “My lord, you know.”^b So he said to me: “These are those who come out of the Great Tribulation—they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”^c ¹⁵Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His sanctuary.^d And He who sits on the throne will shelter them. ¹⁶They shall not hunger anymore, nor thirst anymore; the sun will absolutely not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them and leads them to springs of waters^e of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”^f

The seventh seal

8 ¹And when He opened the seventh seal there was a stillness in heaven for about half an hour.^g ²And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.^h

³And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer.ⁱ He was given lots of incense so that he could offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar that is before the throne. ⁴And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints went up before God out of the angel’s hand. ⁵Then

^a I take it that we should refer back to the fifth seal, 6:11 above—in that event those martyrs were also killed during the Great Tribulation, just earlier on. Perhaps at this point (7:13) the pre-determined number of martyrs is now complete (in 6:11 it was not).

^b John understands that the elder is offering information and tells him to go ahead.

^c Assuming a pre-Abomination-of-Desolation rapture of the Church (because of the surprise factor, but see the note at 2 Thessalonians 2:2), I take it that multiplied millions of church members will be left behind—they knew the Gospel but were never really regenerated. When they see that they have been left behind they will fall on their faces before God saying: “Oh Lord, have mercy; if I never believed before I do now!” There will be many millions of conversions in the first hours after the Rapture. People were saved in the OT without the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they will be too. But they will have to face the Beast and most of them will be martyred. Notice that they say, “Saved by our God... and by the Lamb.” Apparently there is a sovereign act of God (the Father) involved here, with the blood of the Lamb as the basis.

^d How does one “serve” in this sanctuary? I suppose by worship and praise.

^e That is what the Text says, “waters”, plural. Might there be different kinds of water, or just different sources?

^f To do this, will He also remove the memories that bring the tears?

^g A ‘deafening’ silence! I wonder why. Well, there has been a lot of noise up to this point, and there will be plenty more later, so the silence acts as an emphasis by contrast. The outpouring of wrath will now build to a crescendo.

^h One gains the clear impression that the seven trumpets form the content of the seventh seal.

ⁱ See Hebrews 8:5.

REVELATION 9

the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it at the earth. And there were noises and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake. ⁶And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to trumpet.

The first trumpet

⁷So the first one trumpeted, and there appeared hail and fire mixed with blood, and it [the mixture] was thrown at the earth, and a third of the earth was burned up; that is, a third of the trees was burned up and all green grass was burned up.

The second trumpet

⁸So the second angel trumpeted, and something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹And a third of the creatures with souls^a in the sea died. And a third of the ships were destroyed.

The third trumpet

¹⁰So the third angel trumpeted, and a great star fell out of the sky, burning like a torch, and it fell upon a third of the rivers, and on the springs of waters.^b ¹¹The name of the star is called Wormwood; so a third of the waters were turned into wormwood, and many people died from the waters because they were made bitter.

The fourth trumpet

¹²So the fourth angel trumpeted, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them was darkened; so a third of the day did not shine, and the night likewise.

¹³And I saw and heard an eagle^c flying in mid-heaven saying with a loud voice, three times: “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the remaining trumpet blasts of the three angels who are about to trumpet!”

The fifth trumpet

9 ¹So the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a ‘star’^d that had fallen out of the sky to the earth. And to him was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.^e ²So he opened the shaft of the Abyss and smoke went up out of the shaft, like the smoke of a burning furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke from the shaft. ³And ‘locusts’ exited from the smoke into the earth. And to them was given a capability just like the scorpions of the earth have capability. ⁴And they were told not to harm the grass of the earth, nor any green *plant*, nor

^a That is what the Text says. Just as food for thought, I would suggest that God is Spirit and has soul; a human is soul and has spirit; an angel is spirit with no soul; an animal is soul with no spirit; insects and lower forms have neither. I imagine that the reference here is to mammals in the sea (like dolphins).

^b If the springs are hit, does that include the aquifers that supply their water? If so, a third of the sweet water on the earth is ruined.

^c Over 2/3 of the Greek manuscripts, including the best group, read “eagle” rather than ‘angel’. Since the fourth living being is similar to a flying eagle, the idea here is not new.

^d Presumably an angel, and of considerable rank.

^e The Greek word appears to be composed of two morphemes, “no-depth”. Since it is a shaft or pit we presumably should understand no known or measured depth, hence ‘bottomless’. Literally, “the shaft of the no-bottom”; the familiar ‘bottomless pit’ is not a bad rendering. Since the word “abyss” occurs elsewhere without the “shaft/pit” (see verse 11, also Luke 8:31) I prefer to take it as a proper name.

any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵And it was designated to them [locusts], not to kill them [men] but, to torment them five months. And their torment is like the torment of a scorpion whenever it strikes a person. ⁶And in those days the people will seek death but not find it; they will want to die but death will run away from them.^a

⁷Now the appearance of the 'locusts'^b was like horses prepared for battle, and something like a golden crown was on their heads, and their faces were like human faces. ⁸They had hair like a woman's and their teeth were like a lion's. ⁹They had breastplates like breastplates of iron and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. ¹⁰And, they have tails like scorpions and stingers precisely in those tails! They have the capability to hurt the populace five months, ¹¹having as king over them the angel of the Abyss—his name in Hebrew is Abbaddon, while in Greek he has the name Apollyon.^c

¹²The first woe is past, but, two woes are still coming, after these things.

The sixth trumpet

¹³So the sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar^d that is before God ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵So the four angels were released—they had been prepared for the hour and the day and month and year—so that they might kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶And the number of the mounted troops was a hundred million^e (I heard their number). ¹⁷And in the vision I saw the horses like this: those who rode them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow; the heads of the horses were like lions' heads; out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone. ¹⁸By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone that came out of their mouths.^f ¹⁹For the capability of the horses is in their mouths—and in their tails, because their tails are like snakes, having heads, and with them they do harm.

^a It will not be a good time to be on the earth!

^b Evidently these are not the literal insect, but the insect came in clouds (millions of them) and was a terrible plague. Since they are lead by a high-ranking demon (as I suppose), they are probably demons. I associate Luke 8:31 with this passage—although the Lord evidently did not send those demons to the Abyss, that they kept begging Him not to shows that it was a very real possibility in their 'minds'; they knew something that we do not. I take it that the Lord did not send them to the Abyss at that point because He had not won the victory yet—Satan was still the god of this world and the demons were doing their thing under Satan's authority. But now we are to act on the basis of that victory, on the basis of our position and authority in Christ (Ephesians 2:6). So how did all those demons get into the Abyss to be available for the fifth trumpet? They got there because we sent them there! I would say that sending demons to the Abyss is one of the 'greater' things that the Lord Jesus said we would do (John 14:12).

^c And in English, Destroyer. "Angel" covers both good and bad—this one sounds like a boss demon.

^d I find it to be curious that this voice comes from the altar [and why did the altars have horns?], which is usually associated with obtaining God's mercy. But in this case the altar participates in the judgment.

^e Some ¾ of the Greek manuscripts, including the best group, do not have 'two'. John was given the number.

^f Dear me! And I thought the 'locusts' were bad! Notice that it is the "horses" that do the killing, not the riders. I understand that China has over one hundred million armed militia, right now, but presumably not these 'horses'. Just as in the case of the 'locusts', I take it that we are looking at supernatural activity here. The population of the world is reduced by one third.

REVELATION 10

²⁰Yet the rest of the people, those who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as to stop worshipping the demons, even the idols^a of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; ²¹and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their fornication or their thefts.^b

Parenthesis

John eats a little book

10 ¹I saw a mighty angel descending out of heaven,^c clothed with a cloud, and the rainbow^d on his head; his face was like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire;^e ²and he had a little book open in his hand. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land, ³and he cried out with a loud voice, just like a lion roars. And when he cried out, the seven thunders uttered their own voices.^f ⁴Now when the seven thunders spoke I was about to write, but I heard a voice out of heaven saying, “Seal up the things that the seven thunders said,” and “You write after these things.”^g ⁵And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to the heaven ⁶and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there would be no further delay, ⁷but in the days^h of the blast of the seventh angel, whenever he should trumpet, the mystery of God which was announced to His slaves the prophets would be finished.

⁸Now the voice that I heard out of heaven was speaking to me again and saying: “Go, take the little book that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.” ⁹So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the

^a Notice that the idols are linked to demons. Even though an image of wood presumably has no power in itself, a demon associated with it can do all sorts of damage.

^b They were totally self-centered, and therefore totally evil, malignant, under demonic control; carbon copies of the devil. They are prepared to kill, steal and use witchcraft to gain their ends, with a total disregard for others. They want sexual gratification without responsibility. No matter what God does they will not repent; they are beyond fixing. I am glad I will not be there. Oops, wait a minute! Don't an awful lot of people in the world today (especially in Europe and North America) already answer to this description? They have been brought up on evolutionistic, relativistic humanism; they have been taught that they are gods, to 'do your own thing'. Hey, if we are not already there I reckon we are well on the way! A recent study found that most young people in America today are narcissists.

^c John is evidently back on earth at this point.

^d That is what the Text says, “the” rainbow; our rainbows are caused by the sun shining through rain, which was not the case here—perhaps God has a prototype.

^e Does the description remind you of anyone?

^f That is what the Text says, the seven thunders, and each had a voice and could speak intelligible words. Obviously these “thunders” exist quite apart from climactic conditions on earth. Interesting! (I suspect that what we do not know exceeds what we think we do know, and by a considerable margin.)

^g The evidence is divided here, but I take it that two of the three main independent lines of transmission, including the best group, have “You write after these things” rather than ‘do not write them’. This text has been generally misunderstood since the beginning. Having been told to seal what the thunders uttered, why would John be told he would write it later? So many copyists altered the text, reinforcing the prohibition. However, I take it that the voice was giving two unrelated instructions: not to record the thunders; and to put his notebook aside until later—he is going to be busy interacting with the angel and eating a book, and the voice does not want him to be distracted by trying to write at the same time.

^h “The days”—the events associated with a given trumpet (and probably seal and bowl) cover a period of time; they are not instantaneous.

little book,” and he says to me: “Take and eat it up; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.” ¹⁰So I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it up, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹And he said to me, “You must prophesy again over many peoples, even over ethnic nations and languages and kings.”^a

The two witnesses

11 ¹I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood^b saying: “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship there. ²But leave out the outer court of the temple and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.^c ³And I^d will give *authority* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”^e

⁴These are the two olive trees, even the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.^f ⁵And if anyone wants to harm them fire comes out of their mouths and consumes their enemies. So if anyone wants to harm them he must be killed in this way. ⁶They have authority to shut up the sky so that no rain falls during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they wish.^g

⁷When they finish their witness, the Beast of prey that comes up out of the Abyss^h will make war with them, overcome them and kill them ⁸—and *leave* their corpses in the street of the great city! (which is called Sodom and Egypt, spiritually speaking), even where theirⁱ Lord was crucified.^j

^a The action in verses 9-11 is presumably symbolic, but of what? Like why was the little book open, and why the stomach ache, etc.? I imagine that the book contained the prophecy mentioned by the angel, and being open would indicate that the prophecy was to be understandable. The book inside John suggests inspiration to me, and the terms of the prophecy would be mainly bitter.

^b I get the impression that the angel shifted position, probably with both feet on land—his legs had been spread or straddled, now he stands normally.

^c Comparing forty-two months with 1,260 days we get 30-day months. A year computed on the basis of these ‘prophetic’ months, as they are sometimes called, is five days shorter than a calendar year. Forty-two calendar months would give 1,277/8 days.

^d Presumably the angel is still speaking—might He be God the Son? Could a mere angel say “my two witnesses”?

^e Note that their ‘ministry’ covers 3½ years; the Text does not actually say that it will be simultaneous with the trampling of the holy city, but I imagine that it will come close. When I see the perversity in the world I am sometimes tempted to wish I could do what they are going to do, until I get to the ‘sackcloth’—walking around in sackcloth for 3½ years does not sound like much fun.

^f See Zechariah 4:3,14.

^g They have the authority to do these things, but it is discretionary; it is up to them to decide when, where, and how much.

^h This would seem to confirm that the “locusts” and their king, in chapter nine, are on Satan’s side. That is also where Satan will be confined during the Millennium (20:3). If this beast is not Abbaddon he is presumably another high ranking demon, or so I thought until I got to 13:1 and 17:8, which see.

ⁱ Over 99% of the Greek manuscripts have “their” Lord, not ‘our’ as in KJV and NKJV. If these two “olive trees” are the ones in Zechariah 4:3 and 14, then the “LORD of the whole earth” there is Jehovah the Son.

^j We might expect “Sodom and Egypt” to apply to Rome, rather than Jerusalem, but the Lord was crucified in Jerusalem.

REVELATION 11

⁹And those from the peoples, tribes, languages and ethnic nations look at their corpses three-and-a-half days, and will not allow their corpses to be buried.^a
¹⁰And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and they will enjoy themselves and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.^b

¹¹And after three-and-a-half days a breath of life from God entered them and they stood on their feet, and a great fear fell on those who were watching them.
¹²And I heard a loud voice from the heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. ¹³And in that day there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand individuals were killed in the earthquake. And the rest became fearful and gave glory to the God of heaven.^{c)}

¹⁴The second woe is past. Look out, here comes the third woe!

The seventh trumpet

¹⁵So the seventh angel trumpeted, and there were loud voices in heaven saying:

“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
and He shall reign forever and ever!”

¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones in God’s presence, fell on their faces and worshipped God ¹⁷saying:

“We thank You, O Lord God Almighty,
He who is and who was and who is coming,
because You have taken up your great power
and begun to reign.

¹⁸The nations were angry and your wrath came,
even the time for the dead to be judged
and to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets,
and to the saints^d and those who fear your name,
small and great,
and to destroy those who have corrupted the earth.”^e

¹⁹And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant^f of the Lord was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings and huge hail.^g

^a People in past generations had trouble imagining how this could happen, but with modern technology people around the world will watch those corpses.

^b They will celebrate, but not for long!

^c At least they are no longer pretending that God does not exist.

^d “Slaves” and “saints”—again we seem to have two distinct categories.

^e One gets the impression that the elders had been waiting for this day. I think I know how they feel—the destruction of “those who have corrupted the earth” cannot come too soon to suit me.

^f Presumably this is the original ark of which the one made under Moses’ supervision was a copy (Hebrews 8:5, Exodus 25:9, 40, Hebrews 9:23).

^g If this were all there was to the seventh trumpet it would be anti climactic, ‘small potatoes’. I take it that the seven ‘bowls’ (see chapter 16) give the full content of the third woe.

Paraphrase—partly historical

The woman, the Child, the dragon

12 ¹A great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.^a ²And being pregnant she was crying out in labor, being in great pain to give birth.

³And another sign appeared in the sky: wow, a dragon, huge, fiery red, having seven heads and ten horns, with seven diadems on his heads. ⁴And its tail grabbed a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.^b

And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth in order to devour her Child as soon as she gave birth. ⁵And she bore a Son, a male,^c who would shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron.^d And her Child was snatched up to God, even to His throne.

⁶And the woman fled into the wilderness to where she has a place prepared by God, so that they may nourish her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.^e

Satan excluded from heaven

⁷War was declared in heaven; Michael and his angels were to wage war with the dragon; so the dragon and his angels made war,^f ⁸but he was not strong enough; neither was there any place found for him in heaven any more. ⁹So the great dragon was expelled, that ancient serpent, who is called Slanderer and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited world; he was thrown into the earth,^g and his angels were expelled with him. ¹⁰And I heard a loud voice in the heaven saying: “Now the salvation and the power have come,^h even the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothersⁱ has been thrown down, who accused them before our God day and night. ¹¹And they con-

^a Just as Michael is the boss-angel in charge of Israel, as a nation (Dan. 10:21, 12:1), presumably each tribe has its own boss-angel (lower in rank than Michael). Assuming that the woman represents Israel, I imagine that these ‘stars’ are the tribal angels (because of the number twelve).

^b It is generally understood that this refers to those angels who joined Lucifer in his rebellion—note that verse 7 refers to the dragon and his angels. If the 2/3 are over 100 million (5:11) then this 1/3 must be over 50 million—more than enough trouble to go around.

^c That is what the Text says. Since “Son” is obviously masculine, adding “a male” emphasizes the gender. What the first man lost the second Man (1 Corinthians 15:47) recovered; the first man allowed his wife to lead, the second Man will rule with a rod of iron.

^d Here the Child is clearly identified as the Messiah—since He was born some 2,000 years ago we are obviously looking at an historical parenthesis. The rebellion of Lucifer and his angels goes back at least 6,000 years. We do not normally associate ‘shepherd’ with ‘a rod of iron’—the Messianic Millennial Kingdom will be a benevolent dictatorship.

^e Verses 1-5 are historical, but verse 6 brings us back to the Great Tribulation. The narrative is interrupted to give us some background.

^f The dragon knew that Michael had received the order, so he decided to get in the first blow.

^g “Into the earth”, including its atmosphere. The idea seems to be that at this point Satan is confined to this planet. From the content of the following verses I take it that Satan’s expulsion occurs in the middle of the seven-year period. So he is still in heaven accusing us (accusing us of what? There would be no point in bringing false accusations, so we must be providing Satan with ‘ammunition’—not a nice thought!).

^h Wait a minute! If it is only “Now”, where have the Kingdom and Authority been in the meantime? As long as a government is being challenged, its rule is not complete or tranquil. I find it instructive that Satan still has sufficient power to wage war, in Heaven!

ⁱ “Our brothers”—I wonder who is speaking, since the ‘brothers’ are saved by the blood of the lamb.

quered^a him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not cherish their lives, *even* up to death. ¹²Therefore rejoice, O heavens, yes, you who are dwelling in them!^b Woe to the earth and the sea! Because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has little time.”

Satan persecutes the woman

¹³So when the dragon perceived that he had been thrown into the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the Male. ¹⁴And to the woman were given two wings of the great eagle, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, so that she might be nourished there for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵So the serpent expelled water from his mouth after the woman, like a river, so as to cause her to be overwhelmed by the flood. ¹⁶But the ground helped the woman; indeed, the ground opened its mouth and drank up the river that the dragon expelled from his mouth. ¹⁷So the dragon was furious about the woman and off he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, those who keep the commands of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.^c

Various Vignettes

A beast from the sea

13 ¹Now I^d was standing on the seashore, and I saw a Beast of prey coming up out of the sea,^e having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten diadems and on his heads blasphemous names.^f ²The beast that I saw was similar to a leopard, his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. ³And one of his heads was as if it had been mortally wounded, but his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the Beast.

⁴And they did obeisance to the dragon who had given the authority to the Beast, and they did obeisance to the Beast saying, “Who is like the Beast, and who is able to make war with him?” ⁵And he was given a mouth speaking great things, that is, blasphemy; and he was given authority^g to make war forty-two months. ⁶So he opened that mouth of his in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, those who dwell in Heaven.^h ⁷And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given him over every tribe and language and ethnic nation. ⁸All who dwell on the earth

^a That is what the Text says. Comparing 6:11 and 7:13, perhaps it is necessary for a certain number of God's servants to be willing to die for the Cause to bring about the accuser's expulsion.

^b It is the inhabitants that do the rejoicing, not the place.

^c Only two very late Greek manuscripts add “Christ”, as in KJV and NKJV. Over 99% do not. The dragon will persecute Jews in general and Christians in particular.

^d Less than 10% of the Greek manuscripts have ‘he’ (presumably referring to the dragon). The difference is between ECTAΘHN (I stood) and ECTAΘH (he stood)—it would be easy to drop off the final N, especially since it is similar to H (more so in handwriting).

^e I am not sure that this beast is the same as the one in 11:7—they are said to come from different places (but see 17:8).

^f There is a family resemblance—seven heads, ten horns; might the Beast be the son of the Dragon? (Imitating God is Satan's ‘thing’.)

^g I take it that here and in verse 7 it is God who does the giving—this is part of the Plan.

^h Compare 1 Corinthians 3:16. We are the ‘temple’ of God; those who dwell in Heaven are His tabernacle.

will do obeisance to him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slaughtered from the foundation of the world.^a

⁹If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰If anyone has captivity, he goes away.^b If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.^c

A beast from the land

¹¹Now I saw another beast of prey coming up out of the land, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. ¹²And he exercises all the authority of the first Beast in his presence; and he started to cause the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first Beast, whose mortal wound was healed. ¹³And he performs great signs, including that fire should come down from heaven upon the earth before the people. ¹⁴And he deceives my own *people*,^d those dwelling on the earth, by the signs that it was given to him to perform before the Beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the Beast who had the sword wound and lived. ¹⁵And it was granted to him to give breath to the image of the Beast, so that the image of the Beast should actually speak, and should cause as many as would not worship the image of the Beast to be killed.^e ¹⁶And he causes everyone—both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave—to receive marks on their right hand or on their foreheads, ¹⁷so that no one would be able to buy or sell who does not have the mark, the name of the Beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸Here is wisdom: let the one who has understanding evaluate the number of the Beast, for it is the number of man—his number is 666.^f

The Lamb and the 144,000

14 ¹And wow, I saw a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand,^g having His name and^h His Father's name written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a sound from the sky, like the

^a 1 Peter 1:20 makes clear that it was actually before the foundation of the world. God knew what was going to happen before He created the human race, the terrible price He would have to pay, but He went ahead anyway.

^b Two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one) so read. The third line reads, 'If anyone goes away into captivity...'—the second half of the conditional clause (the apodosis) is missing. The rendering of KJV and NKJV reflects a very few late manuscripts. But what does the Text mean? Anyone who has been appointed to captivity will certainly be taken away.

^c I confess that this sentence puzzles me. Well, if I believe that my God is Sovereign over all, that He knows what He is doing, and that He has my ultimate wellbeing in view (Romans 8:28), then I will endure in faith.

^d "My own *people*"—two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one) so read. Since John is speaking (writing), his physical people would be the Jews, while his spiritual people would be the Christians. The use of "own" points toward the physical, which accords with the information given elsewhere (Daniel 9:27) that Israel makes a deal with the Beast.

^e Worship an image or be killed—how humiliating! It sounds like a re-run of Daniel 3.

^f I find this verse difficult to translate. The main verb has two basic meanings: 'to calculate' and 'to vote'. Since the number is immediately provided, what is there to calculate? In the context, any wise person will vote against the number, that is, refuse to receive it, but the idea of 'against' is not stated. The number itself is represented by three letters (in Greek), the middle one looking rather like a snake. (Some versions write out the number, but since it has to fit on forehead or hand, just the three letters seems more likely.) Note that the number is 600 plus 60 plus 6, not 6 plus 6 plus 6.

^g Is this group different than the one in chapter 7?

^h Only 2% of the Greek manuscripts do not have "His name and" (as in KJV and NKJV), so they had two names written, the Father's and the Son's—much better than having the name of the Beast!

REVELATION 14

sound of many waters, and like the sound of loud thunder; and the sound that I heard was like harpists playing on their harps.^a ³And they sing a new song before the Throne, and before the four living beings and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the 144 thousand, who had been redeemed from the earth. ⁴These are the ones not defiled with women, for they are virgins;^b these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were redeemed by Jesus^c from among men, firstfruits for God and for the Lamb;^d ⁵no lie was found in their mouth, for they are blameless.^e

Three angels

⁶And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to be proclaimed to those who reside on the earth—to every ethnic nation and tribe and language and people—⁷saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give Him glory,^f because the hour of His judging has come, and do obeisance to Him who made heaven and earth, the ocean and springs of water.”^g

⁸And another, a second, angel followed, saying: “It fell, it fell, Babylon the great!—she made all the nations drink of the wine of the rage of her fornication.”^h

⁹And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice: “If any one worships the Beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,ⁱ ¹⁰really, he will drink of the wine of the fury of God, mixed at full strength in the cup of His wrath. In fact, he will be tormented with fire and sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb.” ¹¹So the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night, those who worship the Beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.^j

¹²Here is the endurance of the saints, here those who keep the commands of God and the faith of Jesus.^k ¹³I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’ (“Yes” says the Spirit), ‘so that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow along with them.’”

^a Evidently John is finding it difficult to describe exactly what he heard, doubtless different from the normal sounds of this earth.

^b All the pronouns are masculine, so these are male virgins.

^c Two of the three main lines of independent transmission (including the best one) read “by Jesus”.

^d Why “firstfruits”? Before the advent of refrigeration, food could be preserved by drying, smoking, salting, etc., but by the time of the next harvest, nothing would compare with a firstfruit, which would be something special. Those men were special!

^e These are remarkable men! KJV and NKJV add “before the throne of God”, following the TR which is here based on only two very late manuscripts.

^f Of all the people who have ever lived on this earth, what percentage of them ever heard that Jesus died for them? Romans 1:18-21 gives the essence of God’s requirement: the evidence of creation demands a Creator, and He expects people to acknowledge Him and try to please Him.

^g As fresh, pure water becomes more and more scarce, the springs of water will become increasingly important.

^h Why “rage”? Her fornication was violent and compulsive, also insatiable.

ⁱ To actually serve as a warning, this would have to be contemporary with 13:16.

^j Believe me, you do not want to submit to the Beast in any way! Don’t let anyone put anything on your right hand or on your forehead. Better to be executed. I do not doubt that the Beast is already alive on the earth, with age and preparation sufficient to take center stage at any moment.

^k I would say that the two “here”s are cataphoric, referring forward to the content of verse 13.

The earth is harvested

¹⁴And wow, I saw a white cloud, and someone like a son of man was sitting on the cloud, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple crying out with a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, “Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is dry.” ¹⁶So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was harvested.

¹⁷Then another angel came out of the temple (the one in heaven), he too having a sharp sickle. ¹⁸And another angel came out from the altar (having authority over the fire), and he called out with a loud cry to the one having the sharp sickle saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the grape clusters of the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle at the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and threw it into the winepress of God’s terrible fury. ²⁰And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the horses’ bridles, for a thousand six hundred stadia.^a

Here come the bowls!

15 ¹And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues—in them the fury of God is completed.^b

The song of the victors

²And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who prevailed over the Beast and over his image and over the number of his name, standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God.^c ³They sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

“Great and marvelous are Your works,
 O Lord God, the Almighty!
 Just and true are Your ways,
 O King of the nations!^d
⁴Who could not fear You, O Lord,
 and glorify Your name?
 Because You alone are holy;
 because all the nations will come
 and do obeisance before You,

^a That is roughly 180 miles! If some four billion people will be killed during the seven-year period [mostly the second half of it] (as I calculate, a low estimate) and we allow an average of one gallon of blood per person, that is four billion gallons of blood—which would make quite a river! If the “winepress of God’s terrible fury” described here represents sort of a summary of the blood shed during the Great Tribulation period, then the picture is not far fetched. Of course a winepress has a single outlet and the liquid is conveyed to the receptacle by a conduit of appropriate size. In this case the conduit is 180 miles long and the flow is about four feet (1.33 yards) deep—four billion gallons equals about 20 million cubic yards; 180 miles equals about 320 thousand linear yards; so we have about 62.5 cubic yards of blood per linear yard of conduit—so the conduit is about 45 yards wide. My purpose in conducting this exercise is simply to show that the description of the “winepress of God’s terrible fury” is not at all ridiculous—it is a graphic but factual picture of the coming bloodbath.

^b I take it that this is a generic cover statement, referring to the detailed description that follows. I further take it that these ‘bowl’ plagues relate to the seventh trumpet (11:15) and make up the third ‘woe’ (11:14).

^c These people were martyred by order of the Beast, so how did they ‘prevail’ over him? By refusing to bow to him they escaped from hell (14:11); they died physically but won spiritually (but see 12:11).

^d KJV and NKJV read ‘saints’ instead of “nations”, following the TR which is here based on only two very late manuscripts.

REVELATION 16

because Your righteous judgments have been manifested.”

The angels are commissioned

⁵After these things I looked, and the sanctuary of the tabernacle of the testimony in the heaven was opened. ⁶And out from that heaven^a came the seven angels, the ones having the seven plagues; they were clothed in pure bright linen and were girded around the chests with golden belts.^b ⁷Then one of the four living beings gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the fury of God, the One who lives forever and ever. ⁸The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to go into the sanctuary until the seven angels’ plagues were completed.

16 ¹And I heard a loud voice from the sanctuary saying to the seven angels, “Go, pour out the bowls of God’s fury on the earth.”

The first bowl

²So off went the first one and poured out his bowl on the earth, and a foul and malignant ulcer^c appeared in the people who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.

The second bowl

³Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood, like a dead person’s; so every living soul in the sea died.^d

The third bowl

⁴Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they turned into blood. ⁵And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “How just You are! The One who is and who was, the holy One, because You have judged these things. ⁶Because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink.^e They deserve it!” ⁷And I heard one from the altar saying: “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty! Your judgments are true and just!”

The fourth bowl

⁸Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was granted to him to burn the people with fire. ⁹So the people were burned with severe burns, and they blasphemed the name of God, who has authority over these plagues. And they did not repent to give Him glory.^f

^a The best line of transmission has “heaven”, all the rest having the expected ‘sanctuary’. At first glance the context seems to call for ‘sanctuary’; so much so that if ‘heaven’ were original some might have omitted while others made the obvious change—if ‘sanctuary’ were original, why would anyone omit or change? On the other hand, there are at least three heavens, 2 Corinthians 12:2, and they may have come out of the third, into the second. This is the only mention of the tabernacle of the testimony in Revelation, so the throne of God was not there and none of the action related by John up to this point took place there—there have been several references to the temple, with angels coming out of it, but I doubt that temple and tabernacle are to be equated.

^b Just like the glorified Christ (1:13). Perhaps a belt around the chest was like ‘war paint’, part of getting ready to fight.

^c Even now a chip the size of a grain of rice is being planted under the skin of volunteers. The battery contains a substance that, if it leaks out of the chip, will produce “a foul and malignant ulcer”. Notice that ‘ulcer’ is singular, one per person, precisely those who have the ‘mark’. A word to the wise...

^d The resulting stench would qualify as a plague of reasonable severity.

^e That is right. Where are people going to find water to drink, let alone for washing, etc.?

^f They are no longer pretending that God does not exist, but they refuse to submit to Him, so they have no excuse.

The fifth bowl

¹⁰Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the Beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness; so they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.^a ¹¹And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains, and because of their ulcers; yet they did not repent of their deeds.

The sixth bowl

¹²Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way for the kings from the sun's rising might be prepared. ¹³And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the Beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole inhabited earth, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵("Watch out, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who watches and guards his clothes,^b so that he not walk about naked and they see his shame.")^c ¹⁶So he gathered them to the place called in Hebrew, Armagedon.

The seventh bowl

¹⁷Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a great voice came out of the sanctuary of heaven, from the Throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸and there were lightnings and thunders and noises. And there was a tremendous earthquake, a terribly severe earthquake such as had not occurred since mankind existed on the earth. ¹⁹So the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.^d And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath. ²⁰And every island fled, and mountains were not found. ²¹And huge hailstones, weighing about a talent,^e fell out of the sky on the people; and the people blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail, because its plague was exceedingly severe.

About Babylon

17 ¹One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me saying, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who sits on the many waters, ²with whom the kings of the earth fornicating; and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

A woman and a beast

³So he took me away in spirit to a wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵And on her forehead a name was written:

^a Apparently this is a different kind of darkness, evidently quite painful.

^b So what might the "clothes" be? Presumably these are spiritual clothes, perhaps having to do with our walk with God, maintaining our personal sanctity or holiness, 'without which no one will see the Lord'. "Watch" and "guard" are up to us—watch out for and guard against the world's values.

^c Verse 15 is an interjection from the glorified Christ.

^d Such a monstrous earthquake will doubtless produce monstrous tsunamis which could well inundate many coastal cities—between the earth and the water the destruction will be massive.

^e That would be around 90 pounds each (a Roman talent = 93.75 pounds). The surviving people are 'punch-drunk' by now, but the hailstones are so incredible that they provoke another round of blasphemy. Such hailstones can destroy any normal dwelling.

“Mystery,
Babylon the Great,
the Mother of the prostitutes
and the abominations of the earth.”^a

⁶And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, even with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And upon seeing her I was tremendously impressed.

The vision explained

⁷So the angel said to me: “Why are you impressed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast, having the seven heads and the ten horns, that carries her. ⁸The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the Abyss^b and to go into perdition. And those who dwell upon the earth will be amazed, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world,^c when they see the beast that was, and is not and will be present. ⁹Here is the mind that has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. ¹⁰And there are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not come yet. And whenever he comes he must continue a short time. ¹¹And the beast that was and is not; he is actually the eighth, yet he is of the seven, and he is going into perdition. ¹²And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the Beast for one hour. ¹³These are of one mind and give their power and authority to the Beast. ¹⁴They will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called and chosen and faithful.”

¹⁵Then he says to me: “The waters that you saw, where the whore sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. ¹⁶And the ten horns that you saw, also the beast, these will hate the whore and will lay her waste and strip her and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷Because God put it into their hearts to perform His purpose, even to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the Beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.^d ¹⁸Now the woman whom you saw is the great city^e that holds rulership over the kings of the earth.

^a In Hebrew usage a ‘son’ of something was characterized by that something. So a ‘father’ of that something would be even more so. So when James calls God “the Father of lights” (1:17) that means that “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5)—He is totally light. In John 8:44 the Lord Jesus says that Satan is the father of the lie, and that “there is no truth in him”—he is totally falsehood (I conclude that it is impossible for Satan to tell the undistorted truth). Here we have “the mother of prostitutes and abominations”—she is totally perverted, evil (it is impossible for her to do anything pure, clean or really good). So whom or what does the whore represent? If the kings are fornicating with her they are not trying to please God, so perhaps she is organized religion (including dead Christianity, of whatever kind). In that event organized religion is incapable of doing anything pure, clean or really good.

^b Well, the origin matches 11:7 but the description matches 13:1, so maybe the three passages refer to a single personage. If “sea” refers to human origin and “Abyss” to demonic, could it be that Satan will imitate God in producing the Antichrist?

^c Here is a strong statement of election or predestination—how else could God know what names to put in the Book? At the same time the seven letters (chaps. 2 & 3) are strong on human responsibility (including the possibility of a name being erased). Divine sovereignty and human responsibility walk side by side throughout the Bible.

^d Compare verse 13—God is in ultimate control: His Word and purpose will be fulfilled.

^e In chapter 21 the Bride of Christ is represented by a city, the New Jerusalem, but the Bride is presumably people from around the earth. Likewise the whore, represented by a city, may well involve people from around the earth. “Is the great city”—when John wrote, Rome was the ruling city.

Her fall proclaimed

18 ¹After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. ²And he cried out with a strong voice saying:

“It fell, it fell, Babylon the great!
and has become a dwelling place of demons,
even a prison of every unclean spirit,
also a prison of every unclean and detestable bird.

³Because all the nations have drunk of the rage
of the wine of her fornication,
and the kings of the earth have fornicated with her,
and the merchants of the earth became rich
through the strength of her luxury.”

⁴And I heard another Voice from heaven saying:

“Come out of her, my people,^a
so as not to participate in her sins
and so as not to receive of her plagues.

⁵For her sins have reached to heaven
and God has remembered about her her iniquities.^b

⁶Render to her just as she rendered to you:^c
yes, pay her back double, according to her deeds;
in the cup that she mixed,
mix double for her.

⁷To the extent that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously,
by so much give her torment;

because in her heart she says,
‘I sit a queen, and am not a widow;
and I will certainly not see sorrow.’

⁸Therefore her plagues will come in one day
death and sorrow and famine
and she will be burned up with fire;
because the Lord God who has judged her is **strong**.

Her fall lamented

⁹“The kings of the earth who fornicated and lived luxuriously with her will weep and mourn over her, when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰standing afar off for fear of her torment,^d saying:

‘Alas, alas, O great city Babylon, O mighty city!
Because your judgment came in one hour.’

^a Could an angel say “my” people? This may be God Himself speaking. But just how can one ‘come out’ of Babylon?—by rejecting all that she represents.

^b What God has remembered about her is her iniquities.

^c Evidently it is “my people” who are supposed to be doing this. First we must disassociate ourselves from the whore, but then we are to participate in her punishment, “double”. Only it does not say how the paying back works, and I, for one, would like to know.

^d None of her lovers charge to the rescue; they stay well clear of the action! They enjoyed the whore, but... (Actually, why do men go to prostitutes? They want sex without commitment.)

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¹¹“And the merchants of the earth weep and sorrow over her, because no one buys their goods anymore: ¹²goods of gold and of silver, of precious stones and of pearl, of fine linen and of purple, of silk and of scarlet; every citron wood and object of ivory, every object of most precious wood and of bronze and of iron and of marble; ¹³cinnamon and incense and perfume and frankincense, wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep and horses and carriages, and bodies and souls of men!” ¹⁴(Yes, the fruit that your soul craved has gone from you, and all the sumptuous and splendid things have perished from you, and you will never find them again!)^a ¹⁵“The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand afar off for fear of her torment,^b weeping and sorrowing ¹⁶and saying:

‘Alas, alas, O great city!
that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet,
and was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;
¹⁷because in one hour such great wealth was laid waste.’

“And every ship captain, and all who travel by ship—sailors and as many as work the sea—stood afar off ¹⁸and cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘Who is like the great city!’” ¹⁹They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and sorrowing and saying:

‘Alas, alas, O great city!
by which all who had ships in the sea became rich,
by her costly abundance;
because in one hour she was laid waste.’

Her doom final

²⁰“Rejoice over her, O heaven, yes you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced your judgment against her!”^c ²¹And a mighty angel took up a stone like a huge millstone and threw it into the ocean saying:

“The great city Babylon will be thrown down violently,
and will never be found again.
²²The sound of harpists and musicians and flutists and trumpeters will never be heard in you again;
no craftsman of whatever craft will ever be found in you again;
the sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again;
²³the light of a lamp will never shine in you again;
the voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again;
because your merchants were the magnates of the earth,
because by your sorcery^d all the nations were deceived.”

²⁴And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, even of all who had been butchered on the earth.

^a An unidentified speaker interjects a cheerful note. It may be that “the fruit that your soul craved” had to do with the “bodies and souls of men”.

^b I guess we should not expect the merchants to be braver than the kings, now should we?

^c Perhaps this should be connected to verses 6-7, above. In that event, the judgment was pronounced in faith.

^d The whore uses sorcery, and kills God’s prophets and saints. The Lord Jesus said that the “Jerusalem” of His day killed God’s prophets, so the whore has been around for quite a while.

Her fall celebrated

19 ¹After these things I heard as it were the really loud voice of a great multitude in heaven saying:

“Hallelujah! The salvation and power and glory of our God!

²Because His judgments are true and just,
because He has judged the great whore who
corrupted the earth with her fornication,
and has avenged the blood of His slaves by her hand.”

³And a second voice said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke goes up for ever and ever!”^a

⁴And the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshipped God, who sits on the throne, saying, “Amen, Hallelujah!” ⁵And a voice came from the Throne saying, “Praise our God, all you His slaves and those who fear Him, small and great!”

The wedding of the Lamb

⁶And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderings saying:

“Hallelujah!

Because the Lord our God reigns, the Almighty!

⁷Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory,
because the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and His wife has prepared herself.”

⁸And it was granted to her to be dressed in fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹And he says to me,^b “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb.’” And he says to me, “These are the true words of God.”

¹⁰And I fell at his feet to worship him, but he says to me: “Don’t! I am your fellow slave and among your brothers who hold the testimony of Jesus.^c Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”^d

The battle of Armageddon

¹¹I saw the heaven opened, and wow, a white horse! And the One who sits on it, called Faithful and True, both judges and makes war with righteousness.

¹²Now His eyes were a flame of fire and on His head were many diadems, having names written,^e besides a written name that no one knows except Himself; ¹³and He was clothed with a robe that had been dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵And out of His mouth goes a sharp, two-edged sword, so that with it He may strike the nations. And He Himself will shepherd

^a The whore’s eternal punishment is a cause for praise to God.

^b Presumably the speaker is the angel of 17:1.

^c It surprises me that an angel could or would call himself “your brother”. I do not know what to make of it, unless this was really a human being that looked like an angel. Since the Bible records angels appearing in human form, I suppose a glorified human could appear in angelic form. Why not?

^d I do not understand this statement either, unless it is Jesus who is testifying to the prophets, giving them their messages.

^e Well over half of the Greek manuscripts, two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one) read “having names written”—presumably these names were on the diadems. I would imagine that each diadem had a name.

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them with a rod of iron. And He Himself treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty.^a **16**And He has a name written on His robe and on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords!

A feast for vultures

17And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven,^b “Come, gather together to the great dinner of God, **18**so that you may eat flesh of kings and flesh of commanders and flesh of the mighty and flesh of horses along with their riders, even the flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.”

19And I saw the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the One riding the horse and against His army. **20**So the Beast was captured, and with him the False prophet, the one who performed signs in his presence (by which he had deceived those who had received the mark of the Beast and those who worshipped his image). The two were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone.^c **21**And the rest were killed by the sword that proceeds from the mouth of the One riding the horse.^d And all the birds were filled with their flesh.^e

The Millennium

Satan bound

20 **1**And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the Abyss and a huge chain on his hand. **2**And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth,^f and bound him for a thousand years; **3**he threw him into the Abyss and locked and sealed *it* over him so that he should not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years were finished. And after these *years* he must be loosed for a short time.^g

Saints reign

4And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them; also, *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded^h on account of the tes-

^a The Lord Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins all by Himself (Hebrews 1:3), and here He treads “the winepress of the fury of the wrath” all by Himself. Those who think of the Lord only in terms of “loving, meek, mild” need to understand that there is a whole lot more to the story. Those who reject His sacrifice can look for “the fury of the wrath”—none of us can understand how terrible was the price the Son had to pay, and He will not take kindly to having that price despised!

^b It is mainly birds of prey and scavengers that fly high in the sky; songbirds and game birds usually stay fairly close to the ground (except when migrating).

^c Apparently these are the first two residents in the Lake, and they will have it all to themselves for a full one thousand years!

^d If the Captain did all the killing, then His followers were just along for the ride. Evidently all the Captain had to do was speak.

^e The birds will eat all they can, but there will presumably be plenty of flesh left over. Ezekiel 39:12 says it will take seven months to cleanse the land of all the remains!

^f Well over half of the Greek manuscripts, two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one), contain this clause. Since both the TR and the so-called critical text omit it, most versions do not include it.

^g If language has any verifiable meaning at all, this passage is obviously talking about a literal period of one thousand years.

^h What cultures in our day practice beheading?

timony of Jesus and on account of the Word of God, even those who had not worshipped the Beast or his image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they lived and reigned with the Christ for a thousand years. ⁵(Now the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished.)^a This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is the one having a part in the first resurrection; upon such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.

The final rebellion

⁷Now when the thousand years are finished Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸and he will go forth to deceive the nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war, whose number is like the sand of the sea.^b ⁹They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down out of heaven from God and devoured them.^c ¹⁰And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the Lake of Fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the False prophet also are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Great White Throne

¹¹Then I saw a tremendous white throne and the One who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the sky fled away;^d and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne;^e and books were opened. And another Book was opened, namely, of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things that were written in the books. ¹³The ocean gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them;^f and they were judged each one according to their works.^g ¹⁴And Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire.^h ¹⁵And if anyone was not found written in the Book of Life he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.ⁱ

^a Verse six makes clear that this part of verse 5 is parenthetical. It is participants in the first resurrection who will reign the thousand years; so that first resurrection must happen at the beginning of the thousand years, not the end; so “the rest of the dead” are the lost who will participate in the resurrection unto condemnation (call it the second resurrection), after the Millennium. Superficial readings of this passage have given rise to all sorts of confusion.

^b During the Millennium there will be a population explosion. Since the government will be dictatorial, everyone will have to obey outwardly, but Satan will have no trouble raising an army of ‘dissidents’.

^c The picture here is different from the battle of Armageddon—compare 19:21.

^d Doubtless the Face was full of wrath—at that point there will be absolutely no place to hide.

^e Less than 10% of the Greek manuscripts read ‘God’ instead of “throne”, as in AV and NKJV.

^f I confess that I do not understand this: how can Death be holding dead that are not in Hades? Perhaps they are regarded as partners. But then, how can the ocean have a separate roster of dead?

^g Twice it says that they will be judged on the basis of their works. So how can you really evaluate someone’s deeds? Only by taking account of their context. Those who never heard the Gospel will be judged within the context that they lived, and the Judge will prove that even within their own context they did not measure up.

^h The first death is the physical one; the second is the spiritual one—eternal separation from the Creator (the essence of death is separation). Death and Hades are treated as if they were living entities.

ⁱ That is right; since no one can be saved by their works, the only way out is the Book of Life!

21 ¹Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away;^a also, the ocean was no more.^b ²And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying: “Take note, the tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. Yes, God Himself will be with them. ⁴And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death nor sorrow nor crying nor pain^c—they will exist no more because the first things have gone.”

⁵Then He who sat on the throne^d said, “Take note, I make everything new!” And He says to me, “Write, because these words are true and faithful!”^e ⁶Then He said to me: “I have become the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.^f To the one who thirsts I will give of the spring of the water of Life freely. ⁷He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him and he will be a son to me. ⁸But as for the cowardly^g and unbelieving and sinners^h and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters, and all who are false,ⁱ their portion is in the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

⁹Then^j one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me saying, “Come, I will show you the woman, the Lamb’s bride.”^k ¹⁰So he transported me in spirit to a great and high mountain and

^a “The first earth”, not the second, or whatever. This statement would seem to go against the ‘gap’ theory in Genesis 1:1.

^b Apparently there will be no water in the new earth; I take it that our glorified bodies will require neither food nor drink (so there will be no body waste to dispose of).

^c Without the separation of death, without pain and sorrow, there will be no occasion for tears.

^d Since the last throne mentioned is the Great White Throne, and since all judgment has been committed to the Son (John 5:22), I conclude that the speaker is Jehovah the Son.

^e “These words are true and faithful”—the guarantee extends to the individual words. If a word is true, then it cannot be false; if a word is faithful, then it cannot be designed to deceive us. Conclusion: the words of this book are to be taken at face value, according to the norms of language.

^f “I have become”—this seems awkward, so a small minority of the Greek manuscripts changed it to the familiar ‘It is done’. But in order to be the Boss at both the beginning and the end, you have to be the greatest, and survive all challenges. All human history has been involved in Satan’s challenge of that supremacy. Because of that challenge, and because only at this point has that challenge been definitively put down, Jehovah the Son says, “I have become”.

^g Does it surprise you that “cowardly” is in this list? In Matthew 10:32-33 we read: “Everyone who will confess me before men, I will also confess him before my father who is in the heavens. But whoever should deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in the heavens.” See also Luke 12:8-9 and 1 John 2:23. Presumably the Lord is referring to our attitude in the face of opposition or persecution. Anyone who caves in under pressure and disowns the Lord is out.

^h Both the TR and the so-called critical text omit “and sinners”, so most versions do as well, but two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one) have the phrase.

ⁱ That is what the Text says; instead of the noun ‘liar’ we find the adjective “false” (all the preceding descriptions are nouns, with one participle = “abominable”).

^j Actually the Text has “and”—John saw the visions in this order, but they will not necessarily happen in this order. I imagine that the New Jerusalem belongs to the Millennium (for reasons I will give below).

^k It seems to me to be unarguable that both Israel (the gates) and the Church (the foundations) participate in the New Jerusalem. (In fact, I imagine that the redeemed of all ages, up to the beginning of the

showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the splendor of God. Her radiance was similar to a most precious stone, like a crystalline jasper stone; ¹²she had a tremendous, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, namely the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel; ¹³*looking* from the east, three gates, and from the north, three gates, and from the south, three gates, and from the west, three gates. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names, of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.^a ¹⁵Now he who spoke with me had a measure, a golden reed, so that he might measure the city and her gates.^b ¹⁶The city is laid out as a square; that is, her length is equal to her width. So he measured the city with the reed at twelve thousand and twelve stadia.^c Her length and width and height are equal.^d ¹⁷And he measured her wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits,^e the measure of a man (which is of an angel).^f ¹⁸The material of her wall was jasper,^g and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation *had* jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the

Millennium, will be involved.) The rendering, “the woman [or, wife], the Lamb’s bride”, is based on over half of the Greek manuscripts, two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one). In Jeremiah 3:20 and Hosea 2 Israel is presented as the wife of Jehovah—but in the O.T. wherever God interacts directly with the human race it is always Jehovah the Son. Passages like Matthew 25:10, John 3:29, 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:25-27, 31-32 point to the Church as the bride of Christ (who is Jehovah the Son). So here the two come together—the wife, the bride—but maintain a distinct identity (gates are one thing and foundations are another)—indeed, nowhere does the Bible ever confuse Israel and the Church (not even in Galatians 6:16, as I can demonstrate to anyone who wishes to pursue the matter). But if the Church is still a “bride”, then the wedding has not happened yet, which is my first reason for placing this scene at the beginning of the Millennium.

^a I wonder, who replaces the Iscariot? Besides the Twelve, the only one who was personally chosen by Jesus was Saul of Tarsus.

^b The evidence is badly divided here, but I take it that two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one), do not add “and her wall”, which is read by most versions since both the TR and the so-called critical text so read. Two thousand years ago a city wall was a barrier to protect the city from attack, but the following context here makes clear that the wall was part of the structure. The city is a cube, like a modern high-rise, which is a recent concept in architecture. Many early copyists presumably assumed that the wall was distinct from the city and officiously altered the text. The angel measured precisely the city and her gates; see the next note.

^c Over half of the Greek manuscripts, two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one), read “and twelve”—a surprising bit of precise detail. But consider—12,000 stadia, twelve gates—if the gates are evenly spaced, as seems likely, we have a thousand stadia between gates; or is it 1,001 stadia? I will argue below that each gate was one stadium wide, which nicely explains the precise number, twelve thousand and twelve!

^d The city is a cube, the total measurement being about 1,350 miles! But does it mean the circumference or is it referring to the three dimensions? If it refers to the circumference we divide by four and each side is about 340 miles long, and of course the height is also 340 miles. If we divide by three each dimension is about 450 miles. In either event, we have one incredibly large city! But because of the twelve gates and 12,000 stadia I really believe that the angel measured the circumference.

^e That is about 70 yards; since we already know that the wall is hundreds of miles high, the reference here must be to the thickness of the wall. I take it that the wall was part of the structure, like in a modern high-rise, not like a fence (with no enemies there is no need for a fence—in fact, verse 25 makes clear that even the gates will never be closed).

^f This is curious; apparently angels use the same measurement as humans. But then, with reference to things on this earth, why wouldn’t they?

^g See verse 11 above.

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twelfth amethyst.^a **21**And the twelve gates are twelve pearls; each individual gate was *composed* of one pearl.^b And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.^c

Her glory

22I saw no sanctuary in her, because the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are her sanctuary. **23**And the city has no need of the sun or the moon, that they should shine on her, because the very glory of God illumines her, and the Lamb is her light. **24**And the nations will walk in her light, and the kings of the earth^d bring their glory and honor into her. **25**Her gates will absolutely not be closed by day (and no night will exist there). **26**And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her. **27**But anything ‘common’^e or anyone perpetrating an abomination or a lie will absolutely not enter her;^f only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.^g

Her river

22 **1**And he showed me a pure river of water of life,^h bright as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, **2**in the middle of her street. And on either side of the river was a tree of life producing twelve fruits, yielding each month’s fruit monthly; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. **3**There will be no accursed thing there, but the throne of God and of the Lamb are in her, and His slaves will minister to Him. **4**They will see His face and His name is on their foreheads. **5**Night will not exist there and they will need neither lamp nor sunlight, because the Lord God illuminates them. And they will reign forever and ever.

^a Each foundation was adorned with a different kind of stone. But how were the twelve foundations arranged, piled up or side by side? Presumably the gates were evenly spaced, with 1,000 stadia between each pair, so perhaps each such space represented an Apostle and had a different precious stone.

^b Are not doors and gates usually wider than the wall is thick? The wall here is some 70 yards thick. I propose that each pearl was 200 yards (one stadium) wide (some pearl!), but notice in verse 25 that the gates were never closed, which means that they always remained in one position, hence no wear and tear on the ‘hinges’. But imagine that we are on that tremendously high mountain with John, and that we are perpendicular to the middle of one wall and at a distance of 50 miles. We are looking at a monstrous wall 340 miles square; it merely fills the horizon. At the base of the wall, evenly spaced (some 110 miles between them), are three gates. Would a gate 200 yards wide be out of proportion? Given the size of the wall, such gates might even seem small!

^c The ‘gold’ here is evidently different from the gold we know; John does not say that it looked like gold, he says it was gold.

^d “Kings of the earth”—we are still on the earth, with kings and nations coming and going, which is my second reason for placing the New Jerusalem during the Millennium.

^e That is, defiled or profane; perhaps anything not consecrated to God.

^f Connecting this statement with 22:15, we have all sorts of nasty people outside the city. After the Millennium and the Great White Throne they will be in the Lake of fire, so if they are still circulating on this earth, it must be during the Millennium, which is my third reason. Because of 22:15 I am inclined to suppose that the New Jerusalem will rest on the earth (not be a satellite, as some argue). But if so, where? The desert east of Jordan is hundreds of miles square with very few inhabitants, and relatively plane, yet quite close to the present Jerusalem. Perhaps there.

^g So why else did you think there was an angel stationed at each gate (21:12)?

^h This river should not be confused with the one in Ezekiel 47. The present city of Jerusalem will still exist and function during the Millennium. The two rivers share certain characteristics, but are also quite different. Zechariah 14:8 may well have to do with Ezekiel 47.

Conclusion

⁶Then He says to me: “These words are faithful and true. The Lord God of the spirits^a of the prophets sent His angel to show to His slaves the things that must shortly take place.^b ⁷Take note, I am coming swiftly! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”^c

⁸Now I, John, who heard and saw these things, when I had heard and seen I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things, ⁹but he says to me: “Don’t! I am your fellow slave and of your brothers the prophets, those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”^d ¹⁰Then he says to me: “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹He who acts unjustly let him act unjustly still, and let the filthy one be filthy still, and let the righteous one still practice righteousness, and let the holy one still be sanctified.”

Jesus’ final word

¹²“Take note, I am coming swiftly, and my reward is with me to give to each one according to his work. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and end, the First and the Last.” ¹⁴(Blessed are those who do His commands, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, even to enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵Outside are the ‘dogs’^e and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters,^f and everyone who loves and practices a lie.) ¹⁶“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify these things to you, in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning Star. ¹⁷Both the Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come!’ And let whoever hears say, ‘Come!’ And let whoever thirsts come; whoever wants to, let him take the water of life free of charge.

A serious warning

¹⁸“I myself testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If any one adds to them, may God add to him the seven plagues written in this book!^g ¹⁹And if anyone takes away from the word^h of the book of this prophecy, may God remove his share from the tree of life and out of the Holy City, that stand written in this book!”

^a Two of the three main independent lines of transmission (including the best one) have “of the spirits”. The familiar ‘the holy’ of the KJV is based on the third main line.

^b This is a restatement of 1:1.

^c Here Jesus Christ speaks (and so in verses 12, 16 and 18); see 1:3.

^d I wonder if John was not always sure who was a real angel and who was the Son, appearing as an angel, and so just to make sure...

^e So who are the ‘dogs’? In Deuteronomy 23:18 ‘dog’ apparently refers to a male prostitute, a catamite, and is declared to be an abomination. In O.T. times dogs were scavengers and therefore unclean, and were generally looked down upon. In Jesus’ day Jews referred to Gentiles as ‘dogs’, but since many Gentiles are in the Church that is presumably not the intended meaning here. The ‘dogs’ in Matthew 7:6 react in an aggressively hostile manner against what is holy; I take it that they are people who are overtly serving evil (Philippians 3:2 may be referring to this sort of person). So who are the ‘dogs’ here? At the very least they are the unclean. Take it from there.

^f Relativism is an idol; Humanism is an idol; Materialism is an idol. One wonders how many Christians today have a worldview that is really Biblical. The world’s values are not compatible with Christ’s values. Don’t forget 1 John 2:15-16!

^g Since God the Son is speaking, I imagine that what He wants will be done!

^h “Words”, plural, includes the individual words that make up the whole. Those textual critics who have wantonly removed words from the Text, on the basis of satanically inspired presuppositions, are out. Those who interpret the Text in such a way as to avoid its plain meaning, likewise. Jehovah the Son affirms that the words are “true and **faithful**”, and He expects us to interpret them that way.

REVELATION 22

John signs off

²⁰He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming swiftly!” Oh yes!!
Come, Sovereign Jesus! ²¹The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ^a be with all the
saints. Amen.

^a “The Lord Jesus Christ” is now the full name or title of Jehovah the Son.

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1) How Often Did Jesus Say Peter Would Deny Him?

The question can be understood in two different senses, and I wish to explore them both. How often was Peter to deny the Lord, and how often did the Lord warn him? I will consider the second question first. Each Gospel records a warning—the relevant passages are Matthew 26:30-35, Mark 14:26-31, Luke 22:31-34, 39 and John 13:36-38, 18:1. For reasons that will presently become apparent I will start to discuss the passages in reverse order.

How Many Warnings?

First, John 13:36-38:

36 Simon Peter says to Him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered him, “Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but later you will follow me”. 37 Peter says to Him: “Lord, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake!” 38 Jesus answered him: “You will lay down your life for my sake? Most assuredly I say to you, no rooster can crow until you have denied me three times!”^a

Notice the distinctive context that leads into our Lord’s warning. Notice also the emphatic nature of His declaration—by employing a double negative (in the Greek text) He leaves no question but that three denials will take place before the first rooster crows from that moment on. Notice finally where and when this exchange took place. They were in the upper room where they had gathered to observe the Passover. Evidently this conversation between the Lord and Peter came comparatively early in the proceedings, because it was followed by the contents of chapters 14, 15, 16 and 17 before they left the room and went to the garden on the Mount of Olives (18:1).

Second, Luke 22:31-34:

31 Then the Lord said, “Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has asked for you (pl) that he may sift you as wheat, 32 but I have prayed for you (sg) that your faith should not fail, and when you have returned to me strengthen your brothers.” 33 But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death!” 34 So He said, “I tell you, Peter, no rooster can crow this day before you will deny three times that you know me!”

Notice again the distinctive context that leads into our Lord’s warning. It is clearly different from that given in John 13. Notice also that there seems to be an increase in the intensity of their exchange. There is a note of reproach in Peter’s speech, and the use of Peter’s name gives a stern note to the Lord’s response. The

^a The emphasis here is on the obligatory absence of any cockcrow until Peter has denied [at least] three times. There is no definite article with ‘rooster’, so it is “a rooster”; the negative is double, therefore emphatic, “absolutely not”. If you have lived where there were a number of roosters, you know that one or another can sound off at any time, and some one of them will crow almost on the hour throughout the night, while at dawn they put on a chorus. It was probably somewhere around 9 p.m. when Jesus issued this warning, and Peter’s first denial probably happened at least five hours later. For not a single rooster to crow anywhere within earshot during that time required supernatural intervention—which is why I render “no rooster can crow” (if an angel can close lions’ mouths [Dan. 6:22], closing roosters’ beaks would be a cake walk).

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addition of “today” (compared to John 13) and the shifting of “thrice” to an emphatic position (in the Greek text—again as compared to John) contribute to the feeling of heightened intensity. Also, now Peter will deny that he even knows Him. Note finally where and when this exchange took place. They were still in the upper room, but this conversation evidently came near the end of the proceedings, because only the contents of verses 35-38 intervened before they left the room and went to the Mount of Olives (22:39). Of course, more may have actually happened than is recorded in 22:35-38, but it seems clear that the warning recorded in Luke is not the same as the one recorded in John, and that the one in John happened first.

I find a comparison of the two warnings in Greek to be impressive and convincing:

John 13:38: “Thn yuchn sou u`per emou qhseij? Amhn(amhn legw soi(ou mh alektrw fwnhsh e`wj ou- aparnhsh me trij)”

Luke 22:34: “Legw soi(Petre(ou mh fwnhsh shmeron alektrw prin h. trij aparnhsh mh eidenai me)”

Really, there is no comparison: they are obviously different (even taking into account that they probably spoke Hebrew, so we are looking at a translation). As in John, here again we have a plain affirmation that three denials [at least] will take place before the first rooster crows.

Third, Matthew 26:30-35:

30 And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives. 31 Then Jesus says to them, “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’.” 32 But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee.” 33 Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if everyone *else* is caused to stumble because of you, **I** will never be caused to stumble!” 34 Jesus said to him, “Assuredly I say to you that this night, before *any* rooster crows, you will deny me three times!” 35 Peter says to Him, “Even if I have to die with you, I will **not** deny you!” All the *other* disciples said the same.

Notice that this exchange took place after they had left the upper room and were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Again the context is distinct from that in Luke or John—here the Lord begins by warning all the disciples. Peter counters by contradicting Him. The Lord’s reiterated specific warning to Peter contains no new elements except that now it is “this very night”. Peter contradicts again, using a double negative for emphasis—he ‘has his back up’ and is starting to get impertinent. It seems clear that Matthew records a third warning to Peter, subsequent to those in Luke and John.

Fourth, Mark 14:26-31:

26 And after hymn-singing they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 And Jesus says to them, “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered’.” 28 But after I am raised I will go before you to Galilee.” 29 But Peter said to Him, “Even if all are caused to stumble, yet I will not be!” 30 And Jesus says to him, “Assuredly I say to you that you, today, even this night, before a

rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times!” 31 But he spoke the more vehemently, “If I have to die with you, I will certainly not deny you!” And they all said the same.

The first four verses are virtually identical with the parallel passage in Matthew, so we evidently have the same time and place in both. But now we come to verse 30, the despair of those who defend scriptural inerrancy and the delight of their opponents. Our Lord’s statement here differs in several ways from that in Matthew 26:34 but the main problem is the word “twice”. What are we to say: Are Matthew 26:34 and Mark 14:30 contradictory accounts of the same warning?

Before settling for that explanation, the precise turn of phrase in Mark 14:30 invites our attention. I believe it will help to see a word for word rendering of what Jesus said. “Assuredly I say to you that you, today, this very night, before twice a rooster crows, thrice you will deny me.” The Lord’s declaration here seems quite sharp. There is extraordinary emphasis on the second “you”. “Twice” is also heavily emphasized. How are we to account for such severity? Peter’s effort in verse 29 scarcely seems to merit such a reaction—the reaction recorded in Matthew 26:34 seems much more appropriate. And what shall we say to Mark 14:31? Peter’s words here are virtually identical to those in Matthew 26:35 but they are introduced by “but he spoke the more vehemently”. Why the vehement reiteration?

I suggest that the solution is to read the following sequence. Matthew 26:30-35^a then Mark 14:30-31:

Jesus: “All of you will be caused to stumble because of me this night...”

Peter: “Though all are caused to stumble because of you, I will never be caused to stumble.”

Jesus: “Assuredly I say to you that this night, before any rooster crows, you will deny me three times.”

Peter: “Even if I have to die with you I will certainly not deny you!”

Jesus: “Assuredly I say to you that you, today, this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”

Peter, more vehemently: “If I have to die with you, I will certainly not deny you!”

In other words, Mark omitted the exchange recorded in Matthew 26:34-35^a while Matthew omitted the exchange recorded in Mark 14:30-31^a. (The editorial comment “and they all said the same” comes at the end of the whole episode.)

On three separate occasions Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him [at least] three times before a rooster crowed during that night. Peter’s responses became increasingly belligerent until after the third warning he even contradicted the Lord with an emphatic double negative (Mat. 26:35). Finally the Lord lost His patience, as it were, and said in effect, “Listen, not only will you deny me three times before a rooster crows once, you will deny me another three times before a rooster crows twice!” For answer Peter repeats his prior statement even more vehemently.

The reader will perceive that in answering the second question I have anticipated the answer to the first one. The Lord warned Peter four times, each Gospel recording a separate instance, and there would be [at least] six denials, three before the first crowing of a rooster (John, Luke, Matthew) and another three before

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the second (Mark). It remains to enquire whether the several accounts of Peter's denials will countenance this proposal. The relevant passages are Matthew 26:57-75, Mark 14:53-72, Luke 22:54-62 and John 18:15-27.

How Many Denials?

A cursory reading of these passages suggests that Peter's denials were provoked by eight different challenges—the maid at the outside entrance (John), a maid in the courtyard (Matthew, Mark, Luke), the same maid a second time (Mark), a different maid in the gateway (Matthew), two different men (Luke, John), and the bystanders on two occasions (John and Matthew, Mark). Although it may be possible to combine one pair or another, there is no reasonable way to get the number down to three. But what if there were at least six denials?

To really get the complete picture we need to plot the relevant information on a chart. We need to know who issued the challenge, where, when, just how was it done, what was Peter's reaction, and if a rooster crowed. Because of constraints of space and paper size, I will do a Gospel at a time, beginning with John.^a

John 18:15-27:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	the gatekeeper (f)	servants and operatives	a relative of Malchus
Where?	outside gate	by the fire	by the fire (?)
When?	at the beginning of the proceedings	a little while after the first one	a little while after the second one (?)
How was it done?	she asks: "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?"	they ask: "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?"	he asks: "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?"
What was the reaction?	he says: "I am not!"	he said: "I am not!"	(Peter denied again)
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately a rooster crowed

^a A comparison of the contents of the four Gospels reveals that in the main John supplies information not recorded in the other three; he wrote last, with the purpose of supplementing their accounts. Here again, the three denials he describes are all new information, not to be found in the other three.

Luke 22:54-62:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	a man	another man
Where?	by the fire	by the fire (?)	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	about an hour later
How was it done?	she looked intently and said: "This man was also with him."	he said: "You also are of them."	he confidently affirmed: "Surely this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean."
What was the reaction?	he said: "Woman, I do not know him!"	he said: "Man, I am not!"	he said: "Man, I do not know what you are saying!"
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately, while he was yet speaking, a rooster crowed.

Matthew 26:57-75:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	another girl	bystanders
Where?	by the fire	in the gateway	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	a little later
How was it done?	approached him saying: "You too were with Jesus the Galilean."	says to the others: "This fellow also was with Jesus the Natsorean."	come up to Peter and say: "Really, you too are one of them, because your very accent gives you away!"
What was the reaction?	denied before them all: "I don't know what you are saying."	denied with an oath: "I do not know the man!"	began to curse and to swear: "I do not know the man!"
Rooster?	(no)	(no)	immediately a rooster crowed

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Mark 14:53-72:

	1 st denial	2 nd denial	3 rd denial
Who?	a servant girl	the same girl	bystanders
Where?	by the fire	in the fore-court (?)	by the fire (?)
When?	fairly early on (?)	a little later	a little later
How was it done?	looked at him and said: "You also were with Jesus the Nazarene."	says to the bystanders: "This is one of them."	say to Peter again: "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean and your speech shows it!"
What was the reaction?	denied, saying: "I neither know nor understand what you are saying!"	(he denied again)	he began to curse and to swear: "I do not know this mand of who you speak!"
Rooster?	he went out to the fore-court and a rooster crowed	(no)	a rooster crowed a second time

If you compare all the parameters—who, where, when, how, what—there really is no way to come out with only three denials; even to come out with only six requires some gymnastics (something I attempted to do in an early draft). Let us try to arrange the events in chronological sequence and see what happens.

John 18:17 gives us what is clearly the first challenge—as the maid who kept the outside door let Peter in, at John's request, she asked, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?"^a Even though John was evidently standing right there, Peter denied, "I am not". He then went in to stand near the fire in the courtyard. The other Gospels have Peter sitting, while John has him standing. Evidently there were quite a few people about—they could not all sit close to the fire. Presumably they would take turns standing near the fire to warm up and then move away a bit to sit down. Thus they, including Peter, would be alternately sitting and standing.

All four Gospels have Peter in the courtyard near the fire (Mat. 26:58 and 69, Mark 14:54 and 66, Luke 22:55, and John 18:18 and 25) and three of them (Matthew, Mark, John) give some account of the council's dealings with Jesus before going on with Peter's denials.^b We know from Luke 22:61 that Jesus was at a window that looked out on the courtyard, only with His back to it. John is the only one who records that the high priest asked Jesus about His disciples (v. 19)—he is facing Jesus and therefore the open window, and would be speaking loudly enough for everyone in the room to hear clearly, so the people in the courtyard

^a Everyone there, including the girl, knows that John belongs to Jesus, so her question is perfectly natural, without malice—since John is vouching for Peter, she assumes that Peter must also belong to Jesus. John had heard all the warnings, so when Peter denied at the gate, in his presence, John doubtless kept a close eye on him the whole rest of the night. So we have an eyewitness account. Of course Peter himself would also be an eyewitness, but since he was undergoing satanic interference in his mind, his powers of recollection might be impaired.

^b It is after midnight and chilly in the courtyard, hence the fire; but there must have been over fifty people in the room where the questioning was going on, and all windows would be open.

also heard everything he said—then in verse 25 we read, “Therefore they said to him, ‘You aren’t one of his disciples too, are you?’” I suggest that verse 25 gives us the second challenge and denial. The guards around the fire, presumably prompted by the high priest’s questioning Jesus about His disciples, put their question to Peter. He answers them as he did the girl at the gate, “I am not”. So far the challengers have only questioned, rather than affirm, but now the tempo quickens.

I take it that the first denials recorded in Matthew (26:69-70), Mark (14:66-68) and Luke (22:56-57) form a single episode. Collating them we may understand the following. A certain serving girl of the high priest came by and saw Peter sitting near the fire. She looked closely at him and said to the others, “This man also was with him” (Luke). She then addressed Peter directly, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene, of Galilee” (Matthew, Mark). But he denied before them all, saying, “Girl, I don’t know him; I neither know nor understand what you’re talking about!” He then went out to the forecourt, and a rooster crowed (Mark 14:68). Thus, there were [at least] three denials before the first cockcrow.

I say ‘at least’ because the third denial in John probably belongs here as well. In 18:26 the verb “to say” is in the present tense, which seems to suggest a brief interval rather than nearly an hour (Luke 22:59); also the challenge is still framed as a question, “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?”, rather than a direct accusation, which would fit better toward the beginning than at the end. I see no problem with suggesting that all three of the denials in John were part of the first set and thus he records the first rooster crow. In that event I would understand that there were actually four denials before the first crowing, the three in John plus the first one in the others. Because the rooster crowed “immediately” I imagine that the order would be as follows: the first two in John, in that order, then the first one in the others, and then, as Peter was moving toward the forecourt, the relative of Peter’s victim comes alongside and puts his question, so that Peter is at the forecourt when the first rooster crows (Mark 14:68). Actually, I am inclined to suspect that indeed there were four denials before the first cockcrow, which is recorded by both Mark and John (recall that Jesus neither said nor implied that there would be ‘only’ three).^a

Now for the next round. In Mark (14:69) the same girl sees Peter again and starts telling the bystanders, “This fellow is one of them”. In Matthew (26:71) a different girl sees him and tells the bystanders, “This fellow was with Jesus the Nazarene”. In Luke (22:58) a man saw him and said, “You also are one of them”. In order to come out with only three denials in the second set, two of these would have to be combined, but as already stated, I am not aware of anything in the Text that rules out the possibility that there could be more than three. It seems to me that there is a progression in Peter’s desperation which culminates in his cursing and swearing. On that basis I would consider the instances in Mark and Luke as forming a single episode (if I had to)—the girl speaks, Peter denies, a man backs the girl up and Peter answers, “Man, I am not!” Then the instance in Matthew would be the sixth denial—notice that now Peter adds an oath! Because of the oath I consider that this denial comes after the other two just mentioned; also, Peter has moved out to the gateway. Actually, I am inclined to suspect that

^a The satanic interference in Peter’s mind was so effective that not even the rooster’s crowing woke him up.

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there were also four denials before the second cockcrow, so I will start again on that basis.

The girl that provoked the third denial is not about to let Peter get away with that denial. Whether she followed him out to the forecourt, or he moved back toward the fire, I imagine that Mark 14:69 records the fifth denial. If so, Luke 22:58 records the sixth denial, perhaps near the fire. Peter is definitely uncomfortable; he is getting altogether too much unwelcome attention. He moves out to the gateway (perhaps thinking of abandoning the premises)^a where he is challenged by a different girl (Matthew 26:71); Peter denies with an oath (number seven). Luke (22:59) puts ‘about an hour’ between denials six and eight, so perhaps Peter was left alone for a bit. However, the ‘trial’ is over but the bosses are waiting for dawn so they can take Jesus to Pilate. Since the bosses are not going home, the guards and employees cannot either—they are obliged to wait out in the cold, bored stiff—so Peter is now the only show in town.

For the eighth denial three Gospels offer a candidate (Mat. 26:73-74, Mark 14:70-72, Luke 22:59-60). The accounts in Matthew and Mark are very similar and evidently parallel. Since Matthew has the rooster crowing “immediately” and Mark “the second time” this has to be last denial—since by now Peter is cursing and swearing it is fitting that it should be. By that time most of the people on the premises would be aware of Peter and his denials. After listening for a while they closed in, citing his accent. The account in Luke has just one man speaking, but his words are in the same vein. This also has to be the last denial because we are told that the rooster crowed while Peter was still speaking. Evidently a number of people were speaking at once (but not in unison), or in rapid succession, and different writers preserve some of the variety of statement. It would appear that they were ganging up on Peter, because he is driven to curse and to swear. And so we have a second set of four denials, before the second cockcrow. Even then it took a direct look from the Lord (Luke 22:61) to break Satan’s spell and bring Peter to a realization of what he had done.

But the question may well be asked, why did each Gospel writer report and speak of only three denials (albeit giving different selections) if there were really six or eight?^b I suggest that we are looking at a prime example of the grace and

^a So why didn’t Peter just bolt out the gate at that point? I would say that there was supernatural intervention—he simply was not allowed to leave.

^b Some 50% of the Greek manuscripts that contain the Gospels have colophons; these colophons state that Matthew was ‘published’ 8 years after Christ’s ascension, Mark 10 years after, Luke 15 years after and John 32 years after Christ’s ascension. (So the four Gospels are arranged in chronological order, not only in our Bibles but in the vast majority of the Greek manuscripts.) “To the Jew first, . . .”—since Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, God’s priorities dictated that Matthew’s should be the first inspired account of our Savior’s life on earth to circulate. Then Mark, with Matthew’s Gospel open in front of him, and Peter at his elbow, wrote for the Roman mind (since Romans would care nothing for Hebrew Scriptures, Mark removed virtually all reference to fulfilled prophecy). Then Luke, with both Mark and Matthew to hand, wrote the third, for the Greek mind. Then John, with the first three open, wrote to fill in the gaps, preserving important information not provided by the others, for all minds. Now let’s consider Peter’s denials within that framework. Matthew wrote first, with one cockcrow. Mark says there were really two cockcrows and changes the second denial (1 and 3 are the same in Mark and Matthew). Luke speaks of just one cockcrow, changes the second denial yet again and provides added information (specific) about the third. So just with these three accounts we are up to five denials. John speaks of just one cockcrow but records three new denials, not mentioned by the other three. If these are inspired accounts, then God did it on purpose, and it is up to us to try to figure out why (see my concluding paragraph).

sensitivity of God. It would be quite humiliating enough to have denied the Lord three/four times, but to go on to do so another three/four times, even after hearing a rooster crow, would be almost too much to bear. Rather than put the full extent of Peter's ignominy on display the Holy Spirit had each writer give only a partial account, enough for the purposes of the record but without flaying Peter unnecessarily. I find it interesting to note that it is Mark who furnishes the necessary clue that there was to be a second set of denials. The opinion is widely held that Peter influenced the composition of this Gospel—this is overtly stated in the introduction to the Gospel found in many manuscripts—and if so he may have insisted on including the hint as to the extent of his humiliation, whereas the others delicately avoided it.

The Text-critical Problem

Although there are around a hundred textual differences reflected in the printed editions of the Greek Text (in the passages considered), I will confine my remarks here to the set that is especially bothersome in terms of the subject matter of this paper.

There are four places in Mark's account that relate to the two cockcrows: "twice" in 14:30, "and a rooster crowed" in 14:68, "the second time" and "twice" in 14:72. Instances 1, 3 and 4 go together and appear to contradict the account in Matthew, Luke and John. Instance 2 is apparently even worse because according to Mark's account Peter had only denied once when the rooster 'jumped the gun' and crowed before he was supposed to (Jesus had said there would certainly be three denials, as recorded in the other three Gospels). Accordingly, ever since the second century there have been those who tried to 'help' Mark out of his difficulties, tampering with the text.

According to the present state of our knowledge it appears that seven Greek MSS omit "twice" in 14:30 (but they do so in two different ways), nine MSS omit "and a rooster crowed" in 14:68 (but in two ways), five omit "the second time" in 14:72^a, and seven omit "twice" in 14:72^b (two others omit the whole clause). The roster of MSS shifts in each case, as does the versional evidence that sides with the omissions. Only three witnesses are thoroughgoing and omit all four: Codex Aleph, cursive 579 and the Old Latin "c" (it^c). This is a curious state of affairs. If the purpose of the omissions was to make Mark conform to the other Gospels, only Aleph, 579 and it^c have succeeded. Of the seventeen MSS involved, twelve omit only one of the four; one MS omits two of them; and two MSS omit three (there is some doubt here). Unless someone is prepared to show why Aleph and 579 are to be preferred above every other MS (some 1700 for Mark), and it^c above all the rest of the versional evidence, Latin and otherwise, there is really no reason to take the omissions seriously. However, the eclectic school does take them seriously, even without the requisite demonstration.

It appears that the 'harder reading' canon has come to the aid of the vast majority of the MSS, at least as far as the editors of the 'critical' or eclectic texts presently in vogue are concerned. Instances 1, 3, and 4 are retained in all Nestle and UBS editions (although UBS ascribes "a considerable degree of doubt" to 1 and 3, and "some degree of doubt" to 4—the change in grade here is strange). However, when it comes to instance 2 ("and a rooster crowed") we get some variety: Nestle editions 1 to 25 omit the words; Nestle²⁶ and all three UBS editions retain them, but in single brackets (the UBS editors ascribe "a very high degree of doubt" to these words, along with the brackets which themselves signify "dubious

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textual validity”). Presumably the crucial datum here is that Codex B joins the evidence for omission with instance 2 (but not the others). From W-H through N²⁵ that was enough to banish the words from the Text. One supposes that it was the “harder reading” canon that restored them to UBS and N²⁶, if only in brackets. It seems to me that this case affords a clear example of the superficiality that characterizes the work of the eclectic school—to challenge the authenticity of a reading supported by over 99% of the MSS is unreasonable at any time, but to do so in the face of a perfectly obvious motivation for the omission is irresponsible.

The English versions that I have consulted all retain instances 1, 3 and 4, but deal variously with instance 2. AV, LB, NKJV, Phillips and TEV all retain “and a rooster crowed”, but LB favors us with a footnote: “This statement is found in only some of the MSS”. What might the purpose of such a footnote be? From the use of the word “only” it would appear that the purpose is to raise a doubt in the reader’s mind about the reliability of the Text. Why would they want to do that? The use of the word “some” also invites comment: it is their way of referring to some 1700 MSS, against nine! Will the reader not be deceived?

Jerusalem, NASB, NEB, NIV and RSV all omit the clause, but only Jerusalem does so without comment. The footnote in NEB reads, “Some witnesses insert ‘and a cock crew’.” As in LB, by “some” they mean some 1700 MSS, not to mention massive versional support and almost unanimous lectionary support. Will the reader not be deceived? The footnote in RSV reads, “Other ancient authorities add ‘and the cock crowed’.” The footnote in NIV reads, “Some early MSS add ‘and the rooster crowd’.” The footnote in NASB reads, “Later mss. add: ‘and a cock crowed’.” In order to evaluate such footnotes we would need to know the precise definitions for “ancient”, “early” and “later”. However, I submit that the uninitiated reader of such footnotes will certainly be misled as to the massive evidence against omission.

The case of the NIV invites special comment. It is the only version that offers a footnote at all four instances. At 14:30 we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘twice’.” At 14:68 we read, “Some early MSS add ‘and the rooster crowed’.” At 14:72^a we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘the second time’.” At 14:72^b we read, “Some early MSS omit ‘twice’.” (The meaning of “some” in the second instance is quite different from that in the other three.) What possible reason could the editors have had for including these footnotes? The immediate effect is to call in question the reliability of the Text at those points. Since the NIV editors held to a high view of Scripture, why would they want to do that? I suppose that it was precisely their concern for the inerrancy of the Text that was at work here. It appears that they did not see any other solution to the seeming discrepancy between Mark and the other Gospels than to imply that Aleph and Old Latin “c” might be right after all. Alas!

The NIV editors are barking up the wrong tree. The worst thing to be done here would be to follow Aleph in deleting all four instances. As already pointed out, the four Gospels record eight different challenges resulting in denials, but no two Gospels have the same selection. So to follow Aleph would force us to try to accommodate eight denials before the first rooster crow, which seems to me to be hopeless. The best thing to be done here is to follow the true Text, which God has graciously caused to be preserved, in this case, in over 99% of the evidence. Peter denied three/four times before the first rooster crow and another set of three/four before the second. The Lord had warned him: “Simon, Simon, indeed Satan has

asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Peter should have paid attention.

Implications

One question that arises is this: What about the internal integrity of each account? For instance, in John’s account, even if we were to claim that two of the denials occurred before the first rooster crow, while the third denial came after the first and before the second, would this claim do violence to the integrity of John’s Gospel? Why would it? Let us review the record. In John 13:38 Jesus said to Peter, “Most assuredly I say to you, a rooster shall not crow till you have denied me three times!” The Lord did not say “only” three times—the emphasis is on the obligatory absence of any rooster crow until Peter has denied three times, at least three times (there is nothing in the Lord’s turn of phrase to preclude the possibility that there could be more than three). In the Greek text there is no definite article with “rooster” and there is an emphatic double negative with the verb “to crow”—“a rooster shall not crow!” (These observations also apply in Luke 22:34; in fact, in all four Gospels, in both the predictions and the fulfillments, it is always “a” rooster.)

Turning to John’s account of the denials themselves, the first one, at the outside door (18:17), poses no difficulty. The second denial (18:25) likewise poses no difficulty—these two occurred before any rooster crow. But what if the third denial (in John’s account, 18:26-27) came after the first crowing?^a I see no problem, in principle. The Lord made a statement of fact, correctly recorded by John—there had to be three denials before the first rooster crow. This was precisely fulfilled, the others supplying the third denial. Nothing in John’s account precludes the possibility that there should be subsequent crowings. (Anyone who has lived near roosters knows that they start crowing off and on anytime after midnight and at daybreak put on a concert—it seems obvious to me that the first two crowings were overtly controlled by God so as to match Christ’s predictions.) In 18:27, after the third denial recorded by John, we read, “and immediately a rooster crowed”. John does not say that it was the first crowing. Someone without access to the other Gospels would naturally assume that John records the first rooster crow, and that the three denials he gives are the whole story—but nothing in John’s statement demands that interpretation; it simply arises from incomplete information. The other three present several added denials that are clearly distinct. The several Evangelists provide distinct sets of details, much like the pieces of a puzzle, that must be fitted together to get the whole picture. The several accounts are complementary, not contradictory.

But how about the internal integrity of Mark’s account? He is the only one who mentions the second rooster crow, as such, and in fact his account is tied to it. Jesus said, “before a rooster crows twice you will deny me three times,” and Mark records three denials before the second rooster crow. Again, Jesus did not say “only” three times, the emphasis is on “you” and “twice”. The other Gospels are needed to get the full picture, but Mark’s account is entirely self consistent.

And how about Luke? In the warning the emphasis is on the obligatory absence of a rooster crow until Peter has denied three times—at least three times (Jesus did not say “only” three times). After describing three of the denials Luke

^a As the reader knows, I believe the third denial in John comes before the first cock crow, but I am covering this possibility for the sake of those who may prefer to have it in the second set.

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writes, “and immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed”. “A” rooster—he does not say it was the first. Then Luke has Peter remembering that Jesus said, “Before a rooster crows you will deny me three times”. Presumably Peter remembered every detail of all the warnings, but Luke (and each of the other Evangelists) gives only a partial description—in fact, Luke has him recalling the warning recorded by Matthew, not the one he himself gave. A reader having only Luke’s account may assume that he told the whole story, but it is an unwarranted assumption. Luke’s account is internally consistent yet the precise turn of phrase is such that it does not preclude my proposal.

So what about Matthew? Virtually everything said about Luke above can be repeated here. He has Peter remembering the warning he himself recorded. Again it is “a” rooster. Matthew’s account is internally consistent yet the turn of phrase will accommodate my proposal without being violated. All of which brings us back to the question: Why does each Gospel speak of three denials, rather than six, eight or whatever? I don’t know; we aren’t told. My best guess is that God chose to draw a veil over the full extent of Peter’s ignominy (and perhaps to test our disposition when faced with the unexplained). But it remains a plain fact that each Gospel offers a different assortment of challenges and denials, giving a total of at least eight denials.

Another question that I have heard concerns the validity of attempting an exercise such as this at all. I believe that God deliberately brings difficulties into our lives (Job in the ash heap, Abraham on Moriah, Moses herding sheep, Joseph in prison, Daniel with the lions, and on, and on), and puts puzzles in the world, to test our disposition and fiber, and to cause us to grow. “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Proverbs 25:2). [Even if you are not a king, you get the point.] The case of John the baptizer in prison comes closer to home. He is frustrated, maybe disillusioned; he did his job but his expectations are not being realized. So he sends two disciples to ask Jesus for an explanation. In effect Jesus answers, “Check the evidence; do your homework”, and closes with, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of me” (Matthew 11:6). When faced with the difficult or unexplained we must be careful not to rebel. It is much better to obey the command recorded in 1 Peter 3:15. “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you...” Since opponents of a Text with objective authority have used the accounts of Peter’s denials as an argument against any idea of inerrancy, I consider that a defense of that inerrancy is in order.

2) Harmonizing the accounts of the Resurrection

A rough sequence within the parallel accounts

Matthew 27:62-28:1;

Mark 16:1-3 // Luke 24:1;

Matthew 28:2-4;

John 20:1-10;

Matthew 28:5-8 // Mark 16:4-8 // Luke 24:2-8;

Mark 16:9 // John 20:11-18;

Matthew 28:9-15;

Luke 24:13-35;

Luke 24:36-43 // John 20:19-31.

The presumed sequence of events

0. [Saturday—guards seal the stone and set up a watch (Matthew 27:62-66).]
1. Jesus rises from the dead.^a
2. Early Sunday morning the women set out for the tomb—Magdalene (John 20:1); Magdalene and Mary (Matthew 28:1); Magdalene, Mary and Salome (Mark 16:1-2); Magdalene, Mary, Joanna and others (Luke 23:55-24:1, 10).^b
3. On the way they worry about the stone (Mark 16:3).
4. Before they arrive an angel rolls back the stone, complete with earthquake, etc. (Matthew 28:2-4).^c
5. They arrive and see that the stone has been rolled back, but the angel was no longer visible outside (Mark 16:4, Luke 24:2, John 20:1).^d
6. Magdalene takes off immediately to tell Peter—Peter and John run to the tomb to see (John 20:2-3).^e
7. Before Peter and John get there the other women enter the tomb, and see and hear the angels (Luke 24:3-8, Mark 16:5-7, Matthew 28:5-7).^f
8. They leave the tomb in fear, saying nothing to the guards or anyone they chance to meet (Mark 16:8, Matthew 28:8a).
9. Probably right after the women leave, and before Peter and John arrive, the guards take off (Matthew 28:11-15).
10. Peter and John come and go [to their own homes] (John 20:4-10; cf. Luke 24:12 that is an historical aside).^a No mention is made of either angels or

^a None of the Evangelists mentions the moment of the resurrection; probably because that information was never revealed. The fact is taken for granted (the “firstborn from the dead”—Col. 1:18, Rev. 1:5; the “firstfruits”—1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

^b The several accounts say it was very early, as the day began to dawn, while it was still dark, but by the time they got to the tomb the sun had risen. There is no discrepancy: recall that the garden is on the west side of a mountain, so even after the sun had risen the tomb would be in shadow, besides the shade of the trees. It was still darkish when they started out, but away from the mountain it was already day by the time they arrived—the tomb area would still be gloomy.

^c The removal of the stone was not to let Jesus out; it was to let witnesses in! If we only had Matthew’s record, we could assume that the women saw the shining angel outside the sepulcher, but a comparison of the other accounts leads to a different understanding. So how do we know those details? Matthew 28:11 says that “some” of the guard reported to the priests and accepted big money to spread a false report, but what happened to the other guards? I have no doubt that some of those guards were soundly converted and gave an eyewitness account to the Christian community.

^d If the angel had been visible, Magdalene would not have taken off, because she would not have thought that the body had been stolen. The hypothesis that she came once alone, before the others, is highly improbable (see the next note).

^e Her use of the plural “we”, verse 2, indicates that she was not alone at the tomb.

^f I take Matthew and Mark to be parallel, describing the same event: the angel who rolled away the stone is now inside the sepulcher, sitting on the right side; he has turned off his neon and appears to be a young man clothed in white; each account furnishes a few distinct details in the angel’s speech—Mark includes “and Peter” [was Peter looking over his shoulder?]. The women were not sure they were happy with the situation, and the ‘young man’ may well have said more than Matthew and Mark record. I take it that Luke records a second inning: the women are having trouble assimilating the missing body (they were loaded with spices to put on that body—was their effort to be wasted?); so the angel calls in a colleague and they both turn on their neon—a little shock treatment; then they appeal to Jesus’ own words, which the women remember, and with that they are convinced and go their way.

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- guards, so presumably Peter and John saw no one—the place appeared to be abandoned.
11. Magdalene returns to the sepulcher but does not get there until everyone is gone (that is why she thought Jesus was the gardener); Jesus appears to her first (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-17).^b
 12. Then Jesus appears to the other women and they go on their way to tell the disciples (Matthew 28:9-10, Luke 24:9-11).^c
 13. Magdalene goes and tells the disciples (Mark 16:10-11, John 20:18).
 14. Later in the day Jesus appears to Peter (cf. Luke 24:34).^d
 15. The Emmaus road episode (Luke 24:13-35, Mark 16:12-13).^e

^a Verse 8 says that John (the author) “saw and believed”. What did John ‘see’ that made him ‘believe’? He saw the linen strips ‘lying’, that is, in the form of the body, only there was no body inside them! If someone had stolen the body, as Magdalene supposed, they would have taken the wrapped package (much easier to carry) and there would have been no linen strips. If someone had unwrapped the body, for whatever reason, there would have been a sizable mound of linen strips and spices piled up (how much cloth would it take to wrap up a hundred pounds of spices?). No, Jesus simply passed through the cloth, as He would later pass through the wall of the upper room, leaving the package like a mummy case or empty cocoon. When John saw that he understood that the only possible explanation was resurrection.

^b When the disciples took off running, of course Magdalene followed them back to the tomb. But she was winded, and could not keep up with them (actually, in that culture women probably seldom ran, so she would really be out of breath, but she was not about to be left out of the action, either). She may have arrived as they were leaving; if not they would pass her on the road. In verse 12 John says that she saw two ‘angels’. How did John know they were angels? He had just been there and knew there were no human beings around (the guards were presumably gone before the two got there). The angels were in white, but probably not shining, or Magdalene would have been shaken out of her despair. She was so locked in to her sorrow that not even seeing the wrappings collapsed without the body sank in.

^c The question may reasonably be asked: How could Magdalene have time to go and come and Jesus appear to her first and still have time to appear to the women before they got to the disciples, the more so since Matthew 28:8 says the women “hurried and ran”? I offer the following considerations in relief of the perceived difficulty: 1) The Jerusalem of that day was small and distances were short (“nearby”, John 19:42)—it was probably less than a mile, or even half a mile, between the tomb and Peter’s house, as well as where the other disciples were staying; 2) the women were probably slow in entering the tomb—the guards making like dead men, dark, spooky (it’s a cemetery), all very strange, Magdalene the impulsive one wasn’t there; they would be leery—Magdalene may have been almost to Peter’s house before they worked up the courage to enter the tomb; 3) Magdalene, Peter and John were excited and had extra adrenalin—it didn’t take that long; 4) the women ran out of the tomb and the garden, but not necessarily all the way to the disciples—once they got away from the garden and on ‘safe’ ground they may well have slowed down, or even stopped, to get a grip on themselves and discuss what had happened (Mary, the mother of James, was no longer young, and none of the women was used to running, not to mention the type of clothing they wore). Putting it all together, I see no reason to doubt that it all happened just like the Text says.

^d I see no way of determining the correct sequence of items 14 and 15, it could have been the other way around. Also, during resurrection Sunday (we do not know just when) many resurrected saints “went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:53), which would have been **dramatic** confirmatory evidence to those who were visited.

^e Some have alleged a discrepancy between the two accounts—their mistake is to tie both accounts to the eleven, which was not the case. There were other people in the upper room, besides the eleven. The eleven were reclining at a table, the ‘others’ would be nearer the door. The two from Emmaus come bursting in, all excited and probably feeling just a little important; it is the ‘others’, probably to ‘prick their balloon’, who say, “Oh, we already know that; He has appeared to Simon”. (Human nature has not changed, and they did not have the Holy Spirit yet.) While the two from Emmaus are talking with the ‘others’, not the eleven, Jesus Himself appears and interacts with the eleven (and they think He’s a ghost!). Mark, writing for a Roman audience, is emphasizing that the disciples were not gullible, did not ‘believe’ because they wanted to—in verse 11 they did not believe Magdalene, in verse 13 nor the two, in verse 14 Jesus rebukes their unbelief. There is nothing here to impugn the genuineness of these

16. Jesus appears to the eleven, Thomas being absent (Luke 24:36-48, Mark 16:14-18, John 20:19-23).
17. After Jesus leaves, Thomas comes in and they tell him (John 20:24-25).

Post resurrection day events

1. The next Sunday Jesus appears to them again and deals with Thomas (John 20:26-29).
2. Jesus appears to the seven beside the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-22).
3. On a mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20).
4. Jesus appears to over 500, also to James (1 Corinthians 15:6-7).^a
5. The ascension from Olivet (Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:49-51, Acts 1:3-12).

Conclusion

In sum, I see no reason for doubt: it all happened just as the Text describes it. There are no discrepancies, in spite of the variety of details supplied by various eyewitnesses (including converted guards) and written down by four different Evangelists. It is just what we should expect from an inspired Text—inspired and preserved, to this day.

3) Some related anomalies in Matthew's genealogy of the Christ

Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus, the Messiah, has a legal right to sit on David's throne (perhaps answering the Lord's own question in Matthew 22:42). Although there are many kings in the genealogy, David is the only one who is described as 'the king', twice. Since David's throne has to do with the covenant people, and that covenant began with Abraham, the genealogy does as well. It ends with Joseph, Jesus' 'father' by adoption, since Jesus had none of Joseph's genes.^b It was sufficient to Matthew's purpose to show that Joseph was a linear, and legal, descendant of David, the number of intervening generations was beside the point. Matthew's Gospel was directed primarily to a Jewish audience, to whom legal rights were important.

Matthew divides his genealogy of the Christ into three groups of fourteen 'generations'. A comparison of his genealogy with the OT record indicates that it is not a 'normal', straightforward genealogy—there are some anomalies.^c In an effort to understand the purpose behind the anomalies, I will begin with the second group, which may be said to be made up of sovereign kings of Judah. Going back to the OT we discover that there were seventeen such kings, not fourteen. But, Matthew says 'generations', not reigns, and since Ahaziah reigned only one year, Amon only two, and Abijah only three, they can be assimilated into the fourteen

verses—they were certainly written by Mark at the same time that he wrote the rest. According to Matthew 28:17 many days later some were still doubting. In any group of people there are always differing levels of belief and unbelief. People's heads work differently, and at different speeds.

^a I see no way of determining the correct sequence of the events in items 3 and 4.

^b Indeed He could not, because of the prophecies in Jeremiah 22:30 and 36:30, wherein Jeconiah and Jehoiakim are cursed. However, Jesus received some of David's genes through Mary (please see the note that accompanies Luke 3:23 in my translation).

^c I believe that Matthew composed his Gospel under divine guidance, which leads me to the conclusion that the anomalies were deliberate, on God's part. Therefore, my attempt to unravel the anomalies tries to understand the Holy Spirit's purpose in introducing them into the record.

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generations. That said, however, we next observe that Abijah and Amon are duly included in the list, while Ahaziah is not, followed by Joash and Amaziah. The three excluded names form a group between Jehoram and Uzziah.

Verse eight says that "Joram begot Uzziah", the verb 'begot' being the same one used throughout, but in fact Uzziah was Joram's (Jehoram's) great-great-grandson. So we see that 'begot' refers to a linear descendant, not necessarily a son. We also see that the number 'fourteen' is not being used in a strictly literal sense (whatever the author's purpose may have been). It also appears that 'generation' is not being used in a strictly literal sense. It follows that we are looking at an edited genealogy, edited in accord with the author's purpose.

In an effort to understand why the group of three was excluded, I ask: What might they have in common? They had in common genes from Ahab and Jezebel, as also a direct spiritual and moral influence from them. Ahaziah's mother was Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, so 50% of his genes were from Ahab. 2 Kings 8:27 says that Ahaziah was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab, referring to the mother of Joash, so 75% of his genes were from Ahab. Since Joash married Jehoaddan of Jerusalem, the contamination in Amaziah was down to 37%, and then in Uzziah it was below 20%.^a This is my best guess as to why that group was excluded; a rebuke after the fact. (Matthew is giving an edited genealogy of the Christ, and Ahab's genes were definitely undesirable.)

We come now to another anomaly: $14 \times 3 = 42$, but only 41 names are given; what to do? We begin by noticing that both David and Jeconiah are mentioned on both sides of a 'boundary'. I will consider the second boundary first. Verse eleven says that "Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers", passing over Jehoiakim, Jeconiah's father. But according to the Record, it was Jehoiakim who had "brothers", not Jeconiah. Since we need the real Jeconiah in the third group to make fourteen names, I place Jeconiah in the third group—counting both Jeconiah and Christ we get fourteen names.^b But why was Jehoiakim omitted? So far as I know, he was the only king who had the perversity to actually cut up a scroll with God's Word and then throw it in the fire, Jeremiah 36:23, and the curse that follows in verse 30 is stated to be a consequence of that act. If we count David in the second group, Jehoiakim would make fifteen. But without Jehoiakim we need David in the second group to make fourteen. But that raises another difficulty: we also need David in the first group, to make fourteen. Because of the "brothers", I consider that the 'Jeconiah' before the captivity actually stands for Jehoiakim, whose name is omitted because of his heinous crime in destroying the scroll. In that event, we have fourteen without David, so he can be assigned to the first group.

If the second group is made up of kings, the first group is made up of patriarchs. Acts 2:29 calls David a 'patriarch', so we may not disqualify him on that basis, but of course he is better known as a king—indeed he is expressly called that in the genealogy (the only one who is). Although David may be both patriarch and king, he may not be two people, nor two generations. In consequence, I

^a It was Dr. Floyd N. Jones who started me thinking along this line (*Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics*, Kings Word Press, 1999, pp. 38-42).

^b Of course, if four people were omitted from the second group, some may also have been omitted from the third, but we have no way of knowing, and it would make no difference to the purpose of this genealogy.

am decidedly uncomfortable with the proposal that David must be placed in both groups—we should neither split him in two, not double him. To my mind, he fits better in the second group, but that would leave only thirteen for the first one. Enter Rahab and Ruth (and if four people were omitted from the second group, why could not some also be omitted from the first?). However, I tentatively assign David to the first group, making fourteen. Since David is used as the first boundary, and the purpose of the genealogy is to establish Jesus' right to David's throne, his name is repeated, but I do not count him in the second group.

There were 340 years between the death of Joshua and the birth of David, and Salmon married Rahab while Joshua was still alive, presumably. That sort of obliges Boaz, Obed and Jesse to do their begetting at age 100, or thereabouts (perhaps not impossible, but certainly improbable). But what if 'begot' is being used for a grandson, as we have already seen? (Josiah begot Jeconiah, with no mention of Jehoiakim.) If Athaliah's genes were enough to disqualify Ahaziah, what about Rahab's genes? She was not even an Israelite, and worse, she was a prostitute. Now the Law says some rather severe things about prostitutes.^a "You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog [catamite] to the house of the LORD your God... for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 23:18). For a priest to marry a harlot would profane his posterity (Leviticus 21:13-15), so how about an ancestor of the Messiah? Of course it is possible for a prostitute to be saved, but why was she even mentioned? And why were Tamar, Ruth, and Uriah's wife mentioned? Women were not normally included in genealogies.^b

Now consider Ruth. She was a Moabitess, and according to Deuteronomy 23:3 a Moabite could not enter the assembly of the LORD to the tenth generation. [To me it is an astonishing example of the grace of God that she was included in the Messiah's line.] She embraced Naomi's God, but what about her genes? 'Ten generations' has to do with genes, not spiritual conversion. Moab was a son of Lot, and the first 'Moabite' would be his son, probably a contemporary of Jacob. From Jacob to Salmon we have seven generations, certainly fewer than ten, so Ruth could not enter. Could it be possible that Rahab and Ruth each represent a missing generation? Could that be why they are mentioned?^c If we divide 300 years by five, then the average begetting age would be 60, certainly within the bounds of reason (and if more than two generations were skipped, the number would be further reduced). I repeat that this is not a 'normal' genealogy. Why did Matthew want three 'equal' groups, and why did he choose 'fourteen'? Perhaps for stylistic (symmetry, balance) and mnemonic reasons. However, my concern has been to address any perceived errors of fact, which an inspired Text should not have.

To conclude: Matthew gives us an edited genealogy of the Messiah. If on the one hand it emphasizes the Messiah's grace, on the other it reflects the Messiah's holiness—He cannot overlook sin and its consequences (the four excluded names

^a However, "the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). This being an edited genealogy of the Messiah, perhaps Rahab, and the other women, were included to emphasize the grace of the Messiah.

^b None of the decent, honest, honorable, responsible mothers are mentioned, only 'exceptions'!

^c Tamar had suffered a severe injustice, and David's sin with Bathsheba was unusually perverse (cowardly murder), but Rahab was probably a victim of circumstances, and Ruth was certainly not to blame for having been born a Moabitess.

in the second group are due to that holiness). If the four women were included as a reflection of the Messiah's grace, it is also true that the consequences of sin are not hidden—the fourth is called simply 'Uriah's wife' (not 'widow', even though Solomon was conceived after the murder of Uriah—David did not marry a widow, he stole someone else's wife).

4) Mary's genealogy

Luke 3:23

Kai autoj h=n o` Ihsouj(w`sei etwn triakonta arcomenouj(wn w`j enomizeto ui`oj lwshf(tou Hlei(tou Matqan(tou Leui(tou Melci(...

There are four words here that invite special attention: *και*, *αυτος*, *ἦν* and *ὡς*. Since verse 22 ends with a statement from the Father at Jesus' baptism, it is clear that verse 23 begins another section. But the conjunction that signals the transition is *και* and not *δε*, as one would expect—this means that 'Jesus' continues as the topic. But in that event, how does one explain the personal pronoun *αυτος*, the more so in such an emphatic position? If the author's purpose was simply to register Jesus as a son of Joseph, as many suppose, why didn't he just write *και ο Ιησους ἦν υἱος Ιωσηφ*, etc.?

But then, why write *ὡς ενομιζετο*? It seems to me that the normal meaning of "as was supposed" is to affirm that Jesus was in fact Joseph's son; but that is precisely what Jesus **was not**. Luke has already made clear that Jesus' real Father was the Holy Spirit—1:34-35, 43, 45; 2:49. So what Luke is really saying is that although the people supposed Jesus to be Joseph's son, He actually had a different lineage—we should translate "so it was supposed". (Recall that a faithful and loyal translation seeks to transmit correctly the meaning intended by the author.)

The verb *ἦν* is the only independent one in the whole paragraph, verses 23-38. Is it working with the participle *αρχομενος* in a periphrastic construction? That appears to be the tendency of the eclectic text that places the participle right after Jesus (following less than 2% of the Greek MSS), which makes Jesus out to be in fact Joseph's son. It seems to me to be far more natural to take the participial clauses as being circumstantial: "beginning at about thirty years of age" and "being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph". Setting those two clauses aside, the independent clause that remains is *ἦν ο Ιησους του Ηλει*, "Jesus was of Eli".

The participle 'beginning' requires an object, that the Text leaves implicit; from the context it seems clear that we may supply 'His ministry', or some such thing, which is why most versions do so. I suggest the following rendering: "Beginning *His ministry* at about thirty years of age, being (so it was supposed) a son of Joseph, Jesus was actually of Eli, of Mathan, of Levi..." I take it that the emphatic pronoun *αυτος* heightens the contrast between what the people imagined and the reality. Jesus was a grandson of Eli, Mary's father—Luke gives the genealogy of Jesus through His mother, while Matthew gives it through His stepfather. Jesus received some of David's genes through Mary and Nathan; the glorified body now at the Father's right hand, and that will one day occupy David's throne, has some of his genes.

The eclectic text gives our verse a different wording: *και αυτος ἦν Ιησους αρχομενος ὡσει ετων τριακοντα, ων υἱος, ὡς ενομιζετο, Ιωσηφ του Ηλι του Μαθθατ του Λευι του Μελχι*... The RSV translates it like this: "Jesus, when he began his minis-

try, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat..." Is not the normal meaning of this rendering that Jesus was in fact the son of Joseph? However, every version that I recall seeing has "Joseph, the son of Heli", which directly contradicts Matthew, "Jacob begot Joseph". The word 'son' (without the article) occurs only with Joseph, although most versions supply it on down the genealogy. But Luke is precisely correct in not using it, because it would not hold for the first and last names in the list—Eli did not beget Jesus (nor Joseph) and God did not beget Adam.

So then, properly understood Luke does not contradict Matthew (with reference to Joseph's father), nor does he affirm an error of fact (with reference to Jesus' father).

5) The 'Legion' and the pigs: where was it?

We need to start with the evidence supplied by the Greek manuscripts. We encounter the episode in three of the Gospels.

Matthew 8:28: γεργησηων 98% (Gergesenes) AV, NKJV
γαδαρηων 2% (Gadarenes) NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; others *Gerasenes*".

Mark 5:1: γαδαρηων 95.5% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργησηων 4.1% (Gergesenes)
γερασηων 0.3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*".

Luke 8:26: γαδαρηων 97% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργησηων 2% (Gergesenes) TEV
γερασηων 0.3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, etc.

NIV footnote: "Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*; also in verse 37".

Luke 8:37: γαδαρηων 96% (Gadarenes) AV, NKJV
γεργησηων 3.5% (Gergesenes) TEV
γερασηων 0.3% (Gerasenes) NIV, NASB, LB, etc.

I will begin with Mark. Jesus arrived at "the region [not 'province'] of the Gadarenes". Gadara was the capital city of the Roman province of Perara, located some six miles from the Sea of Galilee. Since Mark was writing for a Roman audience,^a "the region of the Gadarenes" was a perfectly reasonable description of the site. Lamentably, the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue follows about five Greek manuscripts of objectively inferior quality (against at least 1,700 better ones) in reading 'Gerasenes' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The NIV footnote is dishonest: to use 'some' to describe over 1,600 manuscripts

^a Although, as explained elsewhere, I understand that Matthew was published first, and Mark probably had a copy open before him as he wrote, yet he deliberately changed Matthew's 'Gergesenes' to 'Gadarenes'—to his intended Roman audience 'Gergesa' would be unknown, while some would indeed know about 'Gadara'.

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against five is a dishonest use of the Queen's English (to use 'others' to refer to some 60 is acceptable).

Luke also has Jesus arriving at "the region of the Gadarenes". Since he was writing for a Greek audience, he follows Mark's example. Again NIV has a dishonest footnote. It is most likely that 'Gerasa' is a fiction, a 'place' that never existed. On the other hand, 'Gergesa' certainly did exist, although we no longer know the exact location. As I will explain while discussing Matthew, below, I have no doubt that it was a village near the spot where Jesus landed.

Matthew clearly wrote 'Gergesenes' rather than 'Gadarenes'. Since he was writing for a Jewish audience, and many Galileans would be quite familiar with the Sea of Galilee, he provided a more localized description. Further, try to picture the events in your mind. Do you suppose that the swineherds ran six miles to Gadara? The populace would certainly not run the six miles back. All of that would have taken entirely too long. To me it is obvious that there was a village close by, probably within half a mile, called 'Gergesa'. It was to that village that the swineherds ran, told their story, and brought the residents back. Galileans familiar with the Sea of Galilee would certainly recognize 'Gergesa'.

Not only does Matthew name a different place, he affirms that there were really two demonized men, whereas Mark and Luke mention only one. As a former tax collector, numerical precision was important to Matthew. Neither Mark nor Luke use the number 'one'; they merely commented on the more prominent of the two, the one who wanted to go with Jesus. I understand that indeed there were two of them.

6) **Abiathar is not Ahimelech**

Mark 2:26 X 1 Samuel 21:1

Some of my readers may be aware that this verse has destroyed the faith of at least one scholar in our day, although he was reared in an evangelical home. He understood Jesus to be saying that Abiathar was the priest with whom David dealt, when in fact it was his father, Ahimelech. If Jesus stated an historical error as fact, then he could not be God. So he turned his back on Jesus. I consider that his decision was lamentable and unnecessary, and in the interest of helping others who may be troubled by this verse, I offer the following explanation:

"How he entered the house of God (making Abiathar high priest) and ate the consecrated bread, which only priests are permitted to eat, and shared it with those who were with him."

My rendering is rather different than the 'in the days of Abiathar the high priest' of the AV, NKJV and NIV. We are translating three Greek words that very literally would be 'upon Abiathar high-priest' (but the preposition here, *ἐπι*, is the most versatile of the Greek prepositions, and one of its many meanings/uses is 'toward'—the standard lexicon, BDAG, lists fully eighteen areas of meaning, quite apart from sub-divisions). When we go back to the Old Testament account, we discover that David actually conversed with Ahimelech, Abiathar's father, who was the high priest at that moment (1 Samuel 21:1-9). Within a few days Saul massacred Ahimelech and 84 other priests (1 Samuel 22:16-18), but his son Abiathar escaped and went to David, taking the ephod with him (1 Samuel 22:20-23; 23:6). That David could use it to inquire of the LORD rather suggests that it had to be the ephod that only the high priest wore, since only that ephod had the Urim and Thummim (1 Samuel 23:9-12; cf. Numbers 27:21, Ezra 2:63).

That ephod was to a high priest like the crown was to a king; so how could Abiathar have it? The Text states that David's visit filled Ahimelech with fear, presumably because he too saw Doeg the Edomite and figured what would happen. Now why wasn't Abiathar taken with the others? I suggest that Ahimelech foresaw what would happen (Doeg probably took off immediately, and Ahimelech figured he wouldn't have much time), so he deliberately consecrated Abiathar, gave him the ephod, and told him to hide—he probably did it that very day (once the soldiers arrived to arrest Ahimelech and the other 84, it would be too late). Abiathar escaped, but carried the news of the massacre with him; only now he was the high priest.

Putting it all together, it was David's visit that resulted in Abiathar's becoming high priest prematurely, as David himself recognized, and to which Jesus alluded in passing (which is why I used parentheses). But why would Jesus allude to that? I suppose because the Bible is straightforward about the consequences of sin, and David lied to Ahimelech. Although Jesus was using David's eating that bread as an example, He did not wish to gloss over the sin, and its consequences.

Recall that Jesus was addressing Pharisees, who were steeped in the OT Scriptures. A notorious case like Saul's massacre of 85 priests would be very well known. And of course, none of the NT had yet been written, so any understanding of what Jesus said had to be based on 1 Samuel ("Have you never read...?"). If we today wish to understand this passage, we need to place ourselves in the context recorded in Mark 2:23-28. The Pharisees would understand that if Abiathar was in possession of the ephod with the Urim and Thummim, then he was the high priest. And how did he get that way? He got that way because of David's visit. It was an immediate consequence of that visit.

Some may object that 'making' is a verb, not a preposition. Well, the 'in the days of' of the AV, etc., though not a verb, is a phrase. Both a pronoun and an adverb may stand for a phrase, and a preposition may as well. TEV and Phillips actually use a verb: 'when... was'; NLT has 'during the days when... was'. Where the others used from two to five words, I used only one.

7) Bethsaida, or Tiberias?

Luke X John

The question is: just where did the feeding of the 5,000 men take place? Matthew 14:13 and Mark 6:32 merely say that it was in a deserted spot, without identification. But Luke 9:10 says it was in "a deserted place belonging to a town named Bethsaida",^a while John 6:23 informs us that the spot was near the town of Tiberias. Well now, Tiberias was located on the west side of the Sea, a mile or two above the place where the Jordan River leaves the Sea. But Bethsaida was at the top of the Sea, a little to the east of where the Jordan enters the Sea. What to do?

^a Lamentably, the eclectic Greek text currently in vogue, following a mere half of one percent of the Greek manuscripts (and that half made up of objectively inferior ones), says that they went "to a town named Bethsaida". This is an obvious perversity because two verses later the same text has them in a deserted place. So the editors of that text make Luke contradict himself, as well as contradicting the other three Gospels, since all agree that the place was deserted. Unfortunately, this perversity is duly reproduced by NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.

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We may deduce from Mark 6:31 and John 6:17 and 24 that Jesus and His disciples started out from Capernaum, where Jesus had His base of operations. It happens that Capernaum, like Bethsaida, was situated at the top of the Sea, but a little to the west of the entrance of the Jordan. To go from Capernaum to Bethsaida by boat one would not get far from the shore. But John 6:1 says that Jesus "went over the Sea of Galilee", and that agrees better with Tiberias, since there is a large bay between Capernaum and Tiberias, although they are both on the west side of the Sea—they crossed close to ten miles of water. Further, after the feast, Matthew 14:22 says they went by boat "to the other side", and verse 24 has them "in the middle of the Sea"; while Mark 6:45 says that they went by boat "to the other side, to Bethsaida", and verse 47 has them "in the middle of the Sea"; and John 6:17 says that they "started to cross the Sea toward Capernaum", and verse 19 that "they had rowed some three or four miles".

Well now, to stay close to the shore is one thing, to go over the Sea is another. Further, if they were already in or near Bethsaida, how could they cross the Sea in order to get there (Mark 6:45)? It becomes clear that the miracle in fact took place near Tiberias, as John affirms. But that raises another difficulty: how could a property near Tiberias 'belong' to Bethsaida (Luke 9:10)? Either it had been deeded to the town somehow, or, more likely, it belonged to a family that lived in Bethsaida. My reason for saying this is based on the Text.

John 6:17 says that they "started toward Capernaum", while Mark 6:45 says that they went "to Bethsaida". Since the two towns were a short distance apart, at the beginning of the crossing the direction would be virtually the same. I understand that they did indeed go to Bethsaida, but spent very little time there, going from there directly to Genesaret. Indeed, the day after the miracle Jesus was already back in Capernaum (John 6:24-25). But just why did they make that side trip to Bethsaida (Genesaret lies just south of Capernaum)? I imagine the following: a property near Tiberias, but belonging to someone in Bethsaida, would likely be deserted, a great place for a picnic. I suppose that Jesus had permission to use the place, when He wanted to get away, but no one had foreseen a crowd of perhaps 15,000 (5,000 men plus women and children). Please pardon the unpleasant consideration, but what effect would a crowd that size have on the hygiene and appearance of the place? I conclude that Jesus felt obligated to give a report to the owner, in Bethsaida.

While we are here, allow me to call attention to another miracle Jesus performed, that you will not find in the usual lists. As already noted, Matthew 14:24 and Mark 6:46 say that they were in the middle of the Sea, but John 6:19 is more precise, saying that they had gone perhaps four miles. It happens that a crossing from Tiberias to Bethsaida would involve about eight miles. And now, attention please to John 6:21, "Then they wanted to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going". If the total distance was eight miles, and they had only managed half of it, then Jesus transported the boat four miles instantly. Now that was a fair sized miracle, to transport a boat four miles in an instant! You will not find this miracle in most lists, because few people take the time to give a detailed examination to the Sacred Text.

8) 'Cainan' #2

Luke 3:36 X Genesis 11:12

"35 of Serug, of Reu, of Peleg, of Eber, of Shela, 36 of Cainan, of Arphaxad, of Shem, of Noah, of Lamech,"

There are several spelling variations that together are attested by almost 1% of the MSS: 99% have Καϊναν. Apparently only two omit, P^{75v} and D, but no printed text follows their lead. So there is no reasonable doubt that Luke in fact wrote that Shelah was fathered by Cainan, not Arphaxad. This Cainan has been widely used to justify treating the genealogies in Genesis like accordions—if one name was demonstrably left out in the Genesis account, then who knows how many others were also left out. This Cainan is also used to deny the validity of constructing a strict chronology based on the time spans given in the genealogies.

But where did Luke get this information? The LXX contains Cainan in Genesis 11:12, but is so different from the Massoretic text here that it looks like fiction. Recall that the LXX we know is based on codices Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, produced centuries after Luke. It is more likely that our LXX is based on Luke than vice versa. Where then did Luke get it? I understand that Luke obtained the information about this Cainan from records existing in his day, and being correct information was led by the Holy Spirit to include it in his Gospel. Just like Jude, who quoted Enoch—Enoch's prophecy must have been in existence in Jude's day, but we have no copy in Hebrew today (though Jews are reported to have used one so recently as the 13th century A.D.); similarly we have no copy of Luke's source.^a

This brief note was inspired by the discussion of the subject given by Dr. Floyd N. Jones in *Chronology of the Old Testament*^b (which book comes close to solving all the alleged numerical discrepancies in the OT, at least as I see it). However, the explanation that follows is original with me (if anyone else has proposed it, I am unaware). Let's recall the exact wording of Genesis 11:12-13. "Arphaxad lived thirty-five years and begot Salah; after he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters."

The verb 'begot' requires that Salah be a blood descendent of Arphaxad, not adopted. He could be a grandson, the son of a son of Arphaxad, or even a great-grandson, etc., except that in this case the time frame only has room for one intervening generation. The plain meaning of the formula in the Text, 'W lived X years

^a Let us recall Luke's stated purpose in writing: "It seemed good to me also, most excellent Theophilus, having taken careful note of everything from Above, to write to you with precision and in sequence, so that you may know the certainty of the things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:3-4). Given his stated purpose in writing, Luke's account needs to be historically accurate (cf. 2:2 and 3:1). So then, I take it that the Holy Spirit guided Luke to include Cainan #2; I will argue the same for Joram below. While I am on this tack, my solution to the 'Jeremiah' problem in Matthew 27:9-10 is similar. Daniel (9:2) refers to "the books" (plural) in connection with Jeremiah the prophet. So I assume that Matthew had access to other writings of Jeremiah, of which no copy survives.

^b *Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to the Basics* (Floyd Nolen Jones, The Woodlands, TX: Kings Word Press, 1999, pp. 29-36). (This is the 14th edition, revised and enlarged—the 1st came out in 1993.) I imagine that many readers may feel uncomfortable with the author's very dogmatic way of expressing himself, but I would urge them to filter out the rhetorical style and concentrate on the substantial arguments, that are of extraordinary value. For example, his solution to the conundrum of the reigns of the kings on the two sides of the divided monarchy is simply brilliant, and to my mind obviously correct, leaving no loose ends. (In this connection, he debunks the claims of Edwin R. Thiele and William F. Albright.)

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and begot Y; after W begot Y he lived Z years,' is that W was X years old when Y was born, is it not?^a I take the clear meaning of the Hebrew Text to be that Arphaxad was 35 years old when Salah was born, whatever we may decide to do about 'Cainan'.

Let's try to imagine the situation in the years immediately following the Flood. After the Flood the 'name of the game' was to replenish the earth. Indeed, the divine command was: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 9:1). So, whom could Noah's grandsons marry? Obviously their cousins, Noah's granddaughters. There would be an urgency to reproduce—thus, the girls would be married off at puberty, and the boys would not be wasting around either. The women would be giving birth as often as they possibly could. Really, the absolute top priority would be to increase the number of people.

Arphaxad was born two years after the flood, but his wife could have been born a year or two earlier. (The Sacred Text is clear to the effect that only eight souls entered the ark, but some of the women could have conceived during the Flood.) Thus, Arphaxad could have fathered "Cainan" when he was 17/18. Similarly, Cainan could have fathered Salah when he was 17/18. In this way Arphaxad could be said to have "begotten" Salah when he was 35. Cainan could have died early or been passed over in Genesis because the time span did not constitute a 'generation', or both. Or, as things got back to normal, culturally speaking, the haste with which Arphaxad and Cainan procreated might have been viewed as unseemly. The expedient of omitting Cainan would make the account more 'normal' while preserving precision as to the elapsed time.

But Luke would be correct in saying that Salah was "of" Cainan who was "of" Arphaxad. Salah was Arphaxad's grandson. In any case, the Messianic line was passed on by Salah. Without Luke's record I, for one, would never have stopped to consider what must have happened immediately following the Flood—the absolute priority must have been to increase the number of people.

9) Entering, or leaving Jericho?

Luke 18:35, 19:1 X Mark 10:46 X Matthew 20:29-30

In the NKJV, Luke 18:35 and 19:1 read like this: "Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging... Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho." Luke plainly states that Jesus healed a blind man before entering Jericho (he mentions only one, but does not say that there was only one). And Mark 10:46 reads like this: "Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging." Mark plainly states that Jesus healed a blind man upon leaving Jericho (he names the blind man, referring only to him, but does not say that there was only one). And Matthew 20:29-30 reads like this: "Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road..." Matthew plainly states that Jesus healed two blind men upon leaving Jericho.

Well now, entering is one thing, and leaving is another, so which was it? Strange to relate, it was both! The Jericho that Joshua destroyed had been rebuilt

^a It follows that this formula destroys the 'accordion' gambit. There were precisely 130 years between Adam and Seth, 105 between Seth and Enosh, 90 between Enosh and Cainan¹, etc., etc.

(at least partially), and was inhabited. But in Jesus' day Herod had built a new Jericho, perhaps a kilometer away from the old one, also inhabited. So where would an intelligent beggar place himself? Presumably between the two towns. I take it that all three of the accounts before us transpired between the two Jerichos, so Jesus was leaving one and entering the other. There is no discrepancy. Luke and Mark probably give us the same incident, but what about Mathew? Besides stating that the men were two, he says that Jesus "touched their eyes", whereas according to Luke and Mark He only spoke. It is entirely probable that there was more than one beggar along that stretch of road, and any shouting could be heard for quite a ways. I take it that Matthew records a different incident. I suppose that Bartimaeus was healed first, and he shouted so loud that the two heard it all and knew what to do when their turn came.

10) Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time

According to John 18:12, there was a *chiliarch* among those who went to the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. Well now, a *chiliarch* commanded a thousand men (or perhaps a cohort, about 600). There would scarcely be more than one of them stationed in Jerusalem, so he was presumably the top commanding military officer in town. So what was the top military commander doing in Gethsemane at 2:00 a.m.? If he was there, it was because the governor, Pilate, had sent him. And why would Pilate do something like that? He had his reasons.

As governor, Pilate represented the Roman Empire. He was responsible for keeping the peace, according to Caesar's interests. In those days the city of Jerusalem was not very big, and keeping well informed would not have been difficult. Pilate was doubtless well aware of Jesus, and would have followed His career with attention. Someone with a large public following could be a threat. Moreover, since it was the chief priests' man who led the expedition, and they kept the prisoner, it is clear that they had gone to Pilate and convinced him that Jesus represented enough of a threat that something needed to be done about it. (Jesus had used violence in cleansing the temple, as well as totally disregarding their authority. Why would He not do the same against Rome?) Even so, just why Pilate decided to send his *chiliarch* is hard to say; perhaps to be sure that things were done professionally, as well as to form a professional opinion as to the nature of the threat. Certain it is that Pilate and the chief priests had agreed on a plan of action, as John makes clear, a plan that included death by crucifixion.

Both Mark 15:1 and John 18:28 inform us that it was early morning when Jesus was taken to Pilate, but John 19:14 states that it was around 6:00 a.m. when Pilate pronounced sentence. Even allowing that 'around' 6:00 was perhaps five or ten minutes after the hour, it could not have been later than 5:30 when the chief priests pounded on Pilate's door. Now then, we all know that one just does not go pounding on a governor's door at such an hour, especially a conquered people. Not only that, Pilate was dressed and waiting. Actually, he had doubtless been up, waiting for the *chiliarch's* report. But at that point he changed the game-plan. He went out and asked, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" (John 18:29). Their reply was petulant, "If he were not an evil-doer we would not have handed him over to you." They thought that they had an agreement, but something had made Pilate change his mind.

To understand what happened, we need to go back to Gethsemane, and the *chiliarch*. The traitor had told them that there would be eleven men besides

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Jesus, and that they had two swords (Luke 22:38). But they were country bumpkins with no fighting ability. Even so, the *chiliarch* probably had over twice as many men, and all were armed—he doubtless expected some attempt at resistance. When they arrived and stated their business, Jesus calmly identified Himself, but at His word they all fell to the ground (John 18:6). Later, after the traitor's kiss, Peter managed to slice off an ear, but not only did Jesus tell him to quit it, He healed the ear (Luke 22:51)! Then the disciples abandoned Jesus, and He allowed Himself to be bound, without resistance. So what sort of report would the *chiliarch* give to Pilate? It was more than obvious that Jesus was no wild-eyed insurrectionist. He had supernatural power, and yet submitted peacefully. And Jesus was impressive! Pilate had to conclude that the picture that the chief priests had painted was wrong, and so the agreement could not stand.

Now a *chiliarch* was a hardened and seasoned warrior, not easily impressed. He probably told Pilate that if it were up to him, he would leave Jesus alone! But Pilate had to deal with the chief priests, and he knew it would not be easy. In Acts 3:13 Peter affirms that Pilate was determined to let Jesus go, but the chief priests got what they wanted in the end. Close attention to the Record makes clear that Peter's affirmation is correct. Pilate wanted no part of killing Jesus! He made repeated attempts to 'get off the hook'. Consider:

- 1) Pilate answered their petulant response with, "You take him and judge him according to your law." To this they responded, "We are not permitted to execute anyone." This exchange indicates that execution had been in the agreement, but Pilate also rubbed salt in their wound, making them recognize that they were a subjugated people. Even so, he told them to do the judging, which would make them responsible.
- 2) Luke 23:2 probably gives the first concrete accusation: "We found this fellow perverting the nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, declaring himself to be Christ, a king." The part about taxes was a plain lie, but the part about the Christ was true. In any case, Pilate could not safely ignore such accusations, so he interrogated Jesus.
- 3) Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3 and John 18:33-38 all refer to this first interrogation. It revolved around the kingship of Jesus, which could be a crime against Caesar. Jesus affirms that He is a king, but His kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36). A kingdom that was not of this world would not represent a threat to Rome. So Pilate went out and said to the crowd, "I find no crime in him at all." If there was no crime, there should be no punishment.
- 4) This led to a barrage of further accusations, to which Jesus did not answer, which surprised Pilate (Matthew 27:12-14, Mark 15:3-5 and Luke 23:5). But among the accusations they mentioned Galilee, which allowed Pilate to learn that Jesus was a Galilean, thereby belonging to Herod's jurisdiction. As 'luck' would have it, Herod was in town and nearby. (He had doubtless been informed about what was afoot, since he also was up and dressed at that early hour.)
- 5) So Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, probably hoping that Herod would take responsibility. Luke is the only one who records this side-trip (23:7-12). But Jesus refused to speak; and what can you do with someone who won't talk? From the Lord's point of view, Herod was irrelevant; it was Pilate who had the authority to crucify. So, frustrated, Herod sent Him back, only now

- arrayed in a gorgeous robe. The whole side-trip probably took no more than fifteen minutes.
- 6) Poor Pilate, what was he to do? Next he tried the ‘releasing a prisoner at Passover’ gambit, hoping to release Jesus, but the crowd demanded Barabbas. (Both Matthew and Mark record that Pilate knew that the chief priests had acted out of envy.) In the middle of this proceeding, Pilate received a message from his wife, about her dream (Matthew 27:19) [she had probably been told why he didn’t go to bed that night]. When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, they demanded that he be crucified. When Pilate asked what evil Jesus had done, they just yelled all the louder. Luke gives us a little further information. Pilate affirmed that neither he nor Herod had found guilt in Jesus, but because of their fury he offered to flog Jesus, hoping that would appease them.
 - 7) Matthew, Mark and John give some account of the treatment Jesus received from the soldiers. They made a crown of thorns, probably poisonous, and then drove the thorns into His scalp by beating on the crown with a rod. The poison would cause the scalp to swell, and blood would ooze from the wounds. They covered His face with spittle. Although none of the Evangelists mentions it, Isaiah 50:6 was presumably fulfilled as well—a soldier grabbing a fistful of beard and giving a violent yank would tear away the skin holding the hair, which would leave a painful and ugly wound. The total effect must have been horrible, leaving Jesus unrecognizable—Isaiah 52:14 was literally fulfilled. Then Pilate had Him brought out and said, “Look at the man!” (He had repeated that he found no crime in Him.) Pilate was hoping that when the crowd saw how much Jesus had already suffered, they would be satisfied, but it only made them worse!
 - 8) To their “Crucify! Crucify him!” Pilate answered, “You take and crucify him, because I find no crime in him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he made himself ‘Son of God!’” That statement made Pilate more afraid than ever (John 19:6-8). So he took Jesus inside for a second interview. Although Pilate represented the greatest temporal power at that time, Jesus calmly affirmed that there was a higher power, and that He, Jesus, represented that higher power. It appears to me that Pilate at least half believed Him, because John 19:12 says, “From that moment Pilate really tried to release Him.” But the Jews did an ‘end run’.
 - 9) They kept shouting: “If you release this fellow you are no friend of Caesar’s! Whoever makes himself a king is opposing Caesar!” Oops! Pilate owed his position to Caesar’s good graces, and simply could not afford to do something that could be construed (even with a little twisting) as treason. He was beaten and knew it. But he still managed to get them to declare that their only king was Caesar.
 - 10) Sitting on the judgment seat, Pilate called for water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said: “I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. It’s your problem!” So in answer all the people said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children!” (Matthew 27:24-25). Terrible, terrible, terrible! This may well be the worst curse that any parents ever placed upon their descendants. Since Pilate declared Jesus to be righteous, and since the Jews took full responsibility, I suspect that God will not hold Pilate responsible. After all, he was fulfilling the Plan: Jesus had to die by crucifixion.

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Before bringing this article to a close, I would like to call attention to several further items that bear on Pilate's attitude.

- 1) Pilate had Jesus' 'crime' posted in *three* languages; he evidently wanted as wide an audience as possible. All four Gospels mention this, and from them we may understand that the full Accusation was: This is Jesus the Natsorean, the King of the Jews. That Pilate put "**the** Natsorean" (not Natsarene [Nazarene]) indicates that he had researched Jesus. The reference is to Isaiah 11:1; Jesus was David's Branch, the Messiah. Pilate was making a statement. When the chief priests complained, he answered, "What I have written, I have written!" (John 19:21-22).
- 2) All four Gospels mention the burial, but only Mark registers that when Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for permission to remove Jesus' body, Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. So he summoned the centurion to confirm the fact (15:44-45). As soon as Jesus died, the centurion most probably had left the scene, going back to headquarters, leaving the four soldiers to guard the two malefactors. Of course Pilate had experienced the three hours of darkness, and had felt the earthquake, but he was not on the scene. He knew that a person on a cross dies from asphyxiation. The weight of the body pushes the diaphragm against the lungs and he can't breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure that prolonged the agony—rather than die they would push against the nail to get a breath. Finally, when too weak to do that they would die for lack of air. (That is why they broke the legs of the two thieves; they then died within a few minutes.) Jesus had been on the cross for six hours, but victims could last several times that long. Whether just then or later, Pilate doubtless got a full report from the centurion. Jesus had given a great shout and then died. Obviously, if you are dying without air, you can't shout! The centurion knew that the cross had not killed Jesus. But what mere human can just tell his spirit to leave? $2 + 2 = 4$. Jesus had to be the Son of God.
- 3) Only Matthew mentions the sealing and guarding of the tomb (27:62-66). The chief priests went to Pilate requesting that the tomb be made secure until the third day. To this Pilate replied, "You have a guard; go make it as secure as you can!" His turn of phrase is interesting, "make it as secure as you can". In other words, he was hinting that it would not make any difference. I rather suspect that Pilate believed that Jesus would do what He said.

We learn from Tertullian that Pilate wrote a letter to the emperor suggesting that Jesus be added to the roster of Roman deities. Now to make a suggestion like that involved an element of risk. But evidently Pilate was sufficiently convinced that he took the risk. If I someday meet Pilate in Heaven, I will not be surprised. If his experience with Jesus resulted in his salvation, Pilate would likely suggest a different title for this study: Blessed Pilate—right place, right time!

11) How long was Jesus in the tomb?

Many books and articles have been written about this question. The principal difficulty derives from Jesus' own use of several different expressions to describe that time. Referring to the time period between His death and resurrection He Himself said—"the third day", "after three days" and "three days and three

nights". A careful look at all the relevant passages makes clear that the three phrases are not equal candidates. Consider:

There is only one instance of 'three days and three nights', to be found in Matthew 12:40. Jesus cites the experience of Jonah (Jonah 1:17) and says that He will have a similar experience. That we are in the presence of a Hebrew idiom will become apparent from what follows.

There are just two instances of 'after three days', to be found in Mark 8:31 and Matthew 27:63. In Mark Jesus is cited in an indirect quote, as Jesus tells the disciples what is going to happen to Him. In Matthew Jesus is quoted by the Jewish leaders as they ask Pilate to guard the tomb; but notice that in verse 64 they go on to say, "until the third day", so the two phrases would appear to be synonymous.

As for 'the third day', there are eleven direct instances, plus three related ones. Proper hermeneutic procedure requires that we interpret the few in terms of the many, and not the reverse. In Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Mark 9:31, 10:34;^a Luke 9:22, 18:33, Jesus is telling the disciples what is going to happen to Him. In Luke 24:7 the angel quotes Jesus to the women at the empty tomb. In Luke 24:46 the resurrected Jesus is speaking with the disciples. In Acts 10:40 Peter is preaching to Cornelius. In 1 Corinthians 15:4 Paul makes a statement. Those are the eleven direct instances. In Luke 24:21 Cleopas says to Jesus, "today is the third day since these things happened"—the 'these things' refers to the crucifixion, and the 'today' includes the resurrection, since he cites the women. In John 2:19 Jesus says, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it". In Luke 13:32 Jesus sends a message to Herod, "the third day I will be perfected". Those are the three related instances, for a total of fourteen. Well, the last one is marginal, so make it thirteen.

I suppose that all human cultures have the tendency to think that their way of seeing things is right, and all others wrong. But what to do when conflicts arise? When attempting to understand a given event, it is the culture within which it happened that must be respected. Jews and Brazilians handle time differently than do 'Westerners' in general. Here in Brazil, after church, we often say, "I'll see you in eight days", which means the next Sunday. The day in which you are is included in the number. We have biblical basis; consider John 20:26. "Well, after eight days His disciples were inside again, and Thomas with them." 'Eight days' from when? "Then at evening on that first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the middle" (John 20:19). The 'first day of the week' is Sunday; the use of "that" indicates that it was Resurrection Sunday. With few exceptions, the Church Universal has always understood that Jesus arose on a Sunday, as the Text plainly indicates. In John 20:26 "after eight days" means the next Sunday. To the 'western' mind, the use of 'after' is misleading; 'after eight days' would place one in the ninth day. But we are in the presence of a Hebrew idiom, wherein 'after eight days' = 'the eighth day'. This is plainly indicated in Matthew 27:63-64, where 'after three days' = 'until the third day'. But as already noted, the beginning day is included in the number; so 'after eight days' = 'the eighth day' =

^a In Mark 10:34 the eclectic text currently in vogue reads 'after three days', following a mere 0.7% of the extant Greek manuscripts, which manuscripts are of objectively inferior quality, demonstrably so.

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seven consecutive solar days of elapsed time (although the first and last solar day may not be a full 24 hours).

Now consider Luke 23:53-24:1. “Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock, where no one had ever been laid. **54** It was a Preparation day; the Sabbath was drawing near. **55** The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed along, and they saw the tomb and how His body was placed there. **56** Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. **1** Then on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb carrying the spices that they had prepared, along with some others.” After the women observed the burial, they rested for one day—Sabbath is singular. They took their spices to the tomb on Sunday. It follows that Jesus was buried on Friday. Jesus was in the tomb for part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday—He rose ‘the third day’.

Mark 14:1 may also be of interest. “It was two days before the Passover and the Unleavened Bread.” According to a careful analysis of the sequence of events that made up the last week, at this point it was late Tuesday afternoon, probably after 6:00 p.m.—adding two days takes us to 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, but the proceedings in the upper room began after 6:00 p.m. on that Thursday, which to the Jews was already Friday. Therefore Jesus died on a Friday. We take it that “3 days and 3 nights” was an idiomatic expression that could refer to three solar days represented by some part of each, but in sequence—in this case: Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

12) Harmonizing the accounts of the ‘temptation’

The ‘temptation of Jesus’ is mentioned by three of the Gospels. Mark is very brief (1:12-13); he has the Holy Spirit ‘driving’ Jesus into the wilderness, rather than the ‘leading’ of the other two; also, he is the only one who mentions the animals. Matthew and Luke give more detailed accounts, with some discrepancies, which give rise to this note.

Matthew has, “into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”. Luke has, “into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil”. We have no record of what Satan did during the forty days. That which is recorded happened at the end. Both Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus ate nothing during the 40 days, that at the end He was hungry, and that at that point Satan presented himself. They both record the same three tests, but in a different order, and it is this difference that requires special comment. The descriptions of the tests are not identical, but can easily be harmonized. At the end, Matthew has, “then the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him”. (Mark also mentions the angels.) Luke has: “When the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” The two statements complement each other.

I will now consider the three tests. Both begin with ‘bread’, but Matthew has “these stones”, while Luke has ‘this stone’. I assume that both are correct. Satan started with ‘these stones’ and then singled out one that looked just like a loaf and said ‘this one’. Both have Jesus responding with Deuteronomy 8:3. (Unfortunately, in Luke 4:4, less than half a percent of the extant Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit “but by every word of God”, to be followed by most modern versions.)

For the second test, Matthew has the temple, while Luke has the high mountain, the third test being the reverse. So who has the correct sequence? Luke

introduces both his second and third tests with the conjunction 'and', as if they were like separate blocks in a row. Matthew introduces his second test with a temporal adverb of sequence, 'then'; he introduces the third with another adverb, 'again', one of whose uses is sequence. Since Matthew overtly states the sequence, I conclude that his order is the correct one—Luke was not concerned to give the sequence; he handles the 'temple' almost like an afterthought (the introductory conjunction could be rendered 'also'). Matthew's order is also the logical sequence; there is a progression in the severity or importance of the tests.

The actual description of the temple test given by both is almost identical. Matthew says "holy city" while Luke says "Jerusalem". Satan cites Psalm 91:11-12, and Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6:16. As for the high mountain test, Luke has a fuller description than does Matthew, but they are in harmony. In Matthew 4:10 some 12% of the Greek manuscripts omit "behind me", as in most versions; in Luke 4:8 the whole "Get behind me, Satan!" is omitted by perhaps 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts (of inferior quality), to be followed by most modern versions. (Strange to relate, in Luke 4:5 just three known Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality [against over 1,700, almost all of which are better than the three], omit "up on a high mountain the devil", to be followed by most modern versions, except that some keep 'the devil'.)

To conclude, each of the three accounts supplies some information not found in the others, but they harmonize, being complementary. The one apparent discrepancy, the order of tests two and three, has a reasonable solution.

13) 'Prophets' in Matthew 2:23

"And upon arriving he settled in a town called Natsareth [Branch-town], so that what was spoken through the prophets should be fulfilled, that He would be called a Natsorean [Branch-man]."

We know from Luke that Natsareth was Joseph's home—his house and business were waiting for him (although he had been gone for quite a while). The name of the town in Hebrew is based on the consonants נצר (*resh, tsadde, nun*), but since Hebrew is read from right to left, for us the order is reversed = n, ts, r. This word root means 'branch'. Greek has the equivalent for 'ps' and 'ks', but not for 'ts', so the transliteration used a 'dz' (*zeta*), which is the voiced counterpart of 'ts'. But when the Greek was transliterated into English it came out as 'z'! But Hebrew has a 'z', ז (*zayin*), so in transliterating back into Hebrew people assumed the consonants נזר, replacing the correct *tsadde* with *zayin*. This technical information is necessary as background for what follows.

Neither 'Nazareth' nor 'Nazarene', spelled with a *zayin*, is to be found in the Old Testament, but there is a prophetic reference to Messiah as the Branch, *netser*—Isaiah 11:1—and several to the related word, *tsemach*—Isaiah 4:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15; Zechariah 3:8, 6:12. So Matthew is quite right—the prophets (plural, being at least three) referred to Christ as the Branch. Since Jesus was a man, He would be the 'Branch-man', from 'Branch-town'. Which brings us to the word 'natsorean'. The familiar 'Nazarene' (Ναζαρηνοϛ) [Natsarene] occurs in Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34, but here in Matthew 2:23 and in fourteen other places, including Acts 22:8 where the glorified Jesus calls Himself that, the word is 'Natsorean' (Ναζωραιοϛ), which is quite different. (Actually, in Acts 22:8 Jesus introduced Himself to Saul as the Natsorean', which strict Pharisee

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Saul would understand as a reference to the Messiah.) I have been given to understand that the Natsareth of Jesus' day had been founded some 100 years before by a Branch family who called it Branch town; they were very much aware of the prophecies about the Branch and fully expected the Messiah to be born from among them—they called themselves Branch-people (Natsoreans). Of course everyone else thought it was a big joke and tended to look down on them. "Can anything good...?"

The difficulty in this case is caused by differing phonologies; the sounds of Hebrew do not match those of Greek, or of English. Since proper names are often just transliterated, as in this case, and a translator will normally follow the phonology of the target language, what happened here was straightforward, without malice. We would have felt no inconvenience had Matthew not appealed to "the prophets". It is the false transliteration going back to Hebrew, from either Greek or English, that creates the seeming difficulty.

14) Are we to handle snakes?

Mark 16:18

In the NKJV, Mark 16:18 reads like this: "they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."^a

The NIV renders 'they will pick up snakes with their hands', the 'with their hands' being based on just over 2% of the Greek manuscripts. As we know, there are those who take this translation literally, and believe that they must handle poisonous snakes in obedience to God. I respect their sincerity, but believe they have been misled by a faulty translation.

I would say that this particular statement of the Lord's has been generally misunderstood. The verb in question covers a wide semantic area, one of the uses being to pick up the way a garbage man picks up a bag of trash—he does so to get rid of it (hence 'remove'). I believe Luke 10:19 sheds light on this question. In Luke 10:19 the Lord Jesus said: "Behold, I give [so 98% of the Greek manuscripts] you **the** authority to trample on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." The Lord is addressing the Seventy, not the Twelve, and others were doubtless present; further, this was said perhaps four months before His death and resurrection. It follows that this authority is not limited to the apostles, and there is no indication of a time limit. The Lord Jesus affirms that He gives us **the** authority over all the power of the enemy. In Matthew 28:18 He declares that He holds "all authority... in heaven and earth", and so He has the right and the competence to delegate a portion of that authority to us. We may have any number of enemies, but the enemy is Satan. The phrase, "all the power", presumably includes his works, followed by their consequences.

Returning to Luke 10:19, the Lord gives us the authority to "trample snakes and scorpions". Well now, to smash the literal insect, a scorpion, you don't need

^a Since only three Greek MSS (really only two) omit Mark 16:9-20, against at least 1,700 that contain them, there can be no reasonable question as to the genuineness of those verses. For more on this subject please see the respective appendix in any recent edition of my book, *The Identity of the New Testament Text*.

power from on High, just a slipper (if you are fast you can do it barefoot). To trample a snake I prefer a boot, but we can kill literal snakes without supernatural help. It becomes obvious that Jesus was referring to something other than reptiles and insects. I understand Mark 16:18 to be referring to the same reality—Jesus declares that certain signs will accompany the believers (the turn of phrase virtually has the effect of commands): they will expel demons, they will speak strange languages, they will remove ‘snakes’, they will place hands on the sick. (“If they drink...” is not a command; it refers to an eventuality.) But what did the Lord Jesus mean by ‘snakes’?

In a list of distinct activities Jesus has already referred to demons, so the ‘snakes’ must be something else. In Matthew 12:34 Jesus called the Pharisees a ‘brood of vipers’, and in 23:33, ‘snakes, brood of vipers’. In John 8:44, after they claimed God as their father, Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil”. And 1 John 3:10 makes clear that Satan has many other ‘sons’. In Revelation 20:2 we read: “He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is a slanderer, even Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited earth, and bound him for a thousand years.” If Satan is a snake, then his children are also snakes. So then, I take it that our ‘snakes’ are human beings who chose to serve Satan, who sold themselves to evil. I conclude that the ‘snakes’ in Luke 10:19 are the same as those in Mark 16:18, but what of the ‘scorpions’? Since they also are of the enemy, they may be demons, in which case the term may well include their offspring, the humanoids [see my paper, “In the Days of Noah”, available from my site: prunch.org]. I am still working on the question of just how the removal is to be done.

15) **The Natsorean**

Every version that I remember seeing miss-leads the reader by obliterating one of the Lord’s titles, a title that the glorified Jesus Himself used when dealing with Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road. When Saul asked, “Who are you, Lord?”, He answered, “I am Jesus the Natsorean, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 22:8). Most versions at this place render ‘Jesus of Nazareth’, while some have ‘Jesus the Nazarene’. For an explanation of why I use ‘ts’ instead of ‘z’, please see my article, “‘Prophets’ in Matthew 3:23” (prunch.org).

The familiar ‘Nazarene’ [Nazarhnoj] occurs four times: Mark 1:24, 14:67, 16:6 and Luke 4:34. ‘Jesus the Nazarene’ would appear to be another way of saying ‘Jesus of/from Nazareth’, and some versions so translate the phrase. Unfortunately, the versions do the same with ‘Natsorean’ [Nazwraioj], which I consider to be a serious error. Just looking at the two Greek words, they are obviously different. The Hebrew root is netser, ‘branch’, a reference to Isaiah 11.1 (‘Nazareth’ is a transliteration of the Hebrew name). Going back to Acts 22:8, why would Jesus waste time with the name of a town? He was dealing with a highly instructed Pharisee; He introduced Himself as David’s Branch, the Messiah—a reference that Saul would immediately understand.

‘Natsorean’ occurs fifteen times: Matthew 2:23, 26:71; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:37, 24:19; John 18:5,7, 19:19; Acts 2:22, 3:6, 4:10, 6:14, 22:8, 24:5 and 26:9. All have the definite article, except the first one—the Natsorean; except that in Acts 24:5 Felix speaks of ‘the sect of the Natsoreans’. Speaking of Felix, his use of the term ‘sect’ is instructive. Aside from Acts 22:8, that I have already discussed, I consider that John 19:19 deserves special comment. The title above the cross read: This is Jesus the Natsorean, the King of the Jews. Pilate had evidently re-

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searched Jesus quite well (anyone with a large following is a potential problem); I believe that he knew precisely what he was doing when he used 'Natsorean', just as he knew precisely what he was doing when he put 'the King of the Jews'. For more on the subject of Pilate, please see my article: "Poor Pilate—wrong place, wrong time" (prunch.org).

Whatever version of the Bible you are using, I would urge you to correct it at the references mentioned above, so you know when a title is being used. 'The Natsorean' needs to be added to any list of the Lord's titles.

16) Before, or after?

2 Thessalonians 2:2 X 2:7-8

In Matthew 24:44 we read, "Therefore you also be ready, because the Son of the Man is coming at an hour that you do not suppose." I take it that for there to be the element of surprise the Rapture of the Church must occur before the "abomination of desolation". When the Antichrist takes his place in the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be god there will be precisely 1,290 days until the return of Christ to the earth. "An hour that you do not suppose" presumably requires a pre-'abomination' rapture—if the rapture is pre-wrath but post-abomination, only a fool will be taken by surprise, unless the Rapture happens immediately after the 'abomination' (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

We may begin with 2 Thessalonians 2:2. Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts have 'day of the Lord' (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.); the 85% that have 'day of Christ' (including the best line of transmission) are doubtless correct. I remember one day in a Greek exegesis class, the professor stated that one reason he preferred the 'critical' text (that reads 'Lord' here) is that it fit better with his view of eschatology—the 'Day of Christ' is usually associated with the Rapture and blessing of the saints, while the 'Day of the Lord' is usually associated with heavy judgment upon the world and unrepentant Israel, including the outpouring of wrath just before and after the Second Coming of Christ, when He returns in glory to establish His Millennial Reign. The perceived difficulty here would appear to be that while verses 1, 6 and 7 evidently relate to the Rapture, verses 3-4 and 8-10 evidently relate to the Great Tribulation and the Second Coming. What to do? Look carefully at the Text. In verse 2, why would the Thessalonian believers be "disturbed"? Someone was teaching that the Rapture had already happened and they had been left behind—I would be disturbed too! So 'day of Christ' is precisely correct with reference to the content of verses 1 and 2. The trouble comes in verse 3 because a clause is elided; as an aid to the reader translations usually supply a clause, preferably in italics, to show that it is an addition, as in NKJV—"that *Day will not come*". But that would put the Rapture after the revelation of the man of sin and the 'abomination of desolation'—definitely not congenial to certain eschatological systems. An easy 'solution' would be to change 'Christ' to 'Lord' in verse 2, but that would put the Rapture within the 'day of the Lord'—also not congenial. I submit that fine-tuning our view of eschatology is preferable to tampering with the Text.

If the 'Restrainer' in verses 6-8 is the Holy Spirit, then the Rapture happens before the 'abomination', and may be viewed as its 'trigger'. I translate verse 7 as follows: "For the mystery of the lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He removes Himself." Perhaps more literally, 'gets Himself out of the middle' (the verb *γινωμαι* is inherently middle in voice). I would say

that the Holy Spirit is the only one who satisfies the description. But if the 'Day of Christ' includes the Rapture, then verse 3 would appear to place the Rapture after the 'abomination'. So where does that leave us? Although my own training was strongly 'pre-trib', I have moved to a 'meso-trib' position. If the Rapture follows immediately upon the 'abomination', then the 'surprise' factor remains untouched. If the 'abomination' and the Rapture happen within minutes of each other, then from God's point of view they form a single 'package', and the actual sequence is not important—for all practical purposes they happen at the same time.

17) When did Jesus leave Annas?

John 18:24

After Jesus was taken prisoner in the Garden, only John mentions that He was taken first to Annas; all the others only mention His being taken to Caiaphas, where the recorded proceedings took place, although of the three only Matthew actually names him (Matthew 26:57, Mark 14:53, Luke 22:54).

So far, so good, but the difficulty begins with John 18:15, that takes up Peter's denials without further ado; but Peter's denials took place at Caiaphas' house, not Annas'. Then verses 19-23 have the high priest questioning Jesus, still at Caiaphas'. Then comes verse 24: NKJV reads, "Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest"; NIV reads, "Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest" (but a footnote offers, "Now Annas had sent him"); TEV reads, "So Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest"; while NASB reads, "Annas therefore sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest". All four of these versions have John 18:15-23 occurring in Annas' house, rather than that of Caiaphas—the NIV footnote points to the correct rendering.

It would appear that all four of the versions follow the so-called 'critical' (read 'eclectic') text, that follows some 9% of the Greek manuscripts in adding a conjunction, 'then' or 'therefore' (οὐν), after the initial verb, thereby creating the 'problem'. Following the 90%, including the best line of transmission, I render, "(Annas had sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.)". The use of parenthetical comments, or historical/cultural asides, is standard procedure for John: for a partial list see: 1:44, 2:6, 4:2,9,44, 6:4,64, 7:50, 9:14, 11:2,18-19,30-31, 12:1,6,16, 13:2,11,28-29 (there are at least a dozen more). I take it that verse 24 here is just one more instance: it is as if at this point John realizes that the reader could think that the proceedings were still going on at Annas' house. 8:25 resumes with Peter's denials. Following the correct Text, and the correct understanding thereof, John's record is not at variance with that of the other three Gospels.

18) Where is Mt. Sinai?

I invite attention to Galatians 4:25, that declares that Mt. Sinai is in Arabia: I don't know Paul's definition of 'Arabia', but what the maps call 'Mt. Sinai' probably is not the real one;^a consider: When Moses fled from Pharaoh he stopped in

^a The difficulty here is not in the Text itself, but in the circumstance that almost all modern maps, whether in Bibles or elsewhere, place Mt. Sinai in the peninsula between the two gulfs, Suez and Aqaba: so

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Midian (Exodus 2:15). Midian lies on the east side of the eastern ‘rabbit-ear’ of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Aqaba), in present day Saudi Arabia. It has never been part of the so-called ‘Sinai Peninsula’. It was at “Horeb, the mountain of God” that Moses saw the ‘burning bush’ (Exodus 3:1), and in verse 12 God tells Moses: “when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain”. Mt. Horeb has always been in Midian. (Present day Saudi Arabia calls it ‘el Lowz’, and has it fenced off.) As God continues with Moses’ commission, He specifies “three days’ journey into the wilderness” (verse 18). According to Exodus 4:27 Aaron met Moses at “the mountain of God” (Horeb, in Midian), and they went together to Egypt.

When the people left Egypt, God led them on a forced march; notice the “so as to go by day and night” (Exodus 13:21). Three days of forced march (Exodus 3:18) would have gotten them close to Ezion Geber (present day Elath), and just another two days would have put them well into Midian. But then God told them to “turn back” and “encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon” (Exodus 14:2). To do this they had to leave the established route from Egypt to Arabia, and head south into the wilderness, and this led Pharaoh to conclude that they had lost their way (obviously he would have spies following them, mounted on good horses, to keep him informed). It would have been simply impossible for them to lose their way between Goshen and the western arm of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Suez), but this is what those who place Mt. Sinai in today’s ‘Sinai Peninsula’ are obliged to say—an evident stupidity. The Israelites would have hunted and explored all over that area, down through the years. (And why the chariots? Pharaoh could have surrounded them with foot soldiers.)

God led them down a ravine called ‘Wadi Watir’ which comes out on a surprisingly large beach called ‘Nuweiba’ (it is the only beach on that gulf large enough to accommodate that crowd of people and animals). Most of the Gulf of Aqaba is many hundreds of feet deep, with sheer sides, but precisely at Nuweiba there is a land bridge not far below the surface that goes from shore to shore, the width of the gulf at that point being close to 10 miles—the width of the land bridge is several hundred yards, so there was an ample ‘causeway’ for the crossing. The ravine that opens out on Nuweiba is narrow, with steep sides, so when God moved the pillar of cloud to the mouth of the ravine, Pharaoh and his chariots were blocked. They could not pass the pillar, they could not climb the sides of the ravine with chariots, and with over six hundred chariots in a narrow ravine they would have a proper ‘gridlock’ (lots of unhappy horses!). I suppose that God removed the pillar of cloud while part of the crowd was still on the land bridge, which encouraged Pharaoh to chase after them; and we know the rest of the story. If God let them get out to the middle, they would be five miles from either shore, too far for most people to swim.^a I take it that God’s purpose was to destroy the Egyptian army so it could not be a threat to Israel in the early years.

much so that the peninsula itself is even so named. But such a location for the mount makes the Biblical account out to be ridiculous, as I explain below, and an inspired Text should not be ridiculous.

^a In our day chariot pieces have been discovered along that land bridge.

19) Who bought what from whom, and where?***Stephen X Genesis***

Acts 7:15-16—"So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers; and they were transferred to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor of Shechem."

When we compare this text with the relevant passages in Genesis, we appear to be confronted with some discrepancies. Who bought what from whom, and where? Genesis 33:19 informs us that Jacob bought a plot from Hamor, in Shechem. On the other hand, Genesis 23:16-20 explains that Abraham bought an area that included the cave of Machpelah from Ephron, in Hebron. That cave became the sepulcher of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebecca, and of Jacob and Lea, because Jacob insisted upon being buried there, as indeed he was (Genesis 49:29-30, 50:13). Looking again at Acts 7, it was 'our fathers' that were buried in Shechem, not Jacob. Indeed, Joshua 24:32 states explicitly that Joseph's bones were buried in Shechem.

Yes but, whenever did Abraham buy anything in Shechem? I believe Genesis 12:6-7 gives us the clue. Abraham stopped in Shechem and built an altar. Now then, to build on someone else's property, with that someone looking on, probably won't work very well. I believe we may reasonably deduce that Abraham bought a plot "from the sons of Hamor of Shechem". The 'Hamor' of Jacob's day would be a descendant of the 'Hamor' in Abraham's (sons were often named after their fathers). In Genesis 14:14 we read that Abraham "armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house". If we add women and children, the total number of people under Abraham's command was probably over a thousand. Well now, with such a crowd it is not at all unlikely that someone died while they were stopped at Shechem. (People older than Abraham would not have been 'born in his own house', but there were doubtless older persons in that crowd.) In that event Abraham would need space for a cemetery, if the plot he had already bought for the altar wasn't big enough, or appropriate. That sort of information may have been available to Stephen from an extra-biblical document, or he may have figured it out as I have done (in his case guided by the Holy Spirit—Acts 7:55).

Going back to Genesis 33:19, it is possible that Jacob increased the area that Abraham had bought, by purchase. But why were all of Jacob's sons buried in Shechem? I believe the answer lies in Genesis 34:27-29. We read that Jacob's sons killed all the men of Shechem, looted everything, but kept the women and children. And what do you suppose they did with the women? So where did you think they found wives for so many men? They got them from Shechem. Since Shechem was the source of their wives and material possessions, it would be a natural place for them to be buried.

To conclude: there is no discrepancy. Both Abraham and Jacob bought land in Shechem. It was Jacob's sons who were buried there, not Jacob himself.

20) Did the cross kill Jesus?***John 10:18 X Mark 15:39, John 19:30, Matthew 27:50, Luke 23:46***

In the NKJV, John 10:17-18 reads like this: "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it

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again. This command I have received from My Father.” Please notice: **“No one takes it from me”**. That includes Pilate, etc. In Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30 the Text states that Jesus “dismissed His spirit”. Now consider Mark 15:39. “So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of God!’” Now what could convince a hardened Roman centurion? He had doubtless witnessed no end of crucifixions; he knew that the victim died of asphyxiation. Hanging from one’s hands, the diaphragm is pressed against the lungs, and the victim can’t breathe. Nailing the feet was a sadistic procedure, to prolong the agony—in spite of the pain, the victim would push up so he could get a breath, until finally too worn out to do so. (That is why the Pharisees requested Pilate to have the legs broken; then they died within minutes.) Now then, someone who is dying asphyxiated does not give a tremendous shout; but ordinary people cannot just tell their spirit to leave. So when that centurion observed that Jesus gave a tremendous shout and then immediately died, he drew the obvious conclusion: he was looking at a supernatural being. The cross did not kill Jesus; He gave His life voluntarily, for you and me. Thank you, Lord!

21) How many animals?

Matthew 21:1-7 X Mark 11:1-10, Luke 19:29-36, John 12:12-15

Mark, Luke and John are agreed in mentioning a single animal, a donkey colt. It was loosed, brought to Jesus, garments placed upon it, and then Jesus rode on it. Matthew insists on telling us that there were really two animals, the colt and its mother. The AV (KJV) has a most unfortunate translation of both Matthew 21:5 and Zechariah 9:9 (that has been corrected in the NKJV, fortunately). In Zechariah the AV has, “riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” In Matthew the AV has, “sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” The obvious difficulty is that the AV makes Jesus ride two animals, when in fact He only rode one. For the correct rendering of both Zechariah and Matthew, at this point, please see the NKJV. That said, however, the fact remains that Matthew clearly has the disciples fetching two animals and placing garments on both.

Why do you suppose the Holy Spirit had Matthew supply the added information? I was not there, of course, but I offer my understanding of the event. Mark and Luke specify that no one had ever sat on the colt; they say that the colt was tied, but Matthew says it was really the mother that was tied. Evidently the colt was so young that it was still staying close to ‘mother’, so if she was tied, he was too, in effect (they were out in the street, and that may have been a new experience for the colt). Jesus was going to subject the colt to a strange and even frightening situation. From the peace and quiet of his little village, he would be surrounded by a shouting crowd. Strange things would be put on his back, and then someone who was probably bigger and heavier than he was would sit on him! I believe that Jesus had the mother brought along as moral support for her son. Clothes were put on her too (and of course she was surrounded by the shouting crowd as well), and seeing that she was calm would encourage the colt. Just by the way, Jesus probably had to lift His feet to keep them from dragging; it must have been a comical sight. It gives me a warm feeling to see that the Lord Jesus was concerned for the well-being of the colt.

22) Jeremiah?***Matthew 27:9-10***

In the NKJV, Matthew 27:9-10 reads like this: “Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, *And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter’s field, as the LORD directed me.*” The difficulty comes when we try to find this material in our canonical Jeremiah. Cross-references send us to Jeremiah 32:6-9, or 18:1-4, or 19:1-3, but upon inspection they must do not match. In Zechariah 11:12-13 we find a general approximation, but it is not precise—and of course Zechariah is not Jeremiah. Evidently there are Hebrew manuscripts that begin the scroll containing the prophets (major and minor) with Jeremiah, and it has been argued that Matthew used ‘Jeremiah’ to refer to the contents of the entire scroll. I suppose that could be a possibility, but I prefer to appeal to Daniel 9:2. “In the first year of his reign [Darius] I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet...” Note that ‘books’ is plural. Why should any of us assume that men like Jeremiah, or Isaiah, wrote only what is in our canon? (I myself have written a great deal that has never been published.) Daniel clearly wrote ‘books’, presumably referring to Jeremiah. I conclude that such extra-canonical books were still known in Matthew’s day, and that he refers to one of them. I am aware that the distinction cannot be insisted upon, but Matthew did use ‘spoken’ rather than ‘written’.

23) ‘Censer’, or ‘altar of incense’?***Hebrews 9:4***

What concerns us here is the Greek word, θυμιατηριον, that occurs only here in the NT. In the LXX the meaning of the word is ‘censer’, and that is plainly the intended meaning here. But unfortunately modern versions like NIV, TEV, LB, NASB, etc. render ‘altar of incense’, thus setting up a contradiction with the Old Testament. [What could have motivated such a perverse proceeding?] According to Exodus 30:6 the altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies, and so it was in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies. The only reference to this particular censer appears to be in Leviticus 16:12, where it was to be used behind the second curtain to hide the Ark with smoke. Since that censer would only be used once a year (on the day of atonement), it may well have been stored just behind a corner of the second curtain (where the high priest could retrieve it without looking in) and thus the author of Hebrews would be correct in saying that the censer was behind the second curtain, whereas the altar was in front of it. In any event, evidently that censer was **used** only within the Holy of Holies, and so it would be appropriate to say that the area ‘had’ a golden censer.

24) ‘Jesus’, or ‘Joshua’?***Hebrews 4:8***

Beyond question, the Greek Text has ‘Jesus’, as in the AV, but most modern versions put ‘Joshua’. I suppose that ‘Jesus’ was judged to be an anachronism, and so ‘Joshua’ was elected to relieve the situation. To be sure, the Septuagint we

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know uniformly spells 'Joshua' as *Ἰησοῦς* (Jesus) [as a linguist I wonder why the translators transliterated '*Jehoshua*' as '*Jesus*'], and probably in consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as '*Jesus*' [it was not his purpose to correct the LXX]. However, looking carefully at the context in Psalm 95:7-11, Joshua just does not fit. Consider: it is presumably Jehovah the Son who is speaking ("Jehovah our Maker", verse 6), and since the reference is to those who fell in the wilderness during the forty years, Joshua cannot be in view. Not only that, I invite attention to Joshua 21:43-45 and 23:1, where the Text says that Joshua did in fact give them rest. So whom are you going to believe? Of course the Text is referring to physical rest, not spiritual, since neither Joshua nor anyone else could be responsible for a people's spiritual rest. Ezekiel chapter 18 is very clear to the effect that each individual is responsible for his own eternal destiny. God has no grandchildren, only sons and daughters. In Mathew 23:8-10 Sovereign Jesus forbids any attempt to dominate someone else's faith or conscience. This is consistent with His statement in John 4:23-24. The worship that the Father wants cannot be forced, imposed, controlled or faked.

In relief of the notion of 'anachronism' I offer the following: 1) in John 12:41 John affirms that Isaiah saw Jesus (it was Jehovah the Son on the throne); 2) in 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul affirms that the Rock that provided water was Christ; 3) in Hebrews 11:26 the same author [as I believe] has Moses choosing "the reproach of Christ"; 4) in 1 Peter 1:19-20 Peter affirms that the shed blood of God's Lamb, Jesus, was foreknown before Creation—but blood requires a body, and the Lamb's body was that of Jesus; so Jesus, as Jesus, was known before Creation. Returning to Hebrews 4:8, it was precisely Jesus, Jehovah the Son, who did not allow that generation to enter the 'rest'.

25) How did Judas die?

Matthew 27:5-8 X Acts 1:18-19

In the NKJV, according to Matthew, he "went and hanged himself", while according to Acts, "falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out". From the context it is clear that this happened at the field that he purchased, posthumously. For a successful hanging, there must be enough altitude so that when the end of the rope is reached the victim is still in the air. But to fall headlong there has to be a cliff, and you would have to dive off. Putting the two accounts together we may understand that there must have been a tree near the edge of the cliff, with a branch reaching out beyond the edge; Judas tied a cord around that branch and his neck and jumped—either the cord or the branch broke, and the impact was sufficient to split him open. Matthew states that it was actually the chief priests who bought the field, using the money that Judas had thrown on the temple floor; so Judas made the purchase posthumously.

26) Saved in childbearing'

1 Timothy 2:15

In the NKJV, 1 Timothy 2:14-15 reads like this: "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control." We begin with "she will be saved"; 'she' is a pronoun, that stands for

a noun, and in the context the reference is clearly to Eve. So how is Eve to be saved? (To render ‘preserved’ is basically meaningless.) Neither Eve nor any other woman is saved by bearing a child. In the Greek Text we find ‘childbirth’, a noun, not a verb. Further, there is a definite article with the noun, so it is ‘the childbirth’. There is only one childbirth that could result in salvation for Eve, and the rest of us, the birth of the Messiah. Of course Eve bore Seth, thus beginning the line that culminated in the Messiah (Genesis 3:15). In the middle of verse 15, and of the sentence, Paul breaks the rules of grammar and switches from ‘she’ to ‘they’—what is true of Eve is applied to all women. Well, strictly speaking, since ‘they’ has no antecedent I suppose it could include men as well, everybody (unless someone wants to argue that women are saved on a different basis than men [which I think would run afoul of other passages]). Still, the paragraph is about women. Any sisters in Christ who have been troubled by this verse, thinking that they must bear a child, may relax on that score.

27) Did Jesus hide?

John 8:59

In the NKJV, John 8:59 reads like this: “Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” My translation reads like this: “Then they picked up stones to throw at Him;^a but Jesus was concealed and went out of the temple, going through the middle of them; yes, that is how He got away!” The familiar “hid Himself” is not the best rendering here. Jesus did not try to hide behind a pillar, or whatever. He was surrounded by angry Jews with stones in their hands. Obviously they would have seen Him and started stoning. He became invisible and simply walked out, passing right through the middle of them. About half a percent of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality (demonstrably so), omit “going through the middle of them; yes, that is how He got away” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.). The 99.5% are doubtless correct, and supply an important detail.

28) Did they hear the Voice, or not?

Acts 9:7 X Acts 22:9

In the NKJV, Acts 9:7 reads like this: “And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.” And Acts 22:9 reads like this: “And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me.” Comparing the two accounts, we seem to have a discrepancy: did they hear the Voice, or didn’t they? Comparing the verses in the Greek Text, we discover that the verb, ‘hear’, and the noun, ‘voice’, are the same in both. Looking more closely, however, we notice that in 9:7 the noun is in the Genitive case, while in 22:9 it is in the Accusative. We have here a subtlety of Greek grammar: in the Genitive ‘voice’ refers to sound, while in the Accusative it refers to meaning, to the words. Saul’s companions heard the Voice, but were not allowed to understand the words—only Saul understood the words.

^a Since certain situations demanded a stoning, there were doubtless piles of ammunition placed strategically around the temple premises.

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A similar thing happened in John 12:28-29; the people heard the sound (sufficiently impressive that they called it thunder), but only Jesus understood the words.

29) Did the centurion leave his house?

Luke 7:1-10 X Matthew 8:5-13

It has often been supposed that these are parallel accounts of the same incident. To be sure, both involve a centurion, in Capernaum, a sick servant, and the statement of the centurion along with the Lord's reaction are very similar. But other details simply do not match. Evidently the Romans had an army base in Capernaum, with a centurion as commanding officer, who could be rotated. [Where do you suppose Peter sold most of his fish? And what language did he use?] Looking at the sequence of events in both Matthew and Luke, I would say that the incident recorded by Matthew happened first, and a number of months before the one recorded by Luke. Of course an incident like that would become part of the 'folklore' of the base. I assume that the centurions were different, but they certainly knew each other, so the second one knew every detail of the first incident. When his turn came, he used a different strategy to make his appeal (he was asking for a second favor), but then repeated the statement that had impressed Jesus so favorably. So, the first centurion left his house, but the second did not.

30) 'Gall', or 'myrrh'?

Matthew 27:34 X Mark 15:23

In the NKJV, Matthew 27:34^a reads like this: "they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink." And Mark 15:23^a reads like this: "Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink." That Mark used a generic term, 'wine', for the more precise 'sour wine' (or 'wine vinegar'), need not detain us. But what was the mixture? 'Gall' is one thing, an animal substance, and 'myrrh' is another, a vegetable substance; it was either one or the other, but which? Was Matthew influenced by Psalm 69:21? "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Matthew wrote for a Jewish audience, and seems to have mentioned fulfilled prophecy whenever he could.) More to the point, perhaps, is Acts 8:23, where Peter says to Simon (the ex-sorcerer), "for I see that you are in a gall of bitterness" (so the Greek Text). Evidently 'gall' was used as a generic term for any bitter substance. I take it that Matthew, perhaps influenced by Psalm 69:21, used the generic term. I conclude that the precise substance used was myrrh, as Mark indicates.

31) How many?

Acts 7:14 X Genesis 46:26 X Genesis 46:27

Again, we need only pay close attention to each context, and the precise wording of the text. The three verses give us three different numbers: 75, 66 and 70, respectively. I will begin with the smallest number, which is in Genesis 46:26: "All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all." The crucial datum is 'from his

body', so who were they? Reuben + four sons = 5, Simeon + six sons = 7, Levi + three sons = 4, Judah + five sons + 6, Issachar + four sons = 5, Zebulun + three sons = 4, that add up to 31, but we must include Dinah to get the total of 32 from Leah. Gad + seven sons = 8, Asher + six sons + 7, but we must add a daughter (mentioned in the record) to get the total of 16 from Zilpah. Joseph + two sons = 3, Benjamin + ten sons = 11, that add up to 14 from Rachel. Dan + one son = 2, Naphtali + four sons = 5, that add up to 7 from Bilhah. The grand total 'from his body' is 69. But of course Joseph and his two sons were already in Egypt, so that leaves 66 who 'went with Jacob to Egypt'. Genesis 46:27 says, "All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy." This includes Joseph and Jacob himself, so there is no discrepancy. But what about Acts 7:14? "Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people." The 75 presumably refers to 'all his relatives', which excludes Jacob and of course Joseph. I take it that nine wives came to Egypt (the wives are mentioned in Genesis 46:26), the other two having died before the migration. (If we include Jacob, there would be eight wives.)

32) Buy a ticket to Heaven?

Luke 16:9

In the NKJV, Luke 16:9 reads like this: "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home [literally, 'the eternal dwellings']." Within the context the Lord is clearly using irony, or sarcasm. In the immediately preceding verse the owner's 'commendation' of the stupid steward is obviously sarcastic, since the steward was sacked. And verse 14 below indicates that what Jesus said was for the benefit of the Pharisees, who were greedy. The use of sarcasm is not rare in the Bible. Getting into the eternal dwellings does not depend on 'buying' friends down here; it depends on pleasing the Owner up there. And who says someone who can be bought with 'unrighteous mammon' is going to Heaven? He would have to get there first in order to 'receive' the buyer. The whole 'scene' is patently ridiculous. Just by the way, verse 13 declares a terribly important truth. To embrace the world's value system (humanism, relativism, materialism) is to reject God. Materialistic 'Christians' are really serving mammon ('mammon' includes more than just money).

33) Buy cleansing?

Luke 11:41

In the NKJV, Luke 11:41 reads like this: "But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you." My translation reads like this: "Nevertheless, give what is possible as alms; then indeed all things are clean to you." At first glance this statement seems difficult, but because they were filled with greed, for them to give away as much as possible would represent a major change in their values. Zacchaeus offers a case in point: the Lord Himself declared that he was saved (Luke 19:8-9).

34) Do we command God?***Matthew 18:18***

In the NKJV, Matthew 18:18 reads like this: “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” The normal meaning of this translation is that Heaven has to follow our lead (is it not?), and there is no lack of religious communities that teach this. But really now, what possible competence might human beings have to tell God what to do? We may ask, but not command. The difficulty arises from an inaccurate translation. The tense of the Greek verb phrase here is a periphrastic future perfect, passive voice (so also in 16:18). Thus, “will have been bound/loosed” not “will be bound/loosed”. We are not telling God what to do; we are to apply down here that which He has already done in heaven. (What had been just for Peter is now given to all the disciples.)

In John 5:19 the Lord Jesus stated that He could only do what He saw the Father doing. Our inability to see what the Father is doing is probably one of our worst spiritual problems—it condemns us to waste a lot of time and energy trying to do things that we shouldn’t. In practical terms, when I ‘bind’ something and nothing happens, I conclude that it had not been ‘bound’ in Heaven. I tried to do something that the Father was not doing.

35) ‘Size’ of faith?***Luke 17:6, Matthew 17:20***

In the NKJV, Luke 17:6 reads like this: “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” Perhaps because of the parables just discussed, I don’t remember ever hearing any other interpretation for this than the size of the faith. (The same holds for Matthew 17:20.) But that usually left me disgruntled: surely my faith was bigger than a seed, but I was never able to make a tree or hill obey me! But looking at the Text again, might the intended meaning of ‘as a mustard seed’ be different? Is not the phrase ambiguous? Could the verb ‘has’ be implied? Well then, what kind of ‘faith’ might a mustard seed have? Albeit so small, it reacts without question to the climactic circumstances, and grows to remarkable proportions. If we reacted similarly, without question, to the Holy Spirit’s promptings, our spiritual ‘climactic circumstances’, we should indeed move mountains, literally. Or to put it another way, a seed has the faith to die, like the Lord Jesus said in John 12:24: “unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone”. In 1 Corinthians 15:31 Paul said that he died daily. How so? Obviously he didn’t die physically; he died to himself, his own ideas and ambitions, so as to embrace God’s will. Dying to self is a prerequisite for moving mountains, because then we will only attempt to do what we see the Father doing (John 5:19).

36) ‘Staff’, or ‘bed’?***Hebrews 11:21 X Genesis 47:31***

In the NKJV, Hebrews 11:21 reads like this: “By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.” It has been alleged that this statement disagrees with Genesis 47:31,

that has Jacob leaning on the head of the bed (following the Massoretic Text), rather than the top of his staff. However, close attention to the contexts indicates that Hebrews 11:21 and Genesis 47:31 refer to different occasions, so there is no need to imagine a discrepancy. That said, it may be of interest to note the following. The Hebrew words for 'bed' and 'staff' are spelled with the same three consonants, the difference being in the vowels, that were not written. Thus the Original Hebrew Text was ambiguous here. When the Massoretes added vowel pointing to the Hebrew Text, many centuries after Christ, they chose 'bed'. Long before, the Septuagint had chosen 'staff'.

37) The 'smallest' seed?

Mark 4:31-32, Matthew 13:32

In the NKJV, Mark 4:31-32 reads like this: "It is like a mustard seed which, when it is sown on the ground, is smaller than all the seeds on earth; but when it is sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all herbs, and shoots out large branches, so that the birds of the air may nest under its shade."

The rendering 'the smallest seed in the world/earth' is unfortunate and misleading. The Text has 'of those on the ground', repeating the phrase above it, only eliding the verb. The Lord was not making a global botanical statement, as the next verse makes clear—He was referring to vegetables planted in a garden in His day and in that area, and of such herbs mustard had the smallest seed. To object that tobacco and orchid seeds are smaller is beside the point. My translation reads like this: "It is like a mustard seed, that when it is sown on the ground is the smallest of all such seeds, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden herbs and produces big branches, so that the birds of the air are able to rest in its shade." The verb I have rendered 'to rest' is a compound form. The noun root refers to a temporary shelter, like a tent or a hut. The verbal form means to make use of such a shelter. Here the preposition *kata* is prefixed to the verb, emphasizing, as I suppose, the temporariness. The Text says that the birds can use the shade, not the branches. But shade moves with the sun, and with the wind—how can you build a nest in something that keeps moving around (the Text actually says 'under its shade')? My comments also serve for Matthew 13:32, except that there the birds are resting in the 'branches', rather than the shade. The verb is the same, and I handle it the same way, 'rest' rather than 'nest', although 'nest' is possible.

38) 'This is', or 'You are'?

Matthew 3:17 X Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22

In the NKJV, Matthew 3:17 reads like this: "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" And Mark 1:11 reads like this: "Then a voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" Luke also has "You are". So what did the Voice actually say? In a manner similar to what happened on the Day of Pentecost, I conclude that each hearer received his own interpretation, or message. Matthew records the event from John's perspective: he heard, "This is..." Mark and Luke record the event from Jesus' perspective: He heard, "You are..." At Pentecost, with over a dozen languages being spoken at once, even if one of them was yours, it would

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require a personal miracle in your ear to enable you to extract your message from the welter of sound.

39) 'Valley', or 'ravine'?

Luke 3:5

In the NKJV, Luke 3:4-5 reads like this: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth...'” Does this mean that the surface of the earth will be flattened out? My translation reads like this: "A voice calling out: 'Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness, make His paths straight. 5 Every ravine will be filled up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; the crooked parts of the roads will be straightened out, and the rough parts will be smoothed out:...'” The reference is to Isaiah 40:3. Hebrew poetry, and prose, makes heavy use of parallel or synonymous statements. From the context in Isaiah it seems clear that "in the wilderness" goes with the verb "make straight", not "call out". But why a straight road in the wilderness? Any road facilitates the movement of people and goods, but a straight road through accidented terrain is a major asset, and Jerusalem is surrounded by accidented terrain. I render 'ravine' according to the normal meaning of the Greek word here; 'ravine' is also one of the normal meanings of the corresponding Hebrew word in Isaiah. Actually, Isaiah 40:3-4 describes the construction of a modern super highway. Verse 5 describes what happens where the highway passes, not all over the place.

40) Who said what?

Matthew 27:48-49 X Mark 15:36 X John 19:29-30 (Luke 23:36)

I take it that the action in John 19:29, as well as Luke 23:36, was carried out by soldiers, and should not be confused with that recorded in Matthew and Mark, although all four refer to offering Jesus sour wine to drink (since Jesus was on the cross for some six hours, there was time for several drinks). The seeming discrepancy I wish to address is in Matthew and Mark. In the NKJV, Matthew 27:48-49 reads like this: "Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him'." A single man offers the drink, but the rest say, "Let Him alone,..." And Mark 15:36 reads like this: "Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone;...'” A single man offers the drink, and **he** says, "Let Him alone,..." I would not be surprised if the man involved here was John Mark himself. But whoever he was, if he knew Hebrew he knew perfectly well that Jesus was not calling Elijah, so he sarcastically repeats their statement, in disgust. I deny any discrepancy.

41) Peter's mother-in-law

Matthew 8:14-15 X Mark 1:29-31, Luke 4:38-39

For most of my adult life, I assumed that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law only once, until one day it occurred to me that some of the details do not match.

Consider: although the details of the actual healing are slightly different in the three accounts, they could be harmonized to come out with a single episode; it is the context that differs. Mark and Luke have the same context; the healing they record took place not long after the ministry in Samaria (John chapter four), but certainly before the 'Sermon on the Mount' recorded by Matthew. The context for the healing in Matthew is quite different, and happened after that 'Sermon'. As recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, I would say that the events occurring between the two healings occupy the following stretches of Text: Matthew 4:23-8:13, Mark 1:32-45 and Luke 4:40-5:15. I see a practical application to this: just because God heals you one time does not mean that you will never get sick again (even with the same problem).

43) Where to place a 'comma'

Acts 12:25

Since Acts was written at least two years after Paul arrived in Rome in chains, it would not have been 'published' until into the 60s. When Jerusalem was destroyed in 70, it disappeared from the Christian map for centuries—the center of gravity of the Church was now Asia Minor. Although Luke himself was no doubt very fluent in Greek, for most Christians in Asia Minor it would be a second language. If this was also true of most people who made copies of NT books (especially in the early decades), and since those books were written without punctuation (or even spaces between words), it was predictable that now and again someone would put a 'comma' in the wrong spot. I imagine that it would have been just such an event that gave rise to the peculiar set of variants that we encounter in Acts 12:25.

Throughout the NT there are numerous places where there is a more or less serious split within Family 35, with two competing readings (usually involving just one letter). But this is the **only** place (yes, only) in the whole NT where the family splinters—there are no fewer than seven variants, five of them being of some consequence.

Instead of "Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch, having fulfilled their mission", someone (or several someones) put the comma after 'returned', resulting in "Barnabas and Saul returned, having fulfilled their mission to Antioch"—but with that punctuation 'Antioch' must be changed to 'Jerusalem'. (Having done that, we have two ways of saying essentially the same thing—if you get the 'comma' right!) Following that hypothesis, that change must have occurred rather early on, and in circumstances that resulted in that change dominating the transmission of Acts down through the years. To see what I mean we need to have the evidence before us:

1) <i>upestreyan eij antioceian</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =27.8%) (5.1%)
2) <i>υπεστρεψαν απο ιερουσαλημ</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =8.9%) D (10.9%)
3) <i>υπεστρεψαν απο ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =12.7%) (7.3%)
4) <i>υπεστρεψαν εξ ιερουσαλημ</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =1.3%) \mathfrak{A} (3.6%) OC,TR
5) <i>υπεστρεψαν εξ ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =11.4%) (12.2%) CP
6) <i>υπεστρεψαν εις ιερουσαλημ</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =36.7%) B (60%) RP, HF, NU
7) <i>υπεστρεψαν εις ιερουσαλημ εις αντιοχειαν</i>	(\mathfrak{F}^{35} =1.3%) (0.6%) [not a con- flation, being nonsense; the

copyist was aware of both,
and didn't know how to
choose]

It is evident that variants 2) - 5) were created deliberately; the copyists were reacting to the meaning of the whole phrase within the context (in this situation it will not do to consider the name of each city in isolation; the accompanying preposition must also be taken into account). But they were reacting to variant 6), not variant 1). However, once they were created, and as they became exemplars, those who made copies would see no problem and simply reproduce what was in front of them [so we may not add the percentages for 2) - 6) and say that Jerusalem has over 90% of the vote]. Having myself collated at least one book in over 70 MSS (and over ten entire MSS), I have observed repeatedly that the copyist faithfully reproduced a nonsensical reading—either they weren't paying attention, or their respect for the Text was such that they did not venture to change it (or in later years the monks may have been instructed to not make changes, precisely to preserve the variety of readings that had come down to them [their superiors may not have felt that they had the competence to choose one form to the exclusion of others])—so the 60% does not mean that all those copyists agreed with what they copied, or even that they understood it.

Since the normal meaning of the syntax here is the first one (they returned to Antioch), and since both the Holy Spirit and Luke knew how to write good Greek (Koine), my presuppositions lead me to choose it. But it is not only my presuppositions; consider:

- a) Acts 11:30, ο και εποιησαν αποστειλαντες, "which they also did, having sent... by B. & S." An aorist participle is prior in time to its main verb, in this case also aorist—their purpose is stated to have been realized. The author clearly implies that the offering did arrive, or had arrived, in Judea/Jerusalem. [In Acts the author seems almost to use "Jerusalem" and "Judea" interchangeably, perhaps to avoid repetition. E.g.: 11:1 Judea, 11:2 Jerusalem (were the apostles not in Jerusalem, or immediate environs?); 11:27 Jerusalem, 11:29 Judea, 11:30 the elders (would not the ruling elders be in Jerusalem?); 12:1-19 took place in Jerusalem, but v. 19 says Herod went down from Judea to Caesarea; 15:1 Judea, 15:2 Jerusalem; 28:21 letters from "Judea" probably means Jerusalem.] Note that the next verse (12:1) places us in Jerusalem.
- b) Acts 12:25 (12:1-24 is unrelated, except that verses 1-19 take place in Jerusalem), βαρναβας και σαυλος—the action includes **both**.
- c) Acts 12:25, υπεστρεψαν... πληρωσαντες την διακονιαν, "they returned... having fulfilled the mission". Again, both the participle and the main verb are aorist, and both plural. "Having fulfilled the mission" defines the main verb. Since the mission was to Judea, which of necessity includes Jerusalem as its capital city, the 'returning' must be to the place where the mission originated.
- d) Acts 12:25, "also taking with them John, the one called Mark"—we have no record that John Mark had ever been in Antioch before this, so how could he return to Jerusalem if he was already there? Acts 13:13 raises the same question.

Barnabas could be viewed as returning to Jerusalem, having completed his mission to Antioch, but this could not be said of Saul. I conclude that 'to

Jerusalem' cannot be correct here even though attested by 60% of the MSS. We observe that the other 40% of the MSS, plus the three ancient versions, are agreed that the motion was away from Jerusalem, not toward it. It seems to me that there is only one way to 'save' the majority variant here: place a comma between $\upsilon\pi\sigma\tau\rho\epsilon\psi\alpha\nu$ and $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, thereby making 'to Jerusalem' modify 'the ministry'. (This was my opening hypothesis.) But such a construction is unnatural to the point of being unacceptable—had that been the author's purpose we should expect $\tau\eta\nu \epsilon\iota\varsigma \iota\epsilon\rho\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha\nu$ or $\tau\eta\nu \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha\nu \epsilon\iota\varsigma \iota\epsilon\rho\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu$ (assuming that both the Holy Spirit and Luke were good at Greek). The other sixteen times that Luke uses $\upsilon\pi\sigma\tau\rho\epsilon\phi\omega \epsilon\iota\varsigma$ we find the normal, expected meaning, 'return to'. As a linguist (PhD) I would say that the norms of language require us to use the same meaning in Acts 12:25. Which to my mind leaves $\epsilon\iota\varsigma \alpha\nu\tau\iota\omicron\chi\epsilon\iota\alpha\nu$ as the only viable candidate for the Original reading in this place. (Which, however, would not prevent copyists who were not native speakers of Greek from putting the 'comma' in the wrong spot.)

The whole contour of the evidence is troubling, strange, and as I have already observed, it is absolutely the only place in the whole NT where Family 35 splinters. Variants 1) through 5) are all votes against 6), but we must choose one of them to stand against 6)—the clear choice is 1). "To Jerusalem" has 'Number', 'Antiquity' and 'Continuity'. "To Antioch" has 'Antiquity', 'Variety', 'Continuity' and 'Reasonableness'. As Burgon would say, this is one of those places where 'Reasonableness' just cannot be ignored. I believe he would agree that his 'notes of truth' give the nod to Antioch.